

## TO PASS THROUGH TECHNOSCIENCE ON THE WAY TO ART'S BODY

### **Taking on Embodiment, Technoscience, and Medium in the 'Visual Arts'**

This ambiguous disturbing 'not-quite-a-thing', the gest as a potential eventing, apparently adrift in an abyss of its own making because of what it appears determined to lack, seems thoroughly unsuited to, a tongue-tied foreigner in, the competitive violence of the market's unpredictable 'behaviour' where manifest 'performance', supposedly measurable and monitorable value-addedness, under the careful guidance of an ever-expanding research-and-development field-force, has become the crucial component for a commodity's survival. And yet the generation of these market-strangers whose singularity in the market place (made explicit in the one-offs of the visual arts (paintings, sculptures, assemblages, single photographs, slide-sequences, films, video, and combined performance-machine-events ('happenings' plus 'installations' plus whatever-else...)) and in the improvisations and 'first-night' (every event-night as a potential 'first night'...) performances of music) performs exactly their otherness to the surrounding commodities, has not only continued but has been steadily adapted to market requirements by an expanding infra-structure of controlling institutions already intent upon the aestheticisation of everyday life through the means of consumption. The singularities, in the very becoming-without of their lack, were recognised as an opportunity to develop a perfectly controllable, because patently empty, commodity complementary to the multiples of mass reproduction. They were set up as market-ripe targets for the hybridising drive of industrial aesthetics. And in the communicational zones, where art's gests are actively hybridised and partially integrated into popular culture (the generation of 'art-lite'), the problematic 'status' of singularity is made explicit by performers who confront the industrial processes of representation that are ceaselessly working themselves out through programmed productive reproduction and reduction (machined waste disposal).

In his various series using the 'same' images drawn from popular culture (Marilyn Monroe, the electric chair...) Andy Warhol blurs the line between singularity and multiplicity, identity and difference, by playing on the differences offered by the silk-screen printing process. Through varying the colour schemes across the prints and allowing the vagaries of colour-alignment emerging in the different stages of the printing process to remain, Warhol generates gests that occupy an in-between zone. Each image in a series is both the 'same' (almost...) and different; each, as a throw-away image culled from the mass media, is saturated with popular rather than 'art' resonances but hints, through its treatment (selection out from the mass, scale, and the aspiration of its offer shown in the sites chosen for its 'exhibition'), at its possible affinities with Art's Body. Each plunges the respondent initially into a zone of undecidability that can be escaped only by confronting the question of the gest's possible warrant as 'art' (its becoming 'differently') being dependent on the specificity of its material transformations. And opening up the specific 'act' of repetition, of 'copying', entailed in printing, simultaneously exposes the question of repetition itself as the question of art's very possibility. For is there not an unseeable inscription latent within every gest offered as a 'making-toward-art', that repeats each performer's hoped-for claim *to be taken as already at the threshold of Art's Body simply awaiting its embrace?* And does not the entry of a gest into any 'tradition' of art-performance depend upon a recognition that it has repeated something that crucially differentiates it from all those whose hoped-for claim to membership falls by the way-side?

So obscure is this waiting zone that it enables innumerable performers, having leaped in faithful commitment to art, to keep making-in-hope while knowing (essential to their know-how) that the actual recruitment to whatever-traditions is actually accomplished by an institutional fiat whose aesthetic and socio-economic selection criteria have *nothing to do with the life of (the 'forces' at work within) performing*. It was the acuity of Warhol's perception of this absolutely obscure zone of decision about 'difference' and repetition and, in his 'factory', his working out of some of its implications for art's relation to popular culture, that gave impetus to the hybridising processes already absorbing elements of art according to culture's self-mediatising interests.

All performers now have to attend to the consequences of this zone's 'place' (its displacing work?) in the construction of art's current representation, although the issue of the tension between singularity ('originality') and 'repetition' has receded through performers pluralising their relations to materials and gathering processes. Performers, vitally sensitive to the constantly evolving synaesthetic context of making, respond by re-defining the plight of performing as partially constituted by the telematic machinery that routinely appropriates what they do. The challenge in taking on elements of this machinery in the making-process is to find out whether minuscule zones of reserve and separation for art alone can be withdrawn from and in the very face of the encasing machinery's appropriating functions. It is to ask, through and as the gestures themselves, whether the machines of mass representation can be turned out of themselves (their functional applications - programme maintenance and complexification - and their contribution to the constitution of 'the commodity') in ways which reveal art as the exposure of a becoming-otherwise. To do this means taking on the function-governed 'linguaging processes' through which each machine operates, its conventions (the syntaxes and vocabularies of whatever sign systems (image-text-sound and so on) it develops) for the structuring of sense and perception. It is to turn these functional languagings inside out according to art's requirements and *to find whether the machine can become the bearer of other relations to language in which it is Language 'itself', as the species-defining possibility of our relating, whose potential for otherness is to be opened out*.

And as this machinery is, in its emergence, concerned precisely with controlling, manipulating, and placing 'the body' as machine-responsive, all this work occurs through the ways in which the machines' functional languaging holds, fixes (places), and subjects 'the body' to their programme for it. This virtual 'grasp' of the subjected-body is the 'doing' of representation; it is how representation makes, as an unquestioned routine enculturing, the 'world-as-we-know-it'. Embodied-becoming is 'ordered' and 'fixed' by the coded inscriptions that programme the terms on which each machine engages the senses. It is a synaesthetic embracing (a surrounding-penetrating (consider the code-bearing waves that pass through us without end)) that makes specific demands of the embodiment that it folds in to itself.

Art's challenge and its responsibility to (its and our) embodied-becoming is thus to set aside these in-built models of language-control to see whether the machinery contains possibilities for becoming differently, for transliterating what the machine seems to offer as its limits into terms that might take us somewhere very different indeed - toward other possibilities of becoming. Because the machinery is organised around the electronic generation and transmission of visual phenomena, invariably now in combination with sound and temporal extension, visuality remains a defining focus of performers' response to telematics. But performers recognise and seek to respond to 'seeing', whether generating a single 'still'

image or moving imagery (in combination with other media), *as an absolutely temporally defined process, seeing as the movement of a passing (through, over, off and away)*. The relations between performing and the processes of reproductive representation no longer turn around the relation between ‘the photograph’ and the singular art gest, but are reconvened on the site of an energy-transformation and diffusion where multiple codings across all media stream, are waved, endlessly throughout all social spaces. Whatever language-mixtures appear as the telematic surfaces at the point of ‘reception’, their emergence and transmission are functions of elaborate coded logics of conversion that set the terms for transmission at every prior stage of their production (right back to the sourcing and consumption of the combustible materials that make the transmission possible).

Yet, however making-toward-art responds to these transmitted surfacings, it is necessarily involved with and contained by this relation between energy-use, coding, and the inhuman speeds of electronic transmission through which ‘things’ are eventually ‘brought to market’ and inserted into its processes of exchange. For they are so inserted as things to be seen, even though this seeing may be augmented and complemented by hearing and touching. The market offerings are underpinned, inscribed, by the implicit texts that structure the entire process of their being produced as representable things. Every telematic ‘thing-process’ has these pre-inscriptions, *which are never ‘readable’ at its surfacing*, burnt into it. It is through these that seeing is temporalised, in and as the course of this subliminal ‘reading’ of what is now implicit in it - its ingrained inscription. This is the coded temporality of seeing with which performing has to contend if it is to draw this machinery out of itself, however slightly, and toward the otherwise which is its plighting. And each medium or performing mode with a visual dimension (all the ‘traditional’ visual arts plus performance, installation, photography, film, video, musical performance, and the multiple usage of variations of computing’s digitised memory-functions) is now contained within and routinely processed (represented, transmitted) by the global info-machinery. It is through the latter that every gest is brought to market, set up, conditioned, and offered for exchange.

Exchangeing, this most strange of processes, is where the absolute gap between performing and responding ‘occurs’ (we cannot say that it ‘takes place’ because it is precisely ‘place’, the ‘place’ of the gest as a fixed identifiable ‘somewhere’, which is dissolved in exchangeing). For this utterly routine but elusive and inscrutable process is the ‘bearer’, the ‘means’ of carrying ‘out’, *the most radical act of translation*, where ‘translation’ here names a mutation that effects a becoming-different in which a ‘being’ or ‘becoming’ of a different order emerges and is sent on its way. In the switch from ‘one’ language (the ‘not-quite-a-language’ of performing) into another (the interpretive knowledge-saturated languagings of response) the gest ‘goes through’ an uncanny transition. It is where ‘one thing’ becomes, seemingly in no time at all, something completely different, undergoes, whilst apparently moving between zones of an almost ‘common’ medium (language), an identity conversion. The translation is also thus a radical cut-off which effects a switching from the ‘im-proper’ (or the ‘not-yet-proper’ of the gest’s ‘open’ plurality that still carries the possibility of its being waste-matter) to the ‘proper’ - the donation of a new identity vested in and as this now aestheticised commodity, this loaded tension of irreconcilable valuing. That gest cast off and sent on its way as performing’s offer, in passing by way of representation’s exchangeing work, disappears and simultaneously reappears in its raw difference as just this new ‘propriety’ *that now belongs absolutely elsewhere*. It is an ‘elsewhere’ that no longer has anything to do with performing. For response is not a mode of surrogate performing; it is not a ‘stand-in’ for, a representative of, ‘the performer’. Rather it starts from and ‘lives’ somewhere else

altogether; it tries to grasp performing's gests according to its own completely different interests. Through the operation of these interests a gest is (or is not) inducted into the cultural apparatus that makes the control and mediation of 'aesthetics' its 'business'.

Singularity begins afresh right there, but now gathered up and represented as a singularity constituted strangely through an infinity of 'new' (that is no longer 'of' performing) potential affinities, of a plurality of typifications by which it is inducted into numerous collectives. It is a singularity which is no longer an exception to every rule except that of its 'own' being-assembled (Jarry's offer and legacy), for it is now dependent for any future it might have on what it shares, has in common, with other members of the conceptually formed discursive groupings. It is a singularity held together by the intimacy of the family relations through which it is endowed with a social life. From now on it can be moved easily around these family settings (the conventional institutional classifications) according to the interests of its discursive controllers. It is sent round the circuits, actually and telematically, as a fully socialised entity, caught up in the unboundaryable, but nevertheless scrupulously monitored, drifting 'play' of technically informed 'meaning' - the aesthetics of everyday life.

In this process the 'exception' that is the bearer of performing's singular one-track is itself turned into a commodity precisely as an almost-exception, the commodity which seems to be heading for exception but always holds itself back. Its singularity is borne in the way that it is no longer quite exceptional; it is sustained as a hovering at culture's supposed 'edge', as just-this-thing that nevertheless is now subsumed within many little collectives as just-another-member. This one-off seemingly detached (without symbolic aura of attachment to a specific place or ritual aside from the generalised-and-everywhere market place) thing-commodity is given its value as that which, although copyable into alternative media, cannot be reproduced in its material particularity but which can be represented and re-circulated endlessly as the epitome of the exemplary-, the typical-, member. But in its detached mode, its seeming singularity, it also manages to epitomise 'exclusivity', and thus performs as the 'exemplary commodity' because, through this, it adds a zero-sum distinction to its purchaser ('...if I've got it no one else has...'). Of course, once it becomes 'property' the opportunity is opened for the emergence of its propriety, of what now becomes 'proper' to it. Its 'lacks' (particularly its abjection-in-weakness for performing) are displaced and substituted by 'positive' attributes emerging, in the course of and as the means to its value-manipulation, through the accretion to it of an open-discourse of value-attributions. These can arise from the most mundane assessing measures (size, for example) to the most recondite (usually provided by the technically specialist knowledge-discourses of aesthetics). In the course of this accretion the abject not-quite-a-thing, lying there in its less-than-a-language, is transformed into a now 'proper' thing with a 'true identity' to which new confirmatory (of the identity if not the current value assessment) credentials (the infinite detail of attached 'meanings') can always be added. Such 'positive' assessments in critical discourses or art history, for example, often turn around their attributions of 'power' to a gest in contrast to its abjection for performing. This assimilates the gest to existing conventions of 'power' in ways which facilitate its absorption by established interests and values, and in the process eliding or obscuring its de-creative journey into the weakness of language's dissolution. The gest is thus given a 'history' and a complex of intertwined narratives and stories that, steadily accruing to it and recalling the unendable 'wake' of a certain end-denying '*Fin negans*'..., facilitate its 'commodious vicus of recirculation'....

Of course where such accretion does draw upon aesthetic discourse this carries within it the potential threat of value-reduction as the discourse ‘works’ through constant comparison with other singularities. In this very process each singularity is steadily gathered within typicalities; it becomes one of a kind. Thus, while the exception in the market allows one to buy difference for the sake of displaying the difference each exception ‘makes’ - invariably additive (just one more thing) and under the aegis of ‘taste’ - to the distinction of one’s ‘own’ ‘living’, the more exceptions one collects the less interesting does each become in its difference, *for what then defines one’s (whether as private collector or public institution) distinction is the singularity of the collection.*

Once the minor-mass-market for the one-offs was established it was not long before performer-producing institutions emerged as its necessary complement and maintainer. And this state-supported institutional maintenance has occurred not only in the face of the technical revolutions in image-text reproductive technology, once hailed as dealing the death blow to such ‘primitive production’, but has turned these very reproductive processes to its own advantage through the use of their communicative resources as facilitators of publicity, distribution, and marketing. From the side of response the singularities now ‘occur’ as extensions of the productive work of the ‘creative industries’, where ‘creativity’ is developed, operationalised, under the sway of specific knowledge-discourses (communication, psychology, linguistics, management, and so on) geared to the needs of controlling the structuring and flowing of programmed aestheticised productive-consumption. Defined by their incessant movement, the absolutely electronically driven and dependent global mass media track back and forth occupying, and trying to fill to a bursting point that never seems to be reached, the space-times between all (well, most...) of the ‘interests’ that collide in and at the always receding conjunctive no-place where production and consumption fuse into a simultaneously appearing-disappearing ‘all at once’. It might seem that this fusion effects a happy coupling of the perfect double - production and consumption - that always appear to be made for each other. Yet the seemingly defining completeness of this fusion (latent in every ‘deal’ that is brought off), because its no-place is nowhere to be seen, is also the mark of its permanent crisis. For this ‘place’ that, being on the move incessantly, is no-where, is an absolutely unpredictable opening through which anything can pass at any time. Whatever the ‘anything’ is, there is always someone who wants it at the right price (...eBay, the fake, the stolen, the pornographic, the info-recipe (scone or bomb), the sky-pie, the can labelled as artist’s shit). Which is ‘where’ its implications for performing as embodied-becoming (and perhaps many other ‘events’) may be glimpsed.

The ‘all-of-a-suddenness’ of the fusion achieved in bringing off the market marks the chaotic potential that is distributed everywhere throughout a system continually de-systematising itself in chasing after its defining uncontrollable complexity. As its only goal is the self-complexification demanded by negentropy (trying to put off passing away, decline, running down, the grinding-to-a-halt of things), its on-rushing is necessarily without end (recalling yet again (egan) the ever-again of *fin negans*... the permanent *wake* that is the market’s pure

sleeplessness<sup>1</sup>). Its very uncompleteness not only allows for the eruption of chaos at any moment but it also preserves its permanent leaking. Things little and large - matters, events, becomings - fall chaotically out of control through the unanticipatable holes whose chance openings and closures are all over (and thus aside from) 'the place'. Many 'things', remnants, fall away or are swept up and re-inserted, perhaps in disconcertingly inappropriate places (art's gestures, for example). But where might the by now seemingly utterly routine coupling of the made-for-each-other double (making and buying) leave a performing that wants to take its embodied experience of becoming-remnant (and of falling away, of being-measured, of becoming-hybrid, of becoming-false prophet (celebrity), of the curious pleasures of the challenge of reaching out toward Art's untouchable Body, and of the failure that goes hand in glove with this reaching) and transform this experiencing into the, for it, all too real, 'content' of its performing?

For there are many who, in spite of the tiny minority that is actually entered for the state and institution-sponsored aesthetic competition, still do ceaselessly try to make-toward the strange gathering that 'is' Art's Body even as it recedes into its own disappearance. Perhaps the chaotic shake-out that effects the sieving, the leaky tossing vessel that pitches it off this way and that, releases it into a different no-place, a 'somewhere else', a desert-ghetto that may just be partially aside from and in between the interests that seek to assemble and order themselves around functionality at the consumptive-production conjunction. It is an 'aside' that performing comes to shape as its 'own' through the particularity of its transformations. But, around its always fuzzy boundaries, it also overlaps slightly with and spills over into other no-places peopled by disparate from diverse social zones (the still-to-be-controlled young (infants, children, adolescents), the remaindered aged, wanderers, the solitary, carers, lovers, growers, the disaffected and disenfranchised, dreamers, drifters, insomniacs, mothers-to-be, compulsives (walkers, cyclists...), melancholic jokers, ecstatic players, deluded visionaries, multiple personalities, future-looking mnemonists, conservers-in-hope, poor students, near-penniless explorers, cata-citizens - fortunately these and multiple others are everywhere but they remain, still, very scattered...) who, passing through 'there', *desire and ask for very little of 'use' according to the terms on which it is currently offered*. For them embodiment's secret lies in the way that, turning through itself, it celebrates living's telling-exposing.

In the contemporary 'visual arts' this turn back-and-forward through embodiment has transformed their supposedly 'visual' terms of reference into an expanded expanding 'field' through performers' recognition that 'seeing' is never seeing-alone. They have realised, and begun to explore the consequences of this for performing, that 'seeing' is always intimately intertwined with other senses (beginning, perhaps, with the feelings that infest thinking and memoration) and with its own performing context. Above all it is a recognition that all seeing, all visual attending-to, cannot just be about embodiment's seeable spatial relations, its becoming-in-a-visualisable-place, for it is simultaneously indubitably temporal. 'Seeing', as present participle, reminds us that seeing is always a moving-through, a passing away, and

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, the absence - the lack of any 'presence' - that the market's eternal and virtual sleeplessness both 'performs' and 'is', is perhaps made manifest (but only in the vacancy it reveals) by the intense competition between the range of 'price comparison' web-sites, that by definition have no real presence 'in the world' (and thus no 'place'). It seems that the market lives by its (virtual) recession from our grasp, perhaps, in the process, eluding and opening up a further disappearing alternative to Heidegger's contrast between the 'ready-to-hand' and the 'present-to-hand'; can 'the hand', the haptic, have a 'relation' to and with 'the virtual', with that which has no 'presence'?

*that the 'seeing performer' - the performer who looks questioningly at the seeing-experience itself - is simultaneously and crucially also a 'seer' - one whose seeing takes on and shuttles back and forth through all the tenses and senses.*

In the process of giving itself over to seeing, performing becomes synaesthetically 'involved', entwined with zones of experiencing that shape its seeing by turning it this way and that. And in this being-turned the seeing-performer 'sees' that the seeing-body is never still but is, vitally (*that is, as precisely a matter of life and death*), in the throes of forces (fluxings) that are way beyond its control (except as a final act of cessation). Routinely unavailable to the eyes in the course of their everyday perception, the act of seeing may be reminded of its dependence on these unseeable fluxings through 'surface' effects that can break through, erupt, anywhere across becoming's manifest surfacing. And everyday perception, including that of performing as it begins to turn towards the processes in whose suspension it is held, is now so closely bound up with the dynamic and after-effects of technoscience that the latter becomes the opening onto the naturally unseeable. But such machinery (as the performer's potential 'second-sight') is, of course, always already an elaborate construct of technoscience's abstracting conceptualising work; it only represents (and transforms into 'readable' events) that which it has been instructed and constructed to process through machine-logics that rely on seeing but which, being absolutely 'unnatural', do not reproduce the life of the eyes.

Performing begins to realise that, in trying to situate itself, to treat its experience of 'being-situated' as the sourcing of materials for its transliterative address, it is suspended amongst and borne along by processes the only access to which is via the artifices (the constructs and machinery) of a technoscience intimately intertwined with and driving the market's exchange processes. And it has known too, since modernity's earliest days, that technoscience's artifice and knowledges are the representatives of a radically reconstructed conception of the relation of human (and creaturely) becoming to matter (and thus to the very materials whose life and potential for making-toward-art performing commits itself to exploring), to mattering, and thus to the limitlessness of 'the cosmos'. It knows too that we are all, itself included, drafted without possibility of escape into the vacuum of a violent draughting that sucks us onward (we cannot call it a going 'forward') without cessation. Realising that its traditional conventions of relating, both to its potential materials and to the 'singularity' of its gestures, are scattered in the conjunction of technoscience with the means to social power, performing seeks to respond to the disaster by trying to reconvene making-toward-art in a, hopefully, unfixable 'elsewhere'. Slowly but inexorably it begins to take on and incorporate the multiple intertwining of synaesthesia, situation (context), materials, and machinery as setting up the all too real conditions of 'seeing' now. But it does this whilst keeping the eyes to the fore in its pursuit of the terms of this disaster and how its experience of it might just be turned to its 'own' (Art's Body's...) advantage in maintaining its making-toward-art.

In the earlier consideration of the paintings of Dumas and Tuymans I emphasised that their relation to the painting performance had to pass by way of photography to explore how painting might render visible that which withdraws from the eye of the camera, the 'lack' that is painting's, and all representation's, 'falling short'. Painting here unfixes, corrodes, the photograph to get to where only it can reach - the possible doublings-multiplying of allegory and the moods that arise in the course of returning the image and the imaged-body to the peculiarities of their abjection. But painting-as-performance here still seems to seek to offer each painting, in its being-still, as an interruption of time passing. The movement of

continuity is forestalled in painting's own apparent abject stillness as an attempt to stop time in its tracks (the Faustian 'bargain') and to excise an image of this delay, this being-held-still - the impossible fixing and withdrawal of something less than a 'moment': the exposure of that which, outside of representation, is aside from 'time'. But, seemingly removed from time in this way, it still has to make reference to the tenses from which it has been extracted; this imaged not-yet-moment has to imply the tenses on each 'side' of the smallness of its pre-moment: it has to offer itself as a tense-compound, implying that it has both a past and a future.

It is thus that painting takes, and takes on, time, and in taking time takes something too of the place (context) of its performing. It must memorialise something of its past (what it has emerged out of) and hint at its anticipation of what would have become of it had it not been excised. However 'small' or 'thin' the excised moment, the painting thickens it out, fattens it up, extends it ever so slightly on 'each side', *precisely so that we can see it. In effect it turns this fattened-up time into place. Otherwise there would be nothing 'there', no registerable image at all.* It might also be that each painting, as just this imagined and imaged thin slice of continuity, wants to last almost-forever (or at least for 'sometime to come'...) as a wave-particle absorbed by Art's Body away over there, and quite aside from the incessance of entropy, dissolution, and disappearance. This hopeful sliver of continuity is all it can manage and offer in the face of technoscience's exorbitant powers - its speeds, complexity, and the inhuman (ungraspable) informational span of its image-text-sound waves. And is it not this latter that embodied-becoming is also now up against?

### **Bacon: Embodying Painting in the Maw of Technoscience**

Perhaps, too, it is the emergence of this machinery for body-conversion that is confronted in Francis Bacon's paintings. For it is precisely the 'fate' of embodied-becoming as the ceaselessness of disappearance that he engages as that with which painting has somehow to come to terms if it is to offer itself as representation's other. If the abject body, the body that is now (for technoscience and everyday life) nothing but separable parts and processes, the body shorn of all pretension and myth (except the myth of technoscience itself as master-narrative), is our current legacy, then Bacon's paintings confront us with questions about this being-bodied that were the unavoidable focus of his own painting performance. The gests he releases are his responses to the triangulation of 'forces' from within whose midst he tried to sustain a 'life' in painting, and in this he exemplifies what it is to commit to a life in and with painting now, still. For he feels out painting's potential through intertwining his deep attachments to specific 'moments' (painters and paintings) across 'the tradition', the experience of his own situated embodied-becoming focussed through the intimacy of seeing and touching, and the clichéd nothing-but-surface body sent forth in the technicised mass-flow of disposable images that mark the taken-for-granted conventions of everyday seeing (the bodies that we assume are simply 'there' in and as the way they are represented). The questions that, however obliquely, his gests explore and draw us towards, are 'what body do we now seem to have?', 'what body might we want?', 'can these questions be reconciled?', and 'to what sense of Art's Body might painting now be responsive and responsible?'. And each painting, whose 'point' is to celebrate painting through its exposing of itself as just this self-questioning, as the bringing of painting to 'life' through the very process of putting it into question, can only take us up to and suspend us before these questions as rendered in their specificity through 'this particular body' framed in just this 'situation-event' (even though this latter may be no more (nor less...) than a dark hole or opacity, as in many of the his small head studies (his own included)).

In contrast to the representing work of technoscience's cameras and electronic probings, its scanners and image-generators, the promise of whose probes is to turn the body inside out to display 'everything within' as an endless emergent light-display of surfaces and surfacing, Bacon, who has only an almost flat partially absorbent surface of a certain thickness (unconventionally Bacon painted on the unprimed rear of the primed canvas) to perform at, heads for something much more 'fundamental' and elusive. Turning such imagery back through itself,<sup>2</sup> he makes for a zone where the distinction between inside and outside falls away and embodiment is a movement of continuous folding in which all 'boundary' markers between inside and outside dissolve. For Bacon is seeking to find and expose *in paint alone* the terms on which all embodied-becoming, enwrapped by circumstances (its context-bound condition) which are largely beyond its control, just about manages to hang on to itself in its extremity, an extreme which is always, the paint suggests, all too proximate for all of us, just around the corner if not already a minatory presence infecting the very atmosphere which this clinging on has to absorb to maintain itself.

Is this not 'the body' that comes before any 'reason' - the in-fans (speechless-becoming) body-in-darkness which we always remain through to the end (disappearance)? Already here, we are in that space opened by Artaud of the nothingness-to-infinity (embodied by the receding continuity of a mattering that includes our bodies) with which 'reason' remains locked in permanent violent combat. For Artaud this is the 'space' where all making-for-art is irredeemably stranded. It is a violence that, as Blanchot reminds us, called forth his sense of the absolute necessity of a rigorous 'poetic consciousness'. While Blanchot applies it to writing we can see that it applies equally to (and demands as much of) painting (and all the contemporary arts). He opens it out as a 'dismembering violence that from out of the open depths makes an ignoble body, at once closed and fissured, and from out of the fragmentary an absolute morcellation by bursts, tearings, organic and anorgic explosions: the prior dissociation or decomposition that is released in the fury – the flesh heap – of writing. Whence this sentence devoid of morality: "*all writing is a spilling of guts.*"<sup>3</sup> It is this region of endless unavoidable confrontation into which Bacon, leaping, surely drags painting.

This almost-pure-abjection (but never total because always framed by circumstances which engage it in a permanent titanic and invariably failing struggle) is the 'always-already' which Bacon shows as his (our?) inescapable everyday 'condition'. He enacts painting's, and thus his sense of art's, responsibility to this charged condition, as the necessity of exploring, of trying to realise visually, some consequences of the dark movement and organic transformation-without-end which is the lot of our all too ordinary passing through and away. And, as ever, the challenge is to perform and fix this as a 'still' rendering on an essentially flat almost completely two-dimensional surface in nothing but coloured matter.

As the site of an all-change, embodiment's every regioning moment is transformational. Nothing is fixed. Every 'thing' is on the move and in the process of turning, however slowly, into something else. This 'turning-out-of-and-into', the softening-and-hardening where-when of emergence and undoing, is the 'eventing' that Bacon tries to cajole painting into exposing.

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<sup>2</sup> Painting almost exclusively from the machine-produced images routinely available, including those he generated himself in photo-booths, Bacon only rarely painted from and in front of a 'model'. For his comments on his preference for these resources see David Sylvester, 'Interviews With Francis Bacon', Thames and Hudson, London, 2007, especially 'Interview 2', p. 30 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Blanchot, 'The Infinite Conversation', University of Minnesota, London, 1993, p.296.

And as this becoming is unwitnessable (even technoscience, despite the elaboration of its representing inventing machinery, can neither ‘see’ ‘life’ nor define it’s becoming-disappearing), performing has to try to leap into the conjunction, the non-gap occupied by the ‘and’<sup>4</sup>, between emergence and undoing, and hold itself right there for painting’s course. Painting as ‘stillness’ (still-becoming still...) thus condemns itself to a necessary failure (readily admitted by Bacon and shown in his willingness to destroy his paintings), for the most it can manage in this leap is an estranged proximity *in which everything is in the balance*.

Performing here ‘situates’ itself in a desert-hole without clues and forces itself to make traces of what might just have passed, be ‘still’ passing, across that dimensionless gap to which it seeks to hold itself. And, in that holding, it is Bacon’s feelings about embodiment’s plight that congeal in and find their way out at the canvas through an eyes-hands-materials combination that is itself a singular focussing of ‘moments’ of his charged becoming. Aside from all representation (for there is no pre-existing model/source/referent external to performing to which Bacon’s coloured tracery could possibly refer let alone ‘correspond’), he topologises that which could never be fixed in and at some ‘there’. For this includes, or rather is the charged outcome of, feelings about what painting has to be (and, for him, always has been) responsible to and for. And these ‘feelings’ are not just the passing emotions that arise in the course of responding to the challenges of specific situations and relations (though they may also invoke these). Rather, they are assembled around and are marks of that defining euphoria which is his embrace of painting’s possibilities, his overwhelming affinity for what painting has been responsible for and what it might still be able to do. But, framing Bacon’s performing-problematic here within the schematic ‘simplicity’ of a one-dimensional contrast, his *euphoric* grasp of painting takes as its unavoidable challenge his similarly charged feelings for the *dysphoric* plight of embodied-becoming in the world as he now experiences it - its fate under technoscientific representation.

Bacon approaches this fate through the intensity of his attachment to the dominant motif that is a legacy of that Western painting responding to the institutional demands of Christianity - the crucifixion as image. From the very early ‘Crucifixion’ of 1933, through the triptych ‘Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion’ of 1944, this motif recurs across his oeuvre,<sup>5</sup> either directly, or indirectly through images of bodies in suspension and in ‘formal’ elements which hint at the cruciform shape. It seems that, in discovering embodiment-as-extreme-predicament in these early gests, his entire subsequent oeuvre was haunted by the demand to explore its implications for painting. If painting was to come to terms with this extremity (embodiment always on the verge of disaster) then performing had to find its own ‘spot’ from which to actively relate itself to its emergent image. Such a siting of performing would keep it as a ‘somewhere’ only just short of its ‘own’ *in extremis* (entailing and relying on the celebration of ‘chance’). This was a ‘somewhere’ that had to be ‘just short’ only so that it could still hang on to its responsibility to and desire to be absorbed by Art’s Body. For this responsibility demands of performing that it make its sole goal the bringing to its

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this gap echoes, shares something (but what...?) with, the gap between the ‘0’ and ‘1’ of digitisation.

<sup>5</sup> The 1933 painting is in a private collection and the 1944 triptych is in the Tate Gallery, London. ‘Three Studies for a Crucifixion’ (1962) is in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and is illustrated in ‘Francis Bacon’, Tate Gallery, London, 1985 (no pagin.). The recurring cruciform can be seen in many images, including, in ‘Figure with Meat’ (1954) (at the Art Institute of Chicago), and ‘Triptych Inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus’ (1981) (at Marlborough International Fine Art). Both are illustrated in the Tate Gallery publication above.

highest pitch of clarity only that which, in showing its affinity for Art, is absolutely particular to it - that which differentiates it from all other performing. This is not remotely a matter of 'style' or defining 'mannerisms' but, rather, the exposing of a relation to becoming-embodied through Art - the situating of the performer in the world through the clarity (marking its affinity with the clarity of Blanchot's 'Saying', making clear the obscurity that we are) of this difference. And this entails, as in Bacon's performing, finding ways of being thus clear about that which may be the most obscure 'thing' we 'face': becoming the unequivocal witness - acutely, honestly, and sensitively attentive - to that which is the most difficult to face up to (let alone 'see'), *our unpredictable disappearance*.

It is a virtue of this clarity, of Bacon's bravura 'touch' (a touching which can take many forms entailing multiple combinations of throwing, scraping, wiping, dragging, brushing and so on), that it allows him to show contrasting 'sides' to embodiment's almost-abjection. For the dysphoria that inevitably haunts embodiment in its extremities, is taken in very different directions through the relations to others, to equipment, to 'architectural' setting and the furniture of living, in which Bacon sites his exposures of embodiment. As in everyday life, context is all. And it seems that, for Bacon, the challenge to the event of performing is how to expose the embodiment's almost-abjection through interrupting something that is 'going on' between the embodying forms and the situation (context) in which the painting traps them. Frequently constricted by 'levels' of framing (non-Euclidean 'de-framings' within the outer limits of the paintings' already compressing straight edges), Bacon's paint further pins them down, but it is a fixing of them in transition. They become not-quite-bodies withdrawn from all conventional 'circulation' by an interruption which suspends them in-between. In this isolation the painting makes it clear that their fate is to be this fixed falling-out-of that is without origin or destination. It is thus, aided by the often bizarre accoutrements in whose 'company' Bacon sites them, that the absurdity of becoming's plight is disposed.

Out of this absurdity Bacon draws utterly distinctive strands of humour. He shows us as condemning ourselves to live within and through the most absurd trappings, each of which presents its own challenge to an embodiment at abjection's threshold. Thus in the extraordinary 'Painting 1978' (private collection)<sup>6</sup> the paint interrupts the gesture of a suspended dissolving body (already on its way 'out' of the frame's right-hand edge) 'balanced' on one foot while the other foot, grasping a key between its big and its adjacent toe, seeks to address the latter to a door-lock; the key's relation (neither clearly in nor out of the lock) to both 'body' and door is held in reserve thus rendering farcical the 'task' (all our locking and unlocking?) in which this body-beyond-help seems to be engaged. Bacon offers two lines from Eliot's 'Waste Land' as the painting's 'source', but says 'I don't know why I should have made it turn with the foot.'! In this 'don't know' lies performing's entire promise, for the absurd gesture shown and fixed in the paint as this body's predicament (*prae-dicamentum* - that which, known, said, in advance has to be faced), came from 'somewhere' entirely unpredictable and unsaid as an inversion of a gesture taken-for-granted by us and Bacon himself in previous paintings. In three paintings from 1982<sup>7</sup> the legs of an

<sup>6</sup> See Sylvester, op. cit., p. 151, for an illustration of this painting. Bacon had developed the body-key-door relation in at least two earlier paintings but more conventionally as an interrupted hand gesture (see the centre panel of 'Triptych 1971' (Collection Beyeler, Basle), op. cit., p. 153, and 'Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne 1967' (Nationalgalerie, Berlin), Tate Gallery, op. cit., no. 54.

<sup>7</sup> See 'Study of the Human Body 1982' (Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris), 'Study from the Human Body - Figure in Movement 1982' (Marlborough International, London), and 'Diptych 1982-4' - 'Study from the Human Body 1982-4' (estate of the artist at time of publication), nos. 113, 118, and 124 in Tate Gallery, op. cit.

otherwise naked ‘half-torso’ are painted wearing cricket pads that are themselves on the way to dissolution. In each painting the torso is set, standing or crouching (in one of them posed seemingly as a ‘wicket keeper’...) on a simple table that recedes sharply in to the painting’s depthless ground. It is almost as if the handless torso, putting on (somehow...) the only thing that was ‘ready-to-hand’ for either adornment, protection, or some unknowable ritual, has ‘padded up’ as a last act of helpless defiance in the face of whatever the painter might subsequently have thrown at it. Fortunately for it and us, Bacon holds it right there, showing us definitively that painting is ‘just not cricket’ but is performed precisely to find and expose the difference that Art’s Body demands of it if its idiosyncratic play, quite aside from ‘the rules of the game’, is to stand a chance of making it to the Body’s ‘otherwise’. Its only and founding ‘realism’, eschewing all representation, correspondence, analogy or resemblance (seeming to ‘be-like’), is the realism of performing itself in the face of the overwhelming (in the sense that we all succumb to them, take them for granted, just in order to get by everyday) conventions of the machinery of representation. Commenting on this ‘realism’ in the context of remarks on painting as ‘invention’, Bacon says,

‘You want something new. Not an illustrative realism but a realism that comes about through a real invention of a new way to lock reality into something completely arbitrary.’<sup>8</sup>

It is only by making for this completely arbitrary ‘something’ that performing can hope to achieve and expose its own (yet non-proper - that which is not *its* ‘property’) idiosyncratic differentiation, and thus its chance of affining itself with Art’s Body. Perhaps, then, what Bacon leaves us with is paintings that document the absolute primacy of performing to the performer quite outside any of the interests of representation, of aesthetics, or of any response other than its own to the performing situation (its plight-as-demand) itself. Whatever ‘meanings’ response may give to them in the course of their passage through culture’s multiple modes of distribution, it is how his paintings expose performing-as-embodiment. For they show in and as their performance that performing’s prime ‘matter’, its celebratory (of painting’s possibilities) trouble and fate, is the question of how to embody its own becoming - *painting as the embodiment of the question of its own becoming*. This is the null but moving ‘point’ where Bacon’s embodied-becoming gives itself up entirely to the emerging body of performing-painting. The movement is the ceaselessness of a trial that performing puts itself through to make the unprecedented matter, that is, to turn the things that matter for Bacon, *but have remained so far unseen*, into what matters for painting: his performing traces itself out as the surfacing of coloured markings whose relations (syntactic aligning) propose a not-quite-language precisely through the ‘completely arbitrary something’ constituted by, in, and as his ways of marking.

But it is a marking that, in fusing different embodyings (his ‘own’, that of the painting-performance, his figured ‘models’, and, hopefully, fragments for and of Art’s Body), clings to painting’s possibilities. It keeps painting open, makes it patent, in the face of representation by abjecting itself, by showing embodied-becoming and painting-as-performance as fused together in their bareness. He seeks to show and offer the painting-performance *as that which, in laying itself bare, allows nothing to obtrude between its embodied-performing and its marking’s singular extremity*. And he can only do this (this is the force of his compulsion-to-paint) by admitting, bringing to its surfacing, and then exposing in and as the paints he disposes, the contours of his painting’s ‘own’ almost-abjection, the felt-thought of being

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<sup>8</sup> See Sylvester, op. cit., p. 179 (my italics added).

almost-not-here, on the very verge of disappearance: painting at dissolution's edge. This 'extremity', as a fusion of the extremes of intimacy and clarity (of painting's Saying 'within' and through the syntax of his marks as the Saying of painting's disappearance), is where Bacon seeks to set down his response to the demands of painting in the face of representation's all-consuming appropriation. Art's Body demands nothing less of performing.

As the 'isms' of modernity recede and performers confront painting as a challenging site of multiple possibilities, Bacon's paintings perform, exemplify, its singular requirement: irrespective of specific 'imagery' (figuration/abstraction), a painter's coloured markings have to perform an absolute separation between themselves as an almost-syntax and every mode of marking accepted as a knowledge-convention in the everyday world, that is as a way of describing some 'thing/process' whose descriptive terms, assimilable to and as 'commonsense', can be taken for granted as bearers of more or less trusted knowledge. These modes of marking - constituting the field of representation itself - embrace the sounding and texting of ordinary language and all conventions for making and reproducing images either in isolation, 'still' or 'moving', and with or without sound or textual accompaniment. In this all-embracing context of institutionally mounted representation painting's markings are there precisely to show, to perform, that which is other than the knowledge, the commonsense, we already seem to have securely in hand. They are about, they perform, something other than the knowledges offered in descriptive conventions, for they challenge themselves to feel-think through embodiment's unending crisis by deriving marks, ways of exposing, for those matters proximate to us that we didn't realise we didn't know until the gestic unfolded them for us. The marks in their almost-syntax, as the 'outside' of description and analysis, have nothing to do with what commonsensing routinely searches for ('meaning') in its voracious need to 'make sense' of things. Performing's saltation has already sent them off and away. Painting's invented marks, as Bacon's remarks on their arbitrary character testify, cannot be assimilated to any taken-for-granted truth conventions for relating a mark to something external to it. Rather performing, in painting as in the other arts, seeks to constitute, in and as its gestic-fragment, an experienceable 'world' assimilable to no world we already 'know' (for it has no already known discrete external referent), that might just, through its being-experienced, be gathered to Art's elsewhere Body. Each gestic's hope is to become the only 'happening' of this world.

This is a direct challenge to painting in its now emergent open field aside from the dictates and constrictions arising from attachment to any '-ism-derived' manifestoes. And it situates the painting performance in a provocative self-alienating relation to the all-pervasive representational context, while simultaneously allowing it to treat representation's imaging and figuring as potential 'subject matter', that is as matters, processes and machinery to be subjected to its own transliterative de-creation. But it is also a challenge that, alongside Bacon's explorations, was being taken up within the 'visual arts' by others confronting and seeking to open out the question of the relation between 'seeing' and 'medium' itself. For, in the wake of the second world war, the 'sense' of 'medium' in the culture surrounding and embracing the arts was, as discussed earlier, not only appropriated by the emergent culture industry but was tied by it to its claims to the control of 'representation' through determining its means. Under this new, expanding and ever more technically complex management the character of 'medium-specificity', institutionalised in the tradition and into modernity as making-toward-art's supposedly primary (and thus, for aesthetic response, assumed 'proper') way of relating each performer's erotic attachment to Art's Body to their unique sensuously

thoughtful response to the experienced realities of living under the sway of representation, was cast into free-fall.

Representation's extremities are now mounted in their most public and accessible form in the surfacing of the contemporary mass media. They have become the explicit vehicle for technoscience's complexification and continuous mutation of 'appearance' through the digitised coding of everything as a knowledge object-event that can only appear (to be heard, seen, and read) as a machined simulation. Our enculturing (our slow emergence as embodied-becomings into some sense of an 'unboundaryable but possibly sharable whole') occurs through the self-decentering work of this mediating machinery in which 'medium' becomes synonymous with 'communication'. And what it communicates as its 'given', its '*data*' (those thing-processes that are, precisely, *given*, simply 'there', unquestionable...), now makes its appearance in the form of 'information' - the reductive transformation of 'sense', 'meaning', 'knowledge', into strings of coded data. As noted earlier, with the displacement of the analogue by the digital, the intervention of the coding work leaves us only with the illusion that we are in a direct unmediated relation with what has appeared or is appearing. In this process the code, as our only 'truth', is what we have to take on trust because any 'contact', a 'touching' relation, with some empirical 'origin', some 'happening' mattering matter, has been deferred forever through its transformation into a machined signal.

In the course of the media's functional and institutional integration in the zone of economic-political power (facilitated by the close ties between media-institutions and state-licensing), the programmed management of the diverse modes of communication is 'where' all boundaries between traditionally separable zones of understandable experiencing (including the distinctions between the 'personal' and the 'political', the 'public' and the 'private' space-times) are routinely and steadily dissolved. The working processes of the mass-media accomplish the hybridising of institutional spheres that, even in nascent modernity, may have been partially experienceable in their differences (economics, politics, law, education, warfare, religion, family, and the enculturing processes through which connection between spheres are sustained). The 'life' of each is 'written' through and re-constituted as codable information which facilitates their subsumption and merging as the routine content (exchangeable formulaic 'sense') within the media's generalised programming of information. The ordering and orders of the combustion-lit twenty-four-hour 'electric-day', 'brought off' commonsensically and programmatically as matters of 'value' (that is, as 'what it is worth showing/mediating') are achieved through the extraordinarily complex ties between the production and mediation of the 'information' required for programme maintenance.

Finding themselves adrift in this chaotic 'play' of waved information, and dependent for their survival like everything else on some kind of participation in this interest-driven mediation, the arts become bit players in its manic but still relatively stable info-spectacle. Representation, appearing now in the dominating figure of the medium-machine that gathers all media within its coding processes, becomes the elusively unplaceable 'means' for the channelling of life processes, and thus embodied-becoming, as codable (and thus discursively and commonsensically exchangeable) matters. Living - how it is turned out in commonsense - has to pass through coding disseminating machines which seek to fix and modify its coded possibilities according to the 'interests' (with their specific 'values') that, in capitalising the media-machine, invest in selective dimensions with consequences for the time-spaces allotted to these. Trying to cling to its 'elsewhere' project under these conditions,

performing is confronted with the unavoidable ‘problem’ (insurmountable?) of trying to preserve (hold back, withdraw, secrete, encrypt...) something of embodied-becoming’s idiosyncrasy from the now taken-for-granted coding required for entry into the programmed routines of everyday life via the media’s info-taining spectacle.

To take the question of whether its embodied-becoming might slip away from representation’s spell as performing’s defining challenge is to draw it, at the least, into a permanent tension, perhaps a necessary confrontation (however indirectly, cryptically, carried out...) with the appropriating apparatus. Accepting the challenge on behalf of Art’s Body is to face questions of whether, and if so what and how, its gests might still expose a possibility for seeing differently, an oblique glimpsing of the other-than-information. In exposing itself to the coding machinery, might it be possible to expose, simultaneously, and perhaps (paradoxically) covertly, some fragments, however minuscule, of its de-creative embodying that might just fall away in the vague direction of Art’s Body? Recalling Blanchot on the question of writing, can a performing, committed to questioning ‘seeing’, continue to hold itself to the clarity of a ‘Saying’ of embodied-becoming’s unseeable obscure? This is surely the challenge it faces when it is required to perform under the ruling authority of a representing machinery organising the appearance of everything as coded information to be read on an illuminated depthless screen (courtesy of the cursor’s back-and-forth). In the face of the cultural primacy of digitised ‘seeing’ as our current means to ‘meaning’ (as information), can making-for-art manage to interrupt this appearing and expose a potential for ‘seeing’ differently, an otherwise-seeing whose ‘wise’ still retains an audible trace of its origin in the *visual*?

### **Performing Reconstitutes ‘Medium’ and the ‘Visual’ as a Site of Multiplicity: the Challenge of Digital Composing**

I have already introduced the issue of ‘medium’s’ porous boundary and consequent contemporary fragility in the text ‘To Assemble’. Makers confronting the challenges of the machined innovations in representing processes treat ‘medium/media’ as fluid and open to recombination. Such recombination has emerged alongside the preservation of commitment to a single medium. Clearly painting was Bacon’s chosen medium (though the photograph was a frequent resource for him). Painting was his path to exposing the plight of the relation of seeing to embodied-becoming under the machinery of representation. Yet, long before the pan-global emergence (coincident with digitisation’s domination of communication) of an art-market that finally flattened out late-modernity’s waning ‘internal’ differences, the re-constitution of the ‘visual art’ gest as a possible media-multiple had become a common response of performers. Many makers responded to the challenge of holding to art in the face of an institutionalised and self-aestheticising popular culture by experimenting with multiple media-combinations. This was the emergent culture of everyday life of a modernity in continuous jerky transition. The ‘democratic’ capitalism of Western Europe and the United States, with its hiccups and local (state) variations, opened out the possibility of the now emergent productive-consumptive planet.<sup>9</sup>

As offered earlier, this now global culture is characterised by a political economy entirely dependent on the technoscientific complexification of representation for its continued

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<sup>9</sup> This productive-consumptive planet does not quite coincide yet with planet-earth itself, for there are still life-pockets that partially preserve themselves through culture and terrain from this absorptive appropriation, though obviously not from its climatic effects.

development of aestheticised consumption. It is this economic model and culture, though not necessarily its politics, that have emerged as the steadily integrating machinery, self-grounded on the drifting sands of instantly exchangeable coded information, of the current pan-global productive-consumptive drive. And because ‘the arts of modernity’ were seen in the contexts of their reception and response, crucially at the multiple points where corporate and state interests coincided, as minor contributors both to the process of general aestheticisation and to the cultural-political ‘vision’, however vague, of ‘personal identity’ and ‘citizenship’ required for the interests’ maintenance (primarily through systematising ‘education’ and ‘heritage’ (a kind of part-nationalised version of ‘collecting’ as the celebratory archiving of whatever was believed to memorialise supposedly common ‘values’ - language, history, community, science and technology, design, the popular crafts and fine arts, and so on)), they were themselves integrated into the machinery of cultural re-production. This is the hybridising ‘world’ across which performing and its gestic are now distributed.

It should hardly surprise us, given the tensions generated in the performing context, that performers’ reactions to the conflicting demands placed upon them have included a radical multiplying of materials and processes. For the, perhaps primary, conflict experienced by performers trying to make their way into and through the ‘visual arts’, is that between the sense of ‘seeing’ (otherwise...) stemming directly from the moderns’ legacy<sup>10</sup>, and the coded conventions of ‘seeing’ (and their relation to knowledge-production) that underwrite the authority and routine usage of the machinery of representation and their filtering ‘down’ into all areas of everyday life. Those performers committing themselves still to the possibility of art’s difference, of making-toward a seeing-differently, have somehow to situate themselves in between the otherwise-legacy and the designed pre-coded ‘perfect’ machines and systematic programming that constitute the now unquestioned means for delivering representation and, simultaneously, the means for ‘meaning’, the terms in and through which the relations of everyday life are turned out as a world that makes ‘common’ (more or less...) sense. To hold to something of that legacy requires performing to try to find ways of going ‘through’ and ‘out of’ representation by ‘taking on’, ‘going back through’, ‘turning inside out’, *de-creating perhaps*, the dedicated use-function of the perfect conversion machines that do representation’s work. Art’s Body calls to performers, however faintly it can be picked out amongst the all-drowning cultural white-noise, to de-commission the superbly efficient machines in ways which take them, and thus seeing, somewhere else entirely. Performing is called to multiply the multiple of representation far beyond anything its designers and programmers ever dreamed of.

In the decades following the second world war, but before the subsequent emergence of the global representing machinery facilitated by the digital-computer revolution, many of those making-for-art in the ‘visual arts’ within a still lively vision of the modern project, were undoing the sense of ‘medium’ (the painting-sculpture divide) around which modernity itself had largely cohered. Commitment to medium-singularity began to give way to an expanded field of multiple possibilities in which performing became an open site defined by specific kinds of gathering. Its gestic began to re-define the relation between embodied-becoming

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<sup>10</sup> A legacy now guaranteed, by the collusion between archived collections and the authority carried by art historical (technical) knowledge under the auspices and warrant of an academic ‘research community’, as a past (and thus now ‘dead’...) experiment. The challenge confronted by performing is the resuscitation of this corpse’s elemental processes and their adaptation to the context of performing in an utterly different world, *a world that utters itself differently*.

(specifically that of the performer but with obvious implications for responding), materials, and performers' experience of the time and context of performing itself. Recognising the intimacy, at the level of experiencing, of the synaesthetic relations between 'senses', performers wanted to hold to and draw on this intimacy while preserving the unavoidability of seeing. *This re-consideration and re-siting of modernity's emphasis on 'truth to materials' precisely as a matter of 'experiencing' frequently provoked performers to try to explore and show seeing's integration with other senses.*

Experienced as an embodied temporal process always having to make its way in response to the challenges of specific contexts, performing began to take on this synaesthetic integration in order to show the very real constraints and relations which made seeing itself both possible and lively but simultaneously complex and challenging. If Pop Art, as noted in the discussion of Warhol, had turned the focus of painting's subject matter toward the popular cultural spectacle that was beginning to provide the emerging context of representation for performing itself, other performers, experiencing this emergence as a real cultural re-formation of embodiment's very 'life' and relating (to 'everything'), were impelled to explore its implications for their own situation. Their explorations frequently bore on every aspect of gest-generation – its 'what', its 'how', and the 'where' of its possible display and reception. At the most general level it thus necessarily involved a problematising of performing's relation to institution and market, for it often resulted in the offer of gests whose idiosyncrasies were outside the frames of management, display, and exchange that had been developed around the medium-specificity of the modern project (a project that had in this key way been more or less continuous with the tradition from which it sought to distinguish itself).

These re-gatherings of the relations between performers' embodied-becoming, materials, and 'place' (the 'where' - context - of the gest's 'outing') emerged from very different interests and across the still largely occidental 'landscape' of performing. Although, in this problematising of 'medium', there were loose groupings of shifting membership such as 'Fluxus' (international) and 'Arte Povera' (Italian in its origins though extending well beyond Italy in its influence), the tight manifestoed groupings that had characterised affiliation among the pre-war moderns was signally absent. And much of this medium-dissolution was carried through by practitioners performing in relative isolation from others sharing a commonly formulated 'vision' for performing. While, across this making, the loose debts to Dada (and, through this re-memorising, recalling again Jarry's multiple project) are clear enough, especially in the re-constitution of performing's relation to materials as an open question, it is each performer's problematising of their 'own' embodied-becoming that sets forth performing itself as the defining event.

This 'event', performing 'eventing' itself, becomes the performer's 'real' topic. Performing involutes itself as a questioning of its 'own' seeing's context-bound temporal occurrence in the course of its inseparable ties to other senses. This involution entails an interruption and suspension of what is taken-for-granted in the ordinary passing of these occurrences and an attempt to sustain and suspend itself, however briefly, 'in-between'. What each gest is there to 'show', to make perceptually manifest, is the performer's entirely problematic, but always celebratory (because done for Art's Body), thought-and-feeling-full relation to the context and time of its emergence. And, precisely in not being painting or sculpture as they are institutionally understood and placed, their incisions into 'the everyday' showed the strangeness of the leaps they were making. Art's potential as 'occurrence', both for the

performer and belatedly for respondents, would always 'be' some 'where' absolutely specific. But this 'where' need not, though it still could, have any dependent relation to the institutional management of art. The relation of performing to 'place' was volatilised. Art could 'happen' anywhere provided it was for 'not-here', for art's 'over there'. The 'point' was for performing to become, to manifest itself, in-between its materials, its gestures, and the language conventions to which it made reference, thus keeping 'place' at bay or rather, perhaps, turning it into 'process' - the movement of its relating as an exposing-disposing.

This implicit 'vision' for performing began to emerge from the events and gests of Fluxus (typically multi-media and problematising the relation between embodiment and technology<sup>11</sup>), of the 'Happenings', of 'Land Art', and of the increasing exploration of different ways of relating gests to the specificity of the 'space' of their occurrence. The emergence of the 'installation', whether in or out of a conventional gallery context, re-constituted the gest as the designing and construction of a clearly bounded space to be experienced as a distinct environment according to movement through it and the feeling-out of the matters it offered for perceptive contemplation. As gest the hope is to effect the 'moment' and process of entry itself as a 'cut' that separates performing and responding from the everyday and invites the leap. In-stalling thus treats the space itself as a gest's collaborative and manipulable constituent rather than as a supposedly neutral background against which an independent object is set. As with the site-specific gest of Land Art, performing becomes space- and time-responsive according to its transformations of a specific space into a collaborative 'element', a co-performer, in the offer of a possible place from which to leap towards Art's elsewhere. This is the broader context (recalling the brief discussion of this in 'To Perform') out of which 'Performing' itself (as the performer's offering of the gest as a 'literal' performance of a time-bound event enacted in a specific space) emerged as a separate 'strand' of gests within the visual arts. From these earlier exploratory and very different forays into performing's potential for constituting gests from 'other-than-familiar-materials-and-media', an unboundaryable performing 'field' emerges that both multiplies and complicates the making and marking of individual differences.

However, while this very openness to 'what might be made to matter' in the offering of a gest may enable the idiosyncrasy of each performer's interrelating of embodiment, time, materials, and context to rule performing, under the revolutionary conditions of digitised global representation this openness also facilitates continual hybridisation and absorptive appropriation. For the field of materials and machinery from which performing now draws includes all the communicating machinery through which the programmed culture of infotainment is mediated and sustained. On whatever terms making-toward-art constitutes itself now, whether or not it draws selectively from the array of easily available machinery as constituents of its gests, it is inevitably surrounded and penetrated by this machinery as the defining condition of its cultural context. It is always already 'within', that is 'under', representation and converted into telematic information for universal distribution. If Art's Body is still to be glimpsable over-there as culture's 'other', then performing has to find ways of both interrupting this programmed absorption and of recovering, as a matter for performative revelation, the surprising obscurity still of its 'own' abject weakness.

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<sup>11</sup> This is exemplified in the enormously varied gests of Nam June Paik who not only collaborated with musicians (Cage, Stockhausen, Charlotte Moorman) and performed with others in his events, but who used video and television sets in his installations and gests long before the technology became easily and relatively accessible as consumables. He summarised his relation to technology thus: 'I make technology ridiculous.' See for example 'Nam June Paik', Hayward Gallery, London, 1988, p. 31.

Somehow, from within the very coding that transforms it into an object of cultural strength through exchange and typification (the allocation of the value-compound I noted earlier by which it is hybridised and inducted into programmed popular culture as just another accessible member), performing has to retreat into and keep as secure as it can its solitary helplessness, *its having nothing to do with power as we now routinely experience it*. In the very process of *la poesie* laying itself bare - the exposure for and to Art's Body - it has simultaneously to expose the barriers it sets up to 'meaning's' remorseless grasping. It is called to search out and accept, to preserve and show up front as essential to how it appears, the terms of its defining inscrutability and muteness. For it is precisely these dumb unreadables, outcomes of performing's transliterative rendering of the always inaccessible 'origin', that may just, through the fateful attraction of their non-plussedness, preserve the possibility of the fall out of the everyday while refusing analysis the satisfaction of its confident appropriation. Essential to a gest's questing reaching out for art's difference, they may 'occur' anywhere across a gest's surfacing as manifestations of its cata-syntactics, its constitution of undoubtable 'relations' (through the conjunction of 'matters') that resist absorption by good (common) sense. For, as the aligning of seeming unalignables, conjunctive disjunctions that effect breaks, cuts, syncopations, seizures, while remaining stubbornly aligned and in the most intimate of relations, they keep open the chance, however slight, of resisting, deferring, the gest's coded transformation into the light of absorbable meaning. And it is precisely in performing's holding to the absolute particularities of its response to its 'own' fractured syncopated journeying in the course of each gest's emergence - its passage through and across the highs, troughs, accelerations, fallings away, seizures, crack-ups, sutures and congealings - that the realities of its embodied-becoming's demented grappling with 'its' materials and matters can be preserved in and as the gest's aligning, the strangeness of its not-quite-a-syntax (the matters aligned in ways quite alien to commonsense).

But the production of the absorbable meaning that the culture now 'lives' by (the everyday context of representation that encases performing now) is operationalised under the machinery of digitised representation through pre-codings that structure, frame, and select, everything that these machines 'do'. All the mini-machines (routinely available and represented as desirable consumables for all of us) whose function is to record-copy-manipulate-transmit imageings-soundings (the everyday 'thing-events' of the life-world transformed into data and reproduced as transmittable 'information') now constitute the everyday context of representation and thus the ways we make sense of our relations. Certainly they 'enable', perhaps even 'facilitate', relating - *but only on the pre-coded terms that define each machine's functional possibilities*. What 'comes forth' and is transmitted as 'what is the case', in whatever combination of machined image-text-sound outputs, is now the 'given' (as digitally pre-coded 'data') of represented appearing, of the emergent significance - as 'meanings' - of our relation to 'world'.

As these machines have become conventional resources for performing in making-toward-art, either as supplementary 'aids' in gest-generation (the computer as both archive and manipulating-tool-box) or in their actual appearance as gest-constituents (the video monitor/screen for example), the challenge surely is *to remove them from their functional operations, to avoid or undo their perfect coding, and to get them to 'do' something else entirely*. They have to be brought into the orbit of that embodied-becoming whose only desire is to materialise something which might, at the very least, display performing's attempt to

step aside from and bring into question the machines' self-constituting reliance on technical coding and everyday meaning. And some will go further and expose elements, processes, and conjunctions that effect a scission in conventional functioning, thus opening a gap in sense the leap across which might bear respondents through art's minuscule differences toward Art's Body. All the coherent showing, appearing, telling, storying, narrating, commentating, informing - the entire seductive info-tainment apparatus of self-complexifying representation which the machines have been so brilliantly designed to constitute and serve - have to be suspended in order that the machinery can be turned into a different mode of searching for that which has not yet appeared and is not yet, and with luck will never be, matter for knowledge. It is not that performing is 'against' technoscience and its machinery, but rather that *it condemns itself to be always 'for' something else entirely*. For performers know well enough, as a founding constituent of their ready-to-hand know-how, that everything done in the name of performing is making for nothing but Art. They know too, and hope their gest can show this, that Art can only be approached by and in the particularity of what each gest embeds of their attempts to conjoin the strange erotics of their affinity for that Body with the realities of its context-defined embodied-becoming. The Body's silent but irresistible call is for an absolutely particular 'something' that, through performing's transliterative dredgings and re-callings of the unformulable, takes on the familiars of languaging *but manages to resist absorption by any such familiar language*. Trying to fall away from what we take (a) language to be and to be doing, the gest intends a specificity that, while seeming to be participating in some kind of languaging, sets itself aside from (or at least seeks to confront and problematise) all languaging's gathering and typifying modes.

Perhaps, then, what making-toward-art plights itself to show and offer now, as its response to the relation between a declining modern project and the penetrating context of extreme representation, is that, in spite of the decline, it understands and takes on the project's key legacy. For, when the things that shadowed this key legacy, and, in the course of its real ties to its passing historical 'moments' fixed it into and under their controlling rationalities, are recognised and begin to recede (such as the ideology of linear progress, the random technophilia, the gender/race/national stereotyping, the tendencies to theory-led making, the attempts to tie performing to political interests...), *then what seems to remain, what is left over, is the plight of performing's embodied-becoming*.

What is becoming increasingly explicit across performing's multiple sites is the inexorable reduction of its 'situation' to its real and absolutely tense and intense relations to the two 'demands' between which it is strung out. Over-there is the constant mute appeal of Art's Body and right here is Institutional Culture working incessantly to appropriate performing's body for its own uses. That they cannot be reconciled, and thus that many 'other things' (the 'forces' - the socio-personal desires - that drive us all in the course of just 'getting by' in everyday life) always intervene to pull performing this way and that in the course of endless efforts to resolve the tensions, defines the plight of performing in this 'in-between'. What is left, therefore, in the constricting tightness of this groundless no-place, as the movement of the embracing culture itself steadily sheds the outer veils of the modernist project, *is the would-be-performer as an almost-bare-embodied-becoming*. And it is the institutional machinery of the self-aestheticising culture, under the rule of technoscientific representation, that is effecting this very reduction and exposure through the radical displacement of the earlier 'means' and conditions around which the modern project gathered itself.

The space-time of performing is thus, as just intimated, now being realised - made all too real - as *the turning out of its 'subject-matter', its all-consuming 'theme', as nothing but its 'own' embodied-becoming-in-context*: in its defining attempt to leap away toward Art's Body, performing is challenged to search itself - its almost bare enfleshed-becoming-right-here - for whatever remnants it can find among the matters of its own intimate relating that it intuits might just be outside the frame of culture's all-absorbing languages. The 'focus', however obscure, of this involuted turning through its own plight, is on how to confront and respond to the revelation of its now patent exposure. For this 'reduced state', this almost-bareness of its embodied-becoming, is what is left to performing as the 'external attachments' of the modernist project are steadily stripped away, leaving it practically 'alone' with Art's elusively distant Body as its only and eternally ungroundable 'support', but facing the awesome powers of the all too close aestheticising institutional apparatus. And under the calculative technical interest and scrutiny of the latter *everything is simply 'there' to be made to appear, to be shown, in its absolute patency but always only through the frames and languages of the representing machinery*. Every 'thing' is treated as just 'there' (as 'the real') to be brought under and made to appear (itself laid bare) through the controlling manipulation of this machinery. In this exposed situation, having to face up to its 'own' now patent almost-bareness, performing's plight recalls the insanely paradoxical challenge set forth by Jarry as the motive for *'Pataphysique* in the course of the modern project's chaotic emergence: to search this almost-bareness, *with absolutely serious commitment to its patent absurdity*, for the rule governing exceptions where Art's differentiation of 'itself', the gest's emergence, 'is' each time the rule's only non-transferable performance *in situ*.

Perhaps, exposed now in its almost-bareness as having very little other than its embodied-becoming, performing is having to recoil upon this disclosure of the exception(al)'s ruly unruliness that marked modernity's confusing origination. In its response to and its attempt to differentiate itself from the languaging conventions that already shadow and pre-structure (encode... represent...) its potential matters and processes, the project begins to reconvene itself as a search for and invention of whatever processes enable it to render its findings transliteratively into the cata-syntax, always a one-off, of something-like-a-language - *the singular combination that slips in and out of the languages we know without ever ending up representing one recognisable translatable language*. Perhaps the most this project can hope for, in its celebration of its bareness, is the emergence of a gest that, in attracting us into itself on its own terms, could outwit however briefly (through its whatever-tactics of flight, escape, deferral, avoidance, defeat, paronomasia, and so forth), the inordinately skilful techniques of the appropriating machinery. Under the searing penetrating 'light' of techno-representation, whose waves virtually nothing can avoid (they are passing through and around you now as you read this...), this is some exposure and some plight.... Nevertheless it is a plighted exposure that, without ever occupying some 'centre' around which performing could gather itself, performers now engage in multiple ways as that through which they have to feel their way resourcefully in constituting their singular meridians. Performing thus proceeds as the tension of a strange conjunction. It constitutes itself as a process in which 'moments' of a 'subject-in-dissolution' (the performer as disappearing, self-decreasing, subject) expose themselves to the *already exposed almost-bare condition of performing (as the nothing-but of embodied-becoming)* to see if the not-much of its whatever-remains offer themselves as potential gest-resources.

Once the dominant authority of medium-singularity had been undermined by the extraordinarily diverse and geographically and culturally scattered earlier experiments with

materials, display sites, and emergent representing technologies,<sup>12</sup> performers were confronted soon enough, as citizen-consumers alongside everyone else, by the near-concurrent emergence of both the global network of electronic managed representation and the complementary mass-marketing of the vast array of post-film electronic representing (recording and playback) machinery. The ‘commonsensing’ of everyday life is set forth in this conjunction. And, as seen, performers-to-be only come towards art through this ‘commonsensing’. They begin as citizen-consumers whose activities and relations, under the techno-representation of global consumerism, *are simultaneously ‘local’ and ‘international’*; performing ‘happens’ in particular ‘wheres’, but is also immediately inducted into the nowhere-everywhere global networks of information and goods-exchange. To try to make-toward-art is to face and to share in the now global plight of embodied-becoming. This induction does not eliminate ‘cultural differences’ but it does radically relativise them, because the ‘market’ and ‘information’ exchanges in which they participate set the terms on which they are all brought into some kind of shifting relations. In the wake of the occident’s modernisms, performing’s body is now routinely internationalised, thus generating its embodied-becoming cross-nationally as a plight of almost-equivalence.

Thus, to become as a citizen-consumer (whether making-toward-art or not) is to be a paid-up (bought out?) participant, both receptor and generator-transmitter, in the machined systematics of info-imageing where ‘sense’ is routinely constituted, manipulated, exchanged and sustained. In the relative affluence of the occident everyone becomes, at some level, a head-and-hands-on user, an integral and place-dependent component whose embodying is drawn into and necessarily subservient to the operations of this machine panoply. For the latter, through the means of info-representation, make manifest and re-constitute ‘place’ - what ‘place’, ‘placing’ and ‘being placed’, and thus all our relations to ‘place’ (and thus to the ‘place’ of others) are taken to be. In this they dramatically extend, recalling Mallarmé’s response to this very issue, modernity’s undoing of ‘place’s’ solidity and givenness. What we take to have ‘taken place’ is whatever can be represented (constituted through and as the info-coded and virtual transmissions of representation) as such. As participants we have no option but to take this representing work for granted and carry on on its terms, for we recognise clearly enough that the possibility of our being able to ‘live-on’ (though not yet to ‘dwell’), to have at least a temporary ‘home’ in some ‘where’ - *anywhere* - depends upon our shared participation and belief in at least the ‘reliability’ (for all ‘practical purposes’...) of the machinery of representation.

But, in the earlier remarks concerning art’s relation to ‘place’, performing’s out-going journey ‘away-from-*here*’, its commitment to becoming uncannily un-homely, was offered as a defining constituent of its challenge to its encasing culture. To hold to and to try to bring off its difference entails the problematising of its most intimate relations, necessarily including its relation to ‘place’. To make-towards-art is precisely to confront the relation between its ‘own’ embodied-becoming and ‘place’, and thus to take on, in the full know-how that maintains its focus on Art’s over-there Body, that the latter, as otherwise to ‘what is’, does not ‘dwell’ and has no ‘place’ in the ‘right here’ of everyday life. In pursuit of this otherwise, performing condemns itself to wander in deserts of its own making only in order

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<sup>12</sup> To select a handful from the multiple possible, this diversity is clear in the very different approaches to performing’s relations to site, materials, technology, institution, and (above all) process, in the gests of Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Giuseppe Penone, Robert Smithson, Ed Kienholz, Eva Hess, Claes Oldenburg, Bruce Nauman, and Richard Long..

to keep open Art's offer of a dwelling-to-come *that cannot be 'right here'*.<sup>13</sup> Its remnants, if they survive, may indeed end up right here, but, as irreconcilables and incommensurables, they do not dwell; they may indeed be housed - *but only as troubling matters out-of-place*.

It seems, then, that the issue facing a performer trying to make-for-art now by taking on (there is no other option) elements of this routinely available machinery, is whether, in and as the course of performing, the machinery can be separated from its coded use-functions *and turned toward something else altogether*. But this requires performing to open out, expose, and exceed, the limits of its embodied-becoming by undoing the authoritative hold the machinery of representation has over it (and the rest of us...). It needs to pass through and out of this machinery to arrive at the materialised idiosyncrasy of its 'own' (though still foreign to it and thus not, as we have seen, its 'property') defining strangeness. This is the de-meaning and de-machining - *the de-menting* - towards which Art's Body summons performing now. But it is a de-machining that commits itself to searching for and trying to display (to lay bare) ways in which its embodied-becoming passes through and out of, *while having to remain absolutely roiled within, the machinery's wiles*.

In the earlier discussion of film in the context of the *gesamtkunstwerk*<sup>14</sup> I noted that the director-as-auteur was embedded in a system of industrial production-for-entertainment that inevitably compromised any project of making-toward-art. Moreover the scale and expense of the film-productive machinery seem to exclude the possibility of lone performers confronting film's potential in making-toward-art. Yet there is a long tradition of experimental film-making by independent film-makers that, distancing itself from the concerns and means of entertainment-cinema, affiliates itself closely with the questioning stance to medium's possibilities of the contemporary 'visual arts'. Indeed what gestures across this film genre explore are precisely the phenomena that commercial films, in their need to give priority to conventional narrative structures and topics, take for granted about what film can expose about the relation between 'seeing', 'image/imageing', the bodies filmed, and the material properties of film-as-medium.<sup>15</sup> Here 'seeing-otherwise' already leaps away, abandoning the uses and interests served by film (and now post-film representing technologies) in culture's everyday life, in order to affine itself with making-for-art. What 'seeing' 'does', and how it shapes embodiment's entwined relations with its always context-bound passing, become the driving concerns for these filmic- and post-filmic-explorations. In this they have already prepared the way for the dramatic expansion in the field of the visual arts enabled by the general accessibility of the digital representing machinery through reductions in scale, manipulability and cost.

Making-for-art's transliterative 'figuring' of the seeing-experience – embodied perceiving – learns from and re-figures the legacy of the earlier film-projects through exploring ways of lifting the new digital machinery out of itself (the cultural uses for which it has been developed) and turning it towards Art's otherwise Body. To take on this disjunctive-conjunctive dementing of the techno-machinery for art's sake, while simultaneously having to perform within its complexities and limitations, opens up a seductive but intensely

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<sup>13</sup> Beckett reminds us of this in his insistence that "the artist who stakes his being is from nowhere, has no kith" (quoted by David Wheatley in his Preface to his edited volume 'Samuel Beckett Poems 1930 – 1989', Faber, London, 2009, p. xviii).

<sup>14</sup> See 'To Mobilise for Dislocation'.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the very different relations to imageing, film 'syntax' and 'narrative' revealed in the films of Stan Brakhage (who eschews sound), Patrick Keiller, and Peter Greenaway's early film projects.

challenging site for performing. For the question performing cannot avoid is whether it can constitute ways of holding to and exposing art's difference in its very abjection and weakness, while risking itself to the seductive techno-power (both its virtuoso transformative speeding and the range of transformative manipulations it offers) of the programmed and programming machinery. The trouble that this questioning faces is exacerbated, of course, by the machinery's incorporation of the defining interests of those very hybridising institutions, culture's representatives, that seek to appropriate Art's Body as one of their own (the state as info-controller...).

Every representing machine enters the arena that it seeks to order and dominate in the competitive struggle for attention *through and on the terms of its own built-in rhetoric*. These have always already framed in advance the 'how' and the 'what' of the seeing, hearing, sounding, texting terms of its representing work. If, as I am suggesting, making-for-art now lives-on, sur-vives, only in its reduction to and exposure of its embodied-becoming, for this is what it is left with, *then everything performing now 'does' thus becomes a showing, an exposing, of this embodiment's plight, a plight which necessarily includes performing's character-defining penetration by the technologies of representation*. Inevitably pre-formed by the machinery's in-built rhetorics, performing's task surely has to include the attempt to undo, to set aside, the hold (not only taken-for-granted but welcomed in all routine use) these rhetorics have over it. If it is to make-toward-art as representation's 'elsewhere' it needs to find ways of depositing traces of this decreative undoing in its emerging gest. *For the machinery's rhetorics themselves are the active working out of the sources and modes of representation's power – its penetration of how embodied-becoming now experiences its relations to others and to any 'world' at all*. To expose its possible 'otherness' to the interests and routines that are embedded in and that bring off power, performing-as-poiesis has thus to distance itself from the technical virtuosity of the very thing-processes that not only have already contributed to its formation and borne it along *but also have partially seduced it*.

Its challenge in the grip of this penetration, then, is to hold to Art's 'otherwise' and to find ways of figuring (via its transliteration of its elemental sourcings) its plurality's abjection. For the very representing (recording-projecting) machines that are now so seductively available to performers are precisely those instruments of representing work that are key constituents of performing's defining abjection. In displacing film's material plasticity with the processes of electronic-digital coding this machinery seems both to offer itself to lone performers as aside from and thus free of the demands of the info-tainment industry and to re-constitute the field of the 'visual arts' as a performing space. The potential of the post-film machinery is experienced as a metamorphosis of processes of combination and transformation that enable the performer to recast performing as an alliance between vision and other senses. Reduction in handlable scale together with a dramatic increase in the recording equipment's manoeuvrability and the speed and range of its transformative functions seems to open opportunities for lone performers to generate gests aside from the interests and controls of the entertainment industry's production networks.

Tape, acting as the bridge between film and post-analogue digital modes of simultaneously recording sounds and images, facilitated the emergence of this metamorphosed performing zone within which visual imageing, while remaining a defining constituent of the emerging gests, could be fused with aural (all speech, sound effects and music) and textual (legible material) elements in gests making cross-sensual appeals and demands. Each gest's singularity, necessarily emerging in and as the complex fused interplay of its several not-

quite-syntaxes, thus distanced itself, precisely as a function of this gathered plurality, from any sense of either medium-purity or separability. In being realised through 'movement' such performing is often characterised as 'time-based'. But this is surely to propose a firmer 'ground' than such gests could or would want to claim for themselves. For what is at stake in all digitally constituted gests is the appearing-disappearing, the passing away, of imageings-soundings-textings whose only 'basis' is an electronically controlled current passing along paths whose coded interruption points generate signals transmutable into light and sound. Once we leap from the real plastic material of film, with its sequencing of discrete frames of chemically registered images of some illuminated past-present 'event', to digital processing we are confronted with nothing less (nor more) than the ungraspable virtuality of passing away 'itself'. For the digital does away with the 'actual', displacing it with imageless disappearance. If there is a 'basis' to this passing it is not the abstraction of 'time' but the very real surge of electric power – the using up through combustion of energy's force as a constant manipulable current. With film we begin and end with a collection of relatively fixed still images; with the digital (tape, disc, circuit board/memory card) there is only a charge-activatable coding. The virtue (?) of the virtual's passing away lies not in its simulation of some exterior past-present *but rather in its remarkable ability to look (superficially...) just like film: as it passes before us we can imagine that we are watching a film. It manages to persuade us of its fiction that it is no more nor less than an 'analogue' for film!*

What is at stake in making-for-art in taking on digital machinery as its constituting helpmate thus could not be more 'basic' or more elusive. For it is the very question of 'the image' itself (and thus of all imageing, all imagining) that is in question. As a performing that aligns itself with and is placed culturally within the 'visual arts', it seems to be affiliated with all performing zones (pre-modern and modern) in which 'image' is taken as a defining constituent. Its task appears to be partially bound to such affiliations. And yet under digitisation it is 'the image' which disappears. Unlike the photograph, the film-still, the painting, the drawing, the print, there is no 'image' 'behind', 'underneath' (or in any other 'place') the momentary simultaneous passing-away-conjunction of electrically illuminating charges. In this process any sense of the image occupying, being in, a particular place is abolished. All screen-held imageings and all prints derived from digital imageing cameras are code-dependent transformings. Perhaps, then, what performers' gests confront the process of performing itself with, and thus what performing has to make its way through as each gest's very constitution, are the consequences of the fact that the gest's way is precisely through the non-analogical - not-film, not-video (any longer), not-phonic-sonic-recording, not-graphic-copying. What seems to emerge out of this re-constitution is an imageing that rests on no existent; rather it subsists in and as a fused plural passing away of traces without analogy to anything (other than, perhaps, contraries or alternations that 'figure' throughout our languaging of things and ourselves (yes/no, 0/1, present/absent...)). And were it not for the fact of the digital machinery's double trouble of, firstly, in its very conception and production being indissolubly entwined with technoscience's calculative relation to becoming, and, secondly, its pre-coding of everything that passes by way of it, then this abolition of the existent might seem to sit rather well with Art's 'otherwise' placeless Body for which, likewise, there is no referent.

If the constitutive processing of digital recording machinery analogises no 'image' but only imageing-in-disappearance (and in this it seems to display some affinity with memory's, dream's, and perceptual consciousness's ways with imageing), then we might recognise that

the expanding ‘stream’ of making-for-art by way of such machinery has always already taken this on as its defining ‘theme’ and unavoidable question. If, under latter-day modernity, performing’s confrontation with technoscientific appropriation reveals that its sole subject-matter-in-question is the plight of its ‘own’ embodied-becoming, then perhaps the machinery’s virtue for performing lies in its provocation to reconvene and approach all past art as circulating endlessly around and eventually coming to rest (parlously...) on this question.

Through its combining of and impinging on several senses (indeed on the *gathering* that constitutes our sensing embodiment ‘as a whole’) and its generation of a temporally screened imageing-sounding sequence, the machinery reveals unequivocally that all figuring, all imageing, even two-dimensional ‘flat’ ‘still’ painting, drawing, printing, and photography, ‘takes up our time’. It is painting’s ‘stillness’ that comes to pass and engages us in and as our passing. Whatever-imageing is thus intimately involved with the passing-away of the embodying in which all our senses participate. By its explicit generation of modes of figuring whose fusion engages and confuses several ‘senses’ simultaneously, it reminds us that each supposedly separate medium also makes demands on, partially consumes, embodiment in the entirety of its passing. This entirety is perhaps what the American poet Charles Olson is showing us in his placing human embodiment’s supposed ‘five senses’ in their wider embracing context: how it experiences its own depth through the distribution across all its zones of proprioceptors – sensory structures in the body’s tissues that bear information about the multiple stimuli to which the body is continually subject.<sup>16</sup> If performing’s remaining ‘subject’ across the arts now is its abject bodying-forth in a dynamic relation to its touching context, then it is this proprioception-expanded becoming that offers itself to performing’s questioning, even as it experiences its penetration in depth by the wiles of representation.

As the range of performing activity associated with the visual arts expanded with the emergence of ‘happenings’, ‘events’ (Fluxus), and ‘installations’ both within and beyond the conventional gallery setting, the new technologies of recording, projection and transmission were seen as adjuncts to this expansion. For they enabled the relatively straightforward archive-oriented recording of ‘events’ for which there would otherwise be only textual and still-image documentation. Such recording has become a conventional aid for performers in documenting time- and site-specific performances; it mimes the audio-recording of jazz musicians’ occasion-specific improvisations. Of course this technical record-production-for-retrieval-and-transmission does not approach the machinery it uses as itself ‘in question’ but takes its terms of use as given. Yet, simultaneously with this conventional usage, performers across the visual arts began to recognise its potential for the mutual exploration and celebration of imageing and embodying – *the self-exposure that poiesis performs*. Performers began to confront, to try to make patent, and to withdraw from, performing’s conventions for interrelating ‘image(ing)’, ‘objects’, ‘gest-materials’, and the performer’s always context-bound embodied-becoming.

In parallel to the experimental film-makers, and in advance of but anticipating artists’ later widespread adoption of digital machines, performers began to explore the technology’s

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<sup>16</sup> See Charles Olson, ‘Proprioception’ in ‘Collected Prose’ ed. By D. Allen and B. Friedlander, University of California, London, 1997, pp. 179-199. Such proprioceptors, pointing to our neurological multiplicity, seem to plunge us into that zone-in-between marked by Stone-Richards as the focus of J. H. Prynne’s poetics. See Stone-Richards, op. cit.

potential for showing the performing body differently. Taking the ‘home movie vision’ away from its entrapment by domestic and leisure concerns, both John Baldessari’s and Bruce Nauman’s early video and film gests re-focused the equipment precisely on embodiment’s coming-and-going as a tension between the senses. Thus Nauman’s short pieces often took his own performances of compulsive repetitious and ‘ritualised’ actions, in which body and language were interrelated (voice, sound, appearance, act/event) in ways which interrupted conventions of recognition, feeling and interpretation. The recording process offered him ways of opening out disturbing disjunctions between surface appearance, experience, and sense-making. The camera was used to fix attention on and expose the ways in which embodiment-as-process occurs in and as conventionally unnoticed manifestations and responses (embodiment as aside from ‘sense’), especially as they turned around the mysterious conjunctive-disjunctions between ‘language’ (voicing/sounding) and the sensual body-in-movement in its proprioceptive totality. In this way performing challenges respondents to re-focus on the learned and remembered repertoires of sensual and interpretive image-response (conventions of representation) that it disrupts and unravels. Such intervention in the normative modes of showing and relating to embodied becoming in its sensuously challenging variety becomes a defining concern of subsequent performing’s engagement of representing machinery.

Tasking itself to ‘see differently’ it echoes the concerns of making-for-art on other sites. Thus it may be seen as a contrastive complement to the emergent dance ‘de- and re-languagings’ of, for example, Graham, Cunningham, Rainer, and Brown, which explored the moving-gesturing-body as a body-in-difference (a body making for somewhere seemingly irreconcilable with the body of everyday life worn down by and habituated to the ritual demands of work-leisure). Likewise, just as the *nouvelle vague* in film explored and dissolved the narrative conventions of the commercial cinema’s action-imageing productions (Godard’s re-figuring and re-rhythming of what a ‘movie’ can be and do – how and what it might ‘move’ us towards - through his interruptive juxtapositioning of imageing, texting, and sounding), so does much use of video and digital machinery in the visual arts both suspend story-syntax and, through its precise framing of and compulsive attention to the specifics of context-bound gestures, expose the strangeness of embodying’s entwinement with place. It pays precise but playfully acute attention to just those things embodying declares about itself (the ‘all-together’ of its leaps/tics/shifts/stammerings/murmurings - , ...) that we either cannot see or turn away from in the course of our immersion in the seeing-feeling interests and demands that bear us through everyday life. The embodiment we thought we knew well enough (through both our habitual response-patterns, its routine representation and the typifying knowledges of technoscience) is re-figured in its insistent strangeness in gests whose poetisings hope to draw us into their probing and out-stretchings of its intimacies.

If it is ‘true’ to its own ‘inmost’, performing’s de-familiarising pitches itself and, with luck, us, into the gap between what we thought we knew we could rely on through memory and experience and the otherwise-becoming that is art’s invitation. Used on its own (rather than as one component in a cross-media installation) either in film-projection or as an already fused media combination for screen-constituted audio-visual gests, the machinery, through the computer’s image-sound manipulability, facilitates an open diversity of approaches. Across the plurality of performers seeking to draw this machinery toward art through their idiosyncratic responses to it, the range of questioning experiment can be seen in the very different gests of, for example, Francis Alys, Tacita Dean (committed to analogue film), Christian Marclay, and Bill Viola. The defining constant that gathers such performers

together is the screen as site of gest exposure. And it is precisely the terms setting up what can occur at and as this screening (as a technical supposed 'facility') that fix the challenge performing faces in trying to make for art's 'elsewhere' through a network of machinery designed and operationalised for quite other ends. For if, as I have been proposing, the unavoidable question for performing's engagement of the expanding array of digital machinery is the latter's displacement of 'the visual image' through operations constructing 'imageing' as a strange proprioceptive compounding without either base or residue (other than a pre-coding), then the 'crisis' this displacement marks is the dissolution of 'image' itself. What we took, in both art and culture, to be the (possible) identity of 'the visual image' - its particularity as an eyes-specific experience-event - gives way to the groundless multiple of an 'imageing' that only occurs (without ever taking place...) as a screening: the electronic transfusing of light-heat into a coding whose stored reactivation can generate at and from the screen waves of seeable, hearable, readable, body-responsive imageing.

Digital screening, as nothing but the appearing-disappearing (its and our passing through and away) of 'information', is here defined as much by what it screens out as what the coding has filtered into the screen. None of the terms used to gather gests generated through this machinery seem to take us towards what might be specific to their composing performing. Certainly the now overtaken technologies (film, videotape, all forms of disc) that rely on some form of mechanical rotation (reeling, spooling, spinning) are rooted in eighteenth-nineteenth century conceptions of machine-power in which the electrical energy is produced in order to ensure that their wheels/spindles/axes can be turned at fixed revolutions. Whereas under the computing model the energy charging the digital machinery passes through and away by way of coded relays along lines/waves whose very passing-through constitutes the imageing. There is nothing outside the bearing, the vectoring, along the coded relays. Terms such as 'time-based' gests or 'the moving image' no longer take us towards the specificity of the relation between the plural imageing and its machined-screened delivery. All performing occurs 'in' 'time', though the latter, being an ontological construct without a referent other than perhaps our passing away, can hardly be a 'ground' or 'basis' on which we (or performing) can rest. And, under digitisation, there is no longer a row of discrete images whose activation generates a sequence that might be gathered as the 'moving image'; there is only the appearing-disappearing of an imageing-without-images; even where an image appears to be fixed, held, stopped as such, in its tracks, we know that this is a 'virtual' image whose apparent fixture is the work of coded instructions ensuring that the electrical current is maintained at specific junctures in the network relay.<sup>17</sup>

This is no longer just different media working, moving, in harmonious combination (for example, synchronised film and sound), but an operation enabling the reconstitution of its gathered signals as a gest whose constructive operations transcend and dissolve boundaries between media through a common process of signal-storage-and-retrieval. The gest's 'way out', its appearing-disappearing, occurs as nothing but a screening. And, in the very

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<sup>17</sup> As 'imageing' (rather than a succession of discrete images), the 'thingness' of the digital composition's gest occurs in its screened passing (away). Thus Olson's proposal, that we follow Linnaeus's botanical re-definition of the 'imago' (the Latin word from which all our 'image' etymology derives) to show the poem-as-image as a 'thing' rather than as a 'symbol', displaces the conventional emphasis on the visuality of a singular image. He quotes Linnaeus's use of 'imago' as:

'an insect in its final adult, sexually mature, and usually winged, state.' The poem, the art gest, would thus be that thing that has reached its state of perfection, the coming to fulfilment of its developmental processes of mutation and maturation. See Olson, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

specificity of this mode of passing, it may be that performing making-for-Art's-Body by way of such digital composition is raising again for us, but in unfamiliar ways, the always inescapable question of performing's current plight as a 's' *expose* that can no longer 's' *impose*. Indeed it may be that performing itself, in embracing the digital, has not yet found ways of engaging what might be 'going on' in its practical confrontation of its own originary abjection with its 'other' - the current form of the energy-power combine that now 'originates', utterly routinely without surcease, the everyday life of 'our' global culture... representation-as-information. Screening lives, sur-vives, courtesy of its tacit acceptance of this debt. It condemns itself to 'place' its 's' *expose* - its celebratory search for the particularity of its originating abjection - entirely under the control of that non-simple complex of powering which recedes from all attempts to find, fix, and know it. To screen-for-art now is to accept that performing's gest, the attempt to make patent its inmost in its absolute particularity, can only appear on the terms and through the means of its outmost - powering's fuelled work as techno-representation. Perhaps it is the living-through of this project-defining paradox that is the primary 'display' of every screening occasion.

But perhaps, too, the tension of this defining paradox marking the strange plural 'display' performed in digital composing - its proprioceptive appeal and address to the sensuous multiple of embodied-becoming while indebted to power's means - opens up the question of performing's relation to this multiple in new ways. It is no longer, for performing, a question of combining media to generate a *gesamtkunstwerk* (Wagner!), but rather of how the hybrid multiple of digital composition is to constitute its appeal to the manyness of sensing in terms that enact its otherness to representation (Barney!). This is to re-open the question of how making-for-art might find and make its way through this manyness while holding to Art's difference, the very difference whose seizure brought it to Art's Body in the first place. For digital composition necessarily accomplishes its combined appeals to a range of senses through its 'hands-on' relation to the singular means of digital technology; all sensings thus emerge from and thus share a common constructive procedure. And this bears precisely on the challenge which gests-for-art have always posed, though differently, to both performing and response: how apparently singular senses (and thus the medium-specific performing that explores their possibilities for art) impinge on and can be brought into active combination with each other in the course of a gest's appealing offer. Does digital composition open in new ways onto the question of the senses' 'togetherness'?

In his exploration of the relation between 'art', 'laughter', and 'presence', Jean-Luc Nancy, although not considering performing's relation to the machinery of representation, unfolds this matter of 'the sharing (*partage*) of the senses'.<sup>18</sup> He notes that the 'arts cannot be represented one by way of another' but that they 'never cease to pass into each other, to present themselves in place of one another'. The arts 'are' their presences as 'multiple singularities' (the gests in their particularity) and these singularities are 'none other than those of the senses, and of language'.<sup>19</sup> Indeed their 'transcendental condition' is this 'material *fact*':

'that there are several senses and not one common sense, and that there is not a community of sense between the senses and language.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Birth to Presence', Stanford University, Stanford, 1993, especially pp.389-391.

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., p.389.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Yet there are modes of ‘sharing’ of the senses, performing as mutual intrication and a becoming-together of the several, in which each may spill over into and complement others. And this is invariably in spite and in the face of analytical consciousness’s urge to separate and typify them according to what seems to define each’s ‘purity’. This surely is the question that performing through digital composition, always already unavoidably immersed in the multiple of its embodied-becoming, is necessarily responding to in its gests: how the senses are related to each other. Nancy puts it unequivocally:

‘Is there a purity of each sense, or would there be no vision without a trace of touch, no touch without a trace of taste, and so on... *But then: how are the senses shared with regard to art?*’<sup>21</sup>

It seems that the singular fused energy-code dynamic, through which digital composing precipitates its screened visual-aural gests (thus emanating the several-as-one), seeks to enact, and thus disclose, this sharing as its defining accomplishment. Each gest’s ‘presencing’ - the passing-through (and away) of its simultaneous appearing-disappearing - is constituted to try to offer, to hold to, a particularity whose promise (plight) as art rests on collapsing the boundaries between the senses through its fusion of the several. But in order to make-for-art it has to find ways of drawing the energy-code out (and thus away from the conventions and demands of techno-representation) through a cata-syntactics. Whatever idiosyncratic syncopated continuity each gest, in its particularity, offers, its hoped-for ‘point’ in making toward art is to try to reveal its fused disappearing as an otherwise-sharing. It has to persuade, to cajole, its screening to enact through its ‘materials’ (energy as coded-light-heat) a sharing of ‘the senses’ that is other to the dominance of the very energised power to which, in its passage through the latter’s representing machinery, it nevertheless owes its very becoming. For, if making-for-art defines its project, the goal of its sensual cata-syntaxing, as a ‘s’*expose*’ of a different way of embracing sharing, then it has to seek endlessly to cut itself adrift from whatever binds it to the culture’s conventions for exercising and maintaining power. *In and as the ‘nothing-but’ of its passing-away* it has to try to enact its separation from the rule of techno-representation’s world of ‘meaning’. Yet the site of its defining mode of appearing and offer – the electronic screening - is precisely the now near-universal process through which ‘meaning’ (commonsense) has always already been pre-ordered and hierarchically controlled. It is where powering works to continually conceal itself.

In living-on as this tension the digital composer’s only hope in casting off towards Art’s-elsewhere-Body is thus to seek to constitute gests whose fused sensings might just effect a peculiar kind of rift. In their screening, their ‘presence’ as ungraspable disappearance, performing’s fused gests will hope to display sharing itself as the coming together, the intimate intrication, of the senses’ ‘languages’ in their common project of becoming-otherwise. *Their ‘inmost’ is this bringing the languages of embodiment together as the intimacy of an all-together sharing.* Yet they perform this as their tragic moment, the irresolvable tension, of their laughter in the face of the powering that, right there, is the site of their very possibility. Knowing (as its defining *witz* - its know-how) that all such performing begins and ends in power’s grasp and at its disposal, performing’s tragedy is that the glimpse of sharing itself that it may offer in its slightest of rifts, is likely to be very short-lived, indeed may last no longer than the instants of the latter’s passing-away. Perhaps this is the most and least to which it can continue to plight itself.

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<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. p. 390 (italics added).

If digitisation now sets the scene for, is the defining circumstance of, the way the arts now come to pass, then none of them, supposedly visual or otherwise, can escape the effects of its entry into and shaping of their performance. In leaping off and away towards the difference from where Art's Body summons performing, the latter's emergent gestures attempt, however indirectly they transliterate and offer this, to take on and make patent their relation to their most intimate, the inmost of their emergence as nothing but this context-immersed embodiment.<sup>22</sup> The following projects, differently open to the possibilities of transliterating sensing's multiple, are gathered culturally of materials and processes they enact, diversely, the sharing of sensing's multiple that performing, through its confrontation with digitisation, has begun to reveal as art's mode of appearing now. They reveal the performer-towards-art to be, increasingly explicitly and irrespective of medium, a *partageur* - one who seeks to share out the performance between the senses in the hope of achieving a fusion that can no longer be gathered under a definable sense of 'medium'. And each of them, in their diverse ways of responding to this challenge, turns compulsively around the extremity of embodiment's plight under the rule of techno-representation and its defining digital machinery.

### **Mona Hatoum's 'Corps étranger'**

In her installation '*Corps étranger*'<sup>23</sup> Mona Hatoum explores specific aspects of the tensions of living-on as this multiply manifest embodiment through the conjunction and intertwining of several bodies. A white cylindrical shell encloses a small private viewing and listening area cut off from the already enclosing gallery space. The would-be respondent enters the enclosure, stands before a circular video screen set into the floor and looks down to view an enlarged playback of a 'journey' through some of the micro-camera-accessible spaces of the performer's own body. In the making of the video element Hatoum collaborated with a medical specialist who, partially following her verbal directions (she was watching the camera's journey 'live' on an accompanying monitor), took the endoscopic camera on a tube tour with twists, turns, and diversions. The apparent primacy of the visual journey is modified synaesthetically by the accompaniment of a 'soundtrack' conjoining the sounds of breathing and a beating heart. Of the various bodies implied in the gesture two, at least, are offered, perhaps as the defining tension of the installation, in the punning title. For, of the possible bodies intimated and implicated in and through the installation (and thus witnessable by respondents), it is the performer's (and by implication your, my, and everyone's) body that is shown as a dark and largely unknown (certainly a stranger (*étranger*) to almost all of us) continent - undoubtedly a still 'foreign' body. But, simultaneously, it is the camera itself, as a research and diagnostic probe, that, in carrying out its tracking work as the representative of

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<sup>22</sup> A particular event may mark a nascent realisation that embodied-becoming's abjection would become the defining matter, the emergent motif, for performing-to-come across the contemporary arts. Joseph Beuys, exhausted and frozen after the plane in which he was a radio operator had been downed, described his rescue by Tatar nomads and their twelve-day resuscitation of him through wrapping him in felt and fat. The life-threatening extremity of this exposure and revivification became a theme to which he returned many times across the extraordinary variety of his gestures (installations, vitrines, performances, blackboard demonstrations, drawings, and his drawing of art into the purview of the emerging green movement). His subsequent development and self-presentation of making-toward-art as a kind of shamanism recurs repeatedly on this theme of bare-becoming. And this nothing-but of exposure is steadily opened out by others as performing's response to institutional modernity's decline. Robert Morris, however, noting that Luftwaffe archives record a corporal Beuys being brought to hospital 'one half hour after the accident', remarks Beuys' skilful 'media manipulation' as a feature of his self-presentation! See Morris, 'Have I Reasons', Duke University Press, London, 2008, pp. 40, and 129-30.

<sup>23</sup> Mona Hatoum, '*Corps étranger*', Tate Gallery, 1994.

the body of medical technology, also performs as the title's 'foreign body', the invader (techno-parasite) in the host's (artist's) almost abject body. The 'internal' movements of these bodies thus seem to animate and gesture towards a further necessarily absent body (beyond the shell whose enclosure cuts off the gest itself as a fragment of some wider unknowable body) - Art's Body itself. And, all too near, but even more invisible and elusive perhaps, is the all-enclosing body of the facilitator within whose bowels Hatoum's shell-enclosure is itself enclosed, the State-as-Body in the very real structure of its representative, the Tate (whose name, despite the sweetness of its seemingly taste-friendly origins, places itself palindromically). Through borrowing the resources of technoscience, while partially suspending its interests, to facilitate her partial exposure of elements of her 'own' embodied-becoming (and thus of the post-pleistocenian body shared by all of us - the body that, in spite of the inordinate leaps of technoscience and capital, remains stubbornly pleistocenian), Hatoum's installation thus opens onto the complex power-play on which the fate of all our bodies continues to hang in the balance.

Indeed it may be that this body's fate is pointed to in the very way in which Hatoum invites us to follow the camera's journey. For, with the circular monitor set into the floor, the respondent is, while rooted to the spot (earth-bound?), required to look down into a seemingly bottomless tunnel whose darkness, falling away beyond the camera's limited light, is truly abyssal. And we have appreciated, from Virgil (the descent into Avernus) to Lewis Carroll (Alice's tumble in pursuit of the White Rabbit), that while the journey down and out (of this world) may seem to be easy enough, it is what one does 'down there' and on the return journey (recalling Orpheus...) that, as performing knows only too well, presents the real challenge. Perhaps it is in this implied acknowledgment of the pleistocenian body's being beyond our comprehension, its literal ungraspability as it falls down and away below us into a different interiority, that the installation draws us towards art's difference.<sup>24</sup>

While colluding with the literal brilliance of technoscience's combustion-enabled probe *but turning aside from its entire reason for being - the adaptation without end of 'means' to specific use-functions* - the installation offers itself precisely as a de-meaning that begins to undo technoscience's routine hold over us. By seeking to embody, to expose, an experiencing that is other-than-knowledge-and-use, the gest makes for a very specific but, as we have seen, eternally elusive end, Art's not-yet Body. Within the shell and faced by the vertiginous journeying down, the respondent's limited privacy is interrupted by the surround sound of breath and pulse. In the confusion and disarray of this virtual descent the respondent is drawn on as a tentative explorer into and through the circular and enlarged tube(s) and away from all usage and its values. In contrast to the conventions of medical diagnosis and curative therapies (the discoveries of pathological sites for specialist intervention and body-modification), the gest performs a different operation.

Turning aside from the curative-therapeutic model of investigation, it makes toward a paradoxical end of open-endedness that, while seeming to hint vaguely at some kind of 'self-cure', turns rather through a 'self-curiosity' that tries to confront its 'own' interiority. But this

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<sup>24</sup> A contrasting sense of this vertiginous abyssal sliding-within is perhaps offered in Jasper Johns' print 'Voice' (1967). Of this necessarily two-dimensional and still image Robert Morris suggests that 'it feels like a throat/voice. It is not a representation but a kind of subjective mapping of the body's interior...'. It is as if we 'have passed into the interior passages of the vocal chamber itself where we find ourselves within the very stream and origin of the linguistic.' See Robert Morris, op. cit., 237. The lithograph Morris discusses is shown on p. 238 (op. cit.). It is very different from the other pieces Johns made under the title 'Voice'.

is no longer the interiority of consciousness-unconsciousness, of memory, of dream, of languaging, of thoughtfulness, it is rather the absolute 'without' of all these already partially familiar zones of experiencing. It is the interiority of an ever-infolding self-concealing oblivion that we only try to make something of, consciously respond to, when the oblivion is interrupted, syncopated, and disturbed (hunger-thirst, pain-pleasure, all the 'emotions' our languaging despairingly fences with). We are taken into that which for almost all our 'self-conscious becoming' we can neither see, hear, feel, taste, or smell (having lost now, as belated pleistocenians, the likely nasal acuity of our creaturely predecessors) - that which is closest to 'us' and is what becomes us, fits us, absolutely (it 'is' our becoming) and yet which remains the most foreign: the bio-chemical-electronic charging process(es) that keeps us going (on, until...). And '*Corps étranger*' offers us this 'hidden world' as seemingly now accessible, exposable even, while preserving simultaneously its eternal strangeness, its unspeakability. We see all too clearly that even technoscience's brilliant enlightening work leaves us, because of the defining narrowness of both its interests and its literal depth-of-field, all too soon completely in the dark. By following and exposing performing's way through itself toward Art's Body the gest invents its idiosyncratic partial withdrawal from the grip of the technoscientific machinations in which we are routinely, and typically unquestioningly, held.

But it is a withdrawal that, in the very process - the moving journey - of making-toward-art and seducing us with the celebratory sight of the wonders of our 'own' beyond (our enfolding inmost which remains necessarily eternally out of our reach), confronts us also with what may be most troubling, both for our 'own' embodied- becoming and for the leap toward Art's Body. For it draws us toward and into our and art's (in the figure of Art's receding Body) disappearance. Not only are we lost to ourselves amongst the coursing liquids and claustrophobic muscled tunnels that maintain these alien folds in their endless (life-long) moving alienness, but, looking down into embodiment's seemingly subterranean 'world', we realise soon enough that the visible darkness just beyond the span of the camera's cold light is total and endless. Beyond this light there is nothing but recession, for the subterranean plunge has no bottom. The camera's spiralling journey has to come to an end by its withdrawal from the performing body. But this occurs only after it has disclosed the withdrawal of both embodied-becoming and Art's Body from any grasp to which we might aspire. As with Josephine's voice, they remain over there, 'seeable-hearable' only as the 'otherwise' that is all that Art's Body can amount to.

And yet in '*Corps étranger*' this making patent of performing's relation to disappearance, far from provoking an unredeemable melancholia, effects a celebration of that self-curiosity that comes to characterise performing's relation to embodied-becoming in the course of its discovery of the latter as permanent movement. When it confronts its 'own' embodied-becoming in the 'cause' of art, performing faces its defining 'reality' and subsequent demand: to do idiosyncratic justice to its unending movement and to try to match this to the ceaseless movement of Art's Body 'away-from-here'. Performing's only possible response is to keep moving through the strangeness of itself-in-movement. And, as we have seen, being thus on the move casts it 'over there' in a desert of one, an unfixable no-place whose tense is a permanent infinitive. Perhaps this infinitive is implicit in the '*étranger*' of the gest's title whose very appearance seems to invite its homophonic transformation from adjective to verb infinitive - to 'estranger', with its echo of Russian Formalism's rule for art's interruptive way.

### Orlan : Stelarc

If Hatoum sidles up to technoscientific representation and diverts something of its bravura enlightening into re-figuring embodied-becoming in ways that take it toward art rather than calculative knowledge, other performers take on the double challenge of suspending the calculative by passing through it to expose embodiment both more directly and more obliquely. In the contrasting gests of Orlan and Stelarc embodied-becoming itself is literally exposed (in contrast to being 'figured' in process in Hatoum's installation<sup>25</sup>) in order that something else can be disclosed about its, and thus performing's, relation to the cultural uses of technoscience. The possibility of such disclosure - art's leap towards an otherwise - turns on the 'tests' and the real transformations (effected through their collaboration with the machinery of technoscience) to which they subject their bodies. And, for both of them, these 'tests' entail bringing into question, dissolving, in and as the course of performing itself, the cultural conventions (invariably loaded with ethical-political dimensions) which are routinely used to demarcate 'the body' from everything else and to maintain a supposedly 'clear' and shared sense of its 'borders', properties and potential.

Although the concerns and leaps of their performing are very different, both effect an at the least partial dissolution of embodied-becoming's boundaries with a view to disclosing its now seemingly open possibilities. What they variously offer are gests that seem to have to veer away from culture by making-toward-art because there are no other conventional cultural sites where such questions (joyfully troubling, perhaps...) can be materially exposed, figured or figured out. It is as if they have chosen to make-toward-art because that is the only way open to them of making explicit, exposing, that which, *while remaining absolutely implicit in its routine use and work*, may define technoscience's 'essence' and 'end' - its relation (through the design and application of its knowledges) to 'our' embodiment. As performers, both are engaged in emergent but unfinishable exploratory re-constitutions, confident but necessarily halting probes, of what might 'count' as 'the (still human?) body' in relation to its 'world(s)'. And unlike earlier de- and re-figurings under the auspices of art (Leonardo, Goya, Jarry, Picasso/Braque, through post-surrealist affiliates (Bellmer, Matta), Giacometti, Golub, for example), and quite apart from the popular cultural entertainments in fiction and cinema gatherable around 'science fiction', the bodies-in-change are figured not through performing's conventional materials but in and as the performers' 'own' bodies. Here the project of making-toward-art has to go outside the matters, materials and know-how that conventionally define performing's 'sites', and offer its embodied-becoming to and place its trust in, representatives of technoscience itself *and thus of the world of work*.

For the gests of Orlan and Stelarc are defined by and absolutely dependent upon extensive collaboration with professionals skilled in the application of transforming machines and matters to body-work. Transformation becomes, of necessity, a joint 'operation' (sic...) in which all the defining reconstituting activities have to be carried out by others as matters of work, that is as team-work dedicated to bringing off specific technically defined operations. And precisely because such operational activity has to remain as the 'work' that it is (even though, in these projects, it seemingly affiliates itself to, recalling the earlier discussion of art's relation to work, art-as-not-work) in order to 'bring off' the performers' projects, this

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<sup>25</sup> Of course there are various modes of 'picturing' that are partial contributors to the oeuvres of Orlan and Stelarc; many of them utilise the machinery of representation to document aspects and moments of their gests. However the concern here is with the literal transformations to which they subject 'their' embodied-becoming in the course of performing-toward-art, and thus on the latter's behalf. It is through these transformations that performing's body becomes a potential surrogate for Art's Body.

collaborative input remains as work-beyond-art that invades the emergent gest which in its turn is absolutely dependent upon it; for it is 'work' that is quite beyond the performer. As such it marks the projects from within as an essential but hybridising constituent. It exemplifies, this time as a paradoxical matter of explicit tactic, how the 'outside' (culture - the 'foreign body'...) gets to be 'inside' the gest (Art's-Body-to-come), precisely the thing that modernity's making-toward-art and its afterwards, as the search for 'difference' that will position it as nothing but art, have sought to avoid. Despite its seeming affinity with art (through being drawn towards it in the course of the performers' developing concerns), this work is only partially controllable, both in its detail and its consequences, by the performers in receipt of its effects. This strange collusion with the world of work and with the technical-calculative thus defines such performing as a double transformation. For not only does the performer's embodied-becoming undergo change (hybridisation), but the performance, as the leaping journey supposedly making-toward-art, has to make this leap (in order to get 'out' of culture) through a perverse leap-backwards, into and through the very machinery that defines the culture of calculative representation. In this detour through culture performing hybridises itself.

Being thus simultaneously both centrifugal and centripetal in relation to culture, these performers' embodied-becoming strands itself, strings itself out, in-between different sites - the painfully real site of performing, the always unlocatable site of Art's distant Body, and the surrounding invading site where culture's institutional body carries out its hi-technical operations. Borne along in and as this in-between, performing necessarily has to face the challenge to its embodied-becoming in a state of explicit abjection (the operating table as studio...). Yet, caught in this no-space it still hopes that it can turn work (that of its skilled collaborators) out of itself on behalf of Art's Body and, in the process, hold something back for the latter, while being utterly dependent for its real becoming - its literal appearance - upon the specialist knowledge and technical work of these collaborators. It seems, then, that through the two performers' 'contract' (trusting reliance) with their collaborators, their gests make absolutely explicit (perhaps even turning this inadvertently into a prominent 'theme') what for the vast majority of contemporary gests across the arts typically remains implicit, unstated, and invariably unaddressed: the necessary reliance on technical and institutional interests and expertise in both the forming of performing itself and the induction of its gests into and journeyings through culture's representing machinery. Constituted in and as its living-through of this tension, performing experiences the very real pains of an embodied-becoming-for-art for which it is itself responsible. And in so doing it exposes its 'own' (and thus perhaps 'our') unavoidable epochal plight.

Unsurprisingly, given what they submit embodied-becoming to in the course of their performing, Orlan and Stelarc seem to share an optimistic sense of its (and thus art's) fate under technoscientific representation. But, in terms of their construction of the performer as a subject-in-transformation, their projects move in very different directions and manifest different concerns about this subject (including, perhaps, whether it still remains the same 'subject' that we believe we, broadly, 'know' and trust in everyday life). If Stelarc offers us a de- and re-created subject, a differently embodied-becoming, whose 'boundaries' he seeks to extend 'outwards', Orlan's performing journey turns 'inwards' in order to explore and reveal the way that 'appearance', the 'look' of the surfacing of things (precisely that which, as the life of the eyes, has consumed performing in the 'visual arts' since their emergence) *is absolutely dependent upon what goes on beneath the surface*. Her gests thus re-surface embodied-becoming not just to change how it appears (its surfacing) but try to expose aspects

of the relation between surface appearance and the largely invisible depths below. And this is done in order to provoke, stimulate, the possibility of internal changes in what we 'feel' about embodied-becoming's 'look', about the erotics of 'appearance' itself in a culture defined by and sustained in the dynamic play of the surface-appearance of hyper-aestheticised commodities. For the latter's imaged seductiveness is being constructively constituted through their association with and attachment to body parts and processes charged by the exaggerated enhancement of sexual differences (the becoming-sexualised of all modes of appearing). In this process of endless representation it is precisely surfaces and surfacing that bear the brunt of the re-fashioning that is its point.

In taking the relation between the surfacing of her 'own' (perhaps it ceases to be her 'own' when it is appropriated by her collaborators in the course of their work) embodied-becoming and what lies beneath it as the motif for her performing Orlan's gests interrupt the smooth cultural staging and placing of this becoming-sexualised. For her, performing-toward-art becomes a site-in-between whose affinity is not with the culture's image-machine but rather with Art's-otherwise-Body - by rehearsing in multiple ways her freedom to become-other through reconstituting her surfacing she simultaneously reveals the extremity to which woman's embodying has been brought in a culture under the sway of designed appearances. She exposes the ways in which that embodying, in seeming to place itself under the rule of aestheticisation (the industrial manufacture of pure surfaces), has to abject itself before the cutting, inserting, withdrawing, and suturing operations of a very different mode of becoming - the technical-calculative. It is thus through making-toward-art's otherness that she opens onto the troubling conjuncture between subjectivity and hyper-sexualised appearance. Perhaps the possibilities of art's 'otherwise' reveal themselves in the specific ways that the surfaces she creates with her collaborators dissociate themselves from everyday conventions for 'enhancing' sexual attraction. Invariably the estrangement of these surfaces arises from what has been done in the course of performing's 'inward' journey beneath them to change how they appear. In opening up the regions beneath the surface the literal cuts effected on performing's embodied-becoming explicitly make patent the question of 'borders', of 'edges' (specifically, of 'the body' and thus of art's relation to it), thereby confronting potential respondents too with their relation to this question.

If, as I have argued throughout, making-toward-art under modernity and its afterwards has sought that which is 'otherwise' to the boundary-constituting knowledge-conventions that organize everyday living, the swarm that 'is' Art's Body is a region without borders. And performing is thus necessarily an activity of de-bordering, of finding and slicing through convention's edges to make-toward an exposable 'over-there'. Orlan's project focuses art's de-bordering on embodying by making her body that which undergoes the interruption of embodying's taken-for-granted borders. But the cuts and insertions that disrupt and re-model her body's real surfaces perform a double challenge. For they simultaneously cut through and challenge the conventions both about adornment (aestheticisation of the body under the rule of (re-)fashioning) and about what the human body 'is' (its 'limits' - borders - and what should and should not be done to and with them). Art's plight is revealed, for her, as a task of exposing the embodiment its performers share with everyone else as that which, under calculative aestheticisation, is permanently at risk. For 'the body' has become the object-as-model for the two conjoined 'drives' (technoscience and aestheticisation as 'forces of production' ...?), that must undergo endless re-constitution both 'without' and 'within'.

In her geste Orlan holds ‘without’ and ‘within’ in an unavoidable tension through moving back and forth across the ‘border’ (skin) which holds them apart and together. This skin is the real border whose outer surfacing is where the cultural requisite of adornment appears, and it is this which she puts to the test in testing out, putting in suspension through *caesurae*, her own limits. In the cutting of her own skin she reveals the ‘skin’ of culture beneath and on the inside of which the aestheticising institutions controlling the arts’ appearance, their surfacing, seek to pin art. And while Orlan’s very-late-modern project may seem to tie itself to the work of contemporary technoscience’s representation of ‘life’, it actually casts us back to the very border-threatening interventions that marked the modern arts’ halting and fragmented emergence. Specifically it re-memembers, silently invokes, the already noted text (the *Lettre du Voyant*<sup>26</sup>) by Orlan’s fellow-countryman - Rimbaud.

There is a particular detail, a result of specific cutting and subcutaneous insertion operations by her technical collaborators, that figures, being retained in the imagery, across several of Orlan’s later projects. It arcs back unerringly to Rimbaud’s self-prescriptive proposals for the ‘poetic enterprise’, for what the would-be artist had to take on in order to become ‘absolutely modern’. Rimbaud proposes that the ‘first study’ for she/he who would become a ‘poet’ is their ‘own self-knowledge, entire.’ For what the poet has to know and to ‘cultivate’ is the ‘soul’. However this cultivation requires something both specific and strange:

‘But it is a matter of making the soul monstrous; in the fashion of *comprachicos*, so! Imagine a man implanting and cultivating warts on his face...’<sup>27</sup>

In this ‘reasoned *deranging of all the senses*’ the poet ‘exhausts in himself all the poisons, to keep only their quintessences. Unutterable torture in which he needs all his faith, all his superhuman strength’, and thus becomes ‘the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed one - and the supreme Savant - For he arrives at the *unknown!*’ And having arrived at and seen ‘the unknown’ through his ‘visions’, Rimbaud writes, ‘Let him die in his leaping through unheard-of and unnameable things; other horrible workers will come; they will begin on the horizons where the other collapsed.’<sup>28</sup> Self-knowledge thus entails a sensual deranging via a *leaping* involving, amongst other things, the pain of the invalid, and the generation of the monstrous, the imagined case of which is the man with inserted facial warts that, in its turn, provokes others to go beyond his boundaries. This surely seems aptly and precisely prescient of the implants that Orlan underwent in which apparently nascent ‘horns’ appeared on her right and left temples. Transcribing this operation into terms that resonate precisely with both the body’s fate in late modern culture and the idiomatic specifics and context of her projects, she alters the gender and substance of Rimbaud’s exemplary case in its translated re-inscription onto her own embodied-becoming. In this she seems to perform a reverse transliteration by moving from ‘the word’ (familiar language as the representing and originating bearer of an idea or image) down through the cut into the body’s throbbing moist darkness where ‘the word’ is entirely absent.

Because these implanted nearly-horns (budding-emerging or shrinking-disappearing?) are recurring constituents in different image-series it is as if they have become, at least temporarily, fixtures in her self-presentation through which she submits an *already altered*

<sup>26</sup> A short quotation from the *Lettre* heads the text ‘TO LEAP’.

<sup>27</sup> Peschel, op. cit., p.7. Peschel notes that Victor Hugo’s *comprachicos* ‘are kidnappers who mutilate children in order to exhibit them as monsters.’

<sup>28</sup> loc. cit., pp. 7-8.

*surface* for the series' contrasting imagery.<sup>29</sup> And, perhaps because their status as horns remains indeterminate (both diabolic and creaturely without embracing either fully), the becoming-monstrous that re-locates Rimbaud's injunction generates a strangely ambiguous figure. For this late-modern 'monster', though being absolutely reliant on the technoscientific knowledge and skill that produced the implants, is nothing like the machined monsters littering the imagined worlds of popular cultural media (cartoons, film, television) that are invariably presented as machine-like hybrids, both largely indestructible (till they get their final come-uppance) and inordinately powerful. Rather what Orlan offers, precisely as hybrid, is a 'becoming' for which identity (and thus any attribution of characteristics, whether of power or whatever) is either disappearing or perhaps already has disappeared, with 'embodiment' itself both in question and transformation.

In turning over her embodied-becoming to art she generates, performs as, a kind of puppet-for-art that no longer mimes anything (though the 'likeness' that the 'American-Indian' and the 'African' imagery initially seems to claim is immediately punctured and taken elsewhere by the implants). This 'puppet' hangs suspended between becoming and... , and what? Well, perhaps between becoming and an as yet unnameable no-thing, that which is the 'without' of identity, for this puppet-for-art is No-longer-Orlan (as ordinary citizen-participant), but is not yet any *one* else or thing. As a gest for art this uncanny puppet-embodiment has no place, cannot dwell anywhere we recognize as 'home'. And yet this placeless suspension exposes the situation of embodied-becoming in its subjection to the complexifying processes that Lyotard remarked as the defining characteristic of technoscience, a complexification that is actively dissolving 'our' taken-for-granted human-becoming before our eyes. Embodied-becoming (the familiar human being we think we still recognize all around us as our potential companions...) is no longer what it was, but nor is it nor can it be anything else precisely because *it is now generated as a permanent 'state' of flux*, as that which can (and, as complexification implies, must) undergo the changes which technoscience inaugurates.

Perhaps this is the context into which this detail abstracted from Orlan's projects draws us, but in so doing, as an element that participates in the puppet-as-art, also itself partially withdraws from. For the implanted almost-horns perform absolutely ambiguously in their divergent resonances. Not only are the cuts and implants visibly self-woundingly, and thus deadly, serious in transforming the familiar woman into strange (wo)manikin, the living-puppet (thus gesturing towards their diabolic moment - woman as becoming-devilish but also, under the scalpel, at risk...), they also perform as play, as *witz*. Like the musical *capriccio*, with its irregular form, the little (goat) leaps of its stops and starts, they draw the cut-and-implant-gesture that produces a *corni-frons* effect (horns on the forehead) towards a cornucopia - the horn-of-plenty - of playfully mythic references. In the fancy, the freaky whim, of their caprice (*capra* - she-goat), they return us to the goat-world (and performing's site) remarked earlier in relation to Brodsky's writing - it is a world of capricious leaping that withdraws from terrestrial concerns perhaps towards that zodiacal belt of the heavens, Capricorn. The horns-to-be (or not...) mark the incalculability of art's fancy, here offered on the performer's forehead, sited in front of the brain ostensibly as means of protecting it, *but also perhaps to pre-empt it*, to act (the apparent promise of an attack to come...) in advance of the brain's reasoning. Performing synecdochically within the complex of other details that

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<sup>29</sup> For example, see Orlan's web-site which offers two series of digital photographs, 'Refiguration – Self-Hybridation' (showing Orlan as both male and female native-American-Indians) and 'Self-Hybridation africaine', in which the nascent horns are not only visible but often accentuated in the course of her re-constitutions.

constitute each gest, Orlan's near-horns might thus be taken as stand-ins (implants) for making-toward-art, for performing itself in its unanticipatable friskiness. And while the beneficence of the she-goat is marked in early Greek myth through the figure of Amaltheia, who, as the she-goat that suckled Zeus with her milk was rewarded with a place among the stars, we, as witnesses of these frontal protrusions, cannot avoid their troubling associations. Not only do they confront us with what the performer endured for art (and thus with the questions (raised - troublingly in the case of the bursting synthetic breast implants - by aestheticising cosmetic surgery), but, in their very appearance, the swellings remind us of the multiple sub-cutaneous pathologies whose often belated emergence at the surface can defy all attempts at elimination.

Thus suspended between the sites of Art's Body, institutional aesthetics, and her mundane embodied-becoming, Orlan, as transforming puppeteer of herself, offers gests that hover in and expose the gaps between languaging and what it cannot quite contain or return to us. Despite the referentially dense configuration opened by the fragment of the near-horns, they repeatedly strand us at the border between the sayable and its others, words and the abjection of a flesh laid bare and incised by something other than words, *a something-other that, though operating in response to carefully worded instructions, is designed to out-do, go far beyond, the limits of words' control.*

Can we read and hear the name 'Orlan' as effecting a distinctive relation to languaging through its compression of these tensions into a kind of short-hand? Certainly in relation to the horns, and recalling Sebald's exploration of the affinities and associations of his names in the cause of his writing, her name, overlapping in three of its five letters with the French feminine noun for horn - 'corne' - as well as the Latin 'cornu', echoes in consonantly compact phonetic form within *corne/horn*. And in pronouncing her name, with or without French accentuation, it can be heard as also compressing 'Orleans', thus affining her with the real French heroine, the Maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc. But if, in the spirit of 'Pataphysique, we both hyphenate the name and place a hyphen before it (so miming the apostrophe/inverted comma before the latter's 'P') to generate... -Or-lan ... then it can be read as performing the very question that I have suggested is posed by her gests. The now 'significant absence' before the first hyphen marks the condition (in-fancy - speechlessness) that, *preceding lan(guage)*, is what language seems to emerge from: embodied-becoming on the way to *but not yet on speaking terms with language*.<sup>30</sup> As we move along the textual line, 'backwards' and 'forwards' from the 'Or' (doubling homophonically of course as 'gold'...), we mime the movements of both Orlan's gests and the operations from which they emerge in their hovering-shuttling back and forth across this inserted hyphen and the space which it succeeds but implies: they hang on within, they perform, the 'Or' and what it seems to open up for making-toward-art - its being-neither-this-nor-that. Performing's region on-the-way-toward-art is always "Something-other Or Lan guage". Whatever its medium, every gest's transliterated emergence into an idiomatic near-code (something like a truncated language) wants to preserve and expose something of this 'Something-other'. Performing's only chance of living-on toward-art is in and as the necessarily strange mattering tension between this other and language's possibilities; it survives through baring its abjection in the ways it bears itself along (quite aside from the taken-for-granted languaging means of representation) in-between in-fancy and language while managing to be both at once. It sur-vives within, as, the

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<sup>30</sup> For a ground-breaking consideration of the way 'infancy' bears on the relation between 'language' and 'experience' see Giorgio Agamben, 'Infancy and History', op. cit., esp. pp. 11-64.

alternation marked by Or, while knowing all the time that it is this being-unsettled that denies it a settlement, a dwelling place.

In contrast Stelarc, while also getting under the skin, delves in order to find fixing points from which his machined gests can take off and go 'outwards', off and away from embodied-becoming as we know it. Celebrating the complexification of technoscience as opening up the potential for multiple means of re-configuring embodiment, his gests are offered as demonstrative explorations, exemplifications, of the ways that the 'human' body offers possibilities for a 'post-human' becoming. All his projects (as with Orlan, necessarily collaborative, dependent on a range of technical specialists for their design and realisation, and invariably mounted as recordable performance-events to be witnessed) propose the transformation of embodiment's relation to its context, to everything that constitutes its surroundings. In his gests these latter (materials, processes, others) are reconstituted as an environment of technoscientifically derived and supported means for the electronic transmission and reception of pre-coded charges. Their focus is on how complexification has generated revolutionary ways for relating the 'inside' (what 'the body' holds within and to itself) to the 'outside' (the entirety of an environment newly realised through electronically engineered probes into every area of mattering).

No longer dependent, it seems, on the millennial gradualism of evolution for changing its potential modes of 'relating' to everything (and thus of operative 'performing'), his gests seek to show how the-body-that-was (your and my current embodied-becoming) can now be turned out of itself to become differently. His slogan - 'The Body is Obsolete'<sup>31</sup> - may be taken as an assertively pithy attempt to underwrite his performing project. For his gests want to show that turning the body with which we are all too familiar, the living-dying-abstract body, out of itself can, should, be done not with the intention of establishing a new 'subject' with a different 'identity', but rather in order to re-generate embodiment as an open site where multiple performance possibilities can be operationalised and the assumed 'whole' subject, defined by an 'identity', becomes a thing of the past. Again recalling Rimbaud, the monstrous interventions and disruptions, through which he reconfigures his embodied-becoming via a range of prosthetic supplements, seem to be performed as openings onto a 'whatever-X' that might displace what we conventionally recognise as the identity of the singular 'subject'.

This reconfiguring entwines itself with making-toward-art through being offered as a performance-gest that, in the imaging of its performances, breaks out of the borders of received subjectivity (its 'no longer') and makes for the 'not-yet' of an 'otherwise' beyond-subject. That Art's Body, despite Stelarc situating his performing under the sway of technoscience's pragmatics (functional operations), may be its only possible destination, is suggested by the de-bordering journeys its performances take. For they pass through and seek to conjoin, to reconcile in the strangeness of their configuring, those regions of embodied-becoming - the implicitly and explicitly sensuous, and the language/coded - between which that Body hovers beyond what we believe we already know. These de-bordering performances seek to explore what 'happens' when contrasting 'thesis-functions' (aesthesis, anaesthesia, and prosthesis) are conjoined on behalf of what for Stelarc is the necessary emergence of this beyond-subject. And perhaps the 'key' thesis-operation in this projecting is

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<sup>31</sup> See Stelarc's web-site for further extracts and images from his performances and writings, including those discussed here.

that of prosthesis. For what seems to replace ‘our’ subject and its ‘world(s)’ is the combination of whatever multiple of prosthetics can be developed to re-situate embodied-becoming’s relation to a strictly limited and pre-constituted environment. Needless to say such a re-situating implies a very different sense of ‘relation/relating’ and their context, for the ‘environment’ in which the performer-robot performs is shorn of any ‘world’. Context as ‘environment’ is reduced to that which technoscientific functioning makes available; it is reduced to that which is mapped in the course of the latter’s precise operations.

Newly prosthetically endowed with functional operations to be disposed, the embodied-becoming that Stelarc’s performances enact implicitly proposes (or perhaps receives and makes explicit that which has remained implicit in technoscience’s framing) *a precise environment with its own limits and operational rules that is itself to be taken as a prosthetic in its entirety*: everything (the calculatively exposed matters that technoscience and instrumental reason take to constitute every physico-socio eventing) that seems to surround and contain this ‘performer’ *becomes an extension of and thus a supplement to it*. Environment comes to equal, to stand for, embodiment’s prosthetic; it is that which it incorporates and into and through which it extends itself. The line (skin-surface?) between the conventional external environment and performer becomes elusive because it seems as if the external and the internal become interchangeable. And the implication is thus that *this emergent environment is configured solely for this post-subject*, as that with which the latter is processually fused. ‘Relation’, as the connecting of one singularity to one or more other such singularities, is cast adrift, displaced by the flows (between what was inside and outside) enabled by the electronic circuitry powering the post-robotic prostheses. The gestic ‘point’ is thus to show the distinction between the internal and the external as, thematically and performatively at least..., *in dissolution*.

And it is perhaps through its ‘tone’, and the ‘tone’ (whether hearable or not...) that it seeks to provoke in the body on display and in question, that each gestic event inaugurates a conversation with the distant Body of Art. For, in abstracting itself from the taken-for-granted nostrums through which we ‘place’ and use our bodies, a Stelarc gestic starts from somewhere else altogether and puts the body (his) through a range of experiential ‘tests’; but these are tests, that, however dependent upon the technical operations of designed and controlled equipment, remain aside from any sense of application or ‘use’ according to interests outside themselves. Sounding-out the body, they seek to reveal its boundaries and put these to the test on behalf of an emerging ‘vision’ of the body’s as yet unrecognized ‘potential’. His gestic are thus accomplished only in order to show the happening of this boundary and what its maintenance might conceal; in the course of their exposing (the body-put-to-the-test) they display nothing but themselves, their being brought off. As this offer, the question they suspend before us, between us and any developed sense we already have of what ‘art does’ and thus what performing (through the medium of the performer as puppet-for-art) performs, concerns precisely whether what I continually return to here as ‘Art’s Body’ can be reconciled with our taken-for-granted understanding of what ‘a body’, any body, our embodied-becoming, ‘is’ and ‘can’ and ‘should’ do *from now on*. Perhaps, they intimate, any conclusions we have already come to about either embodiment (ourselves as potential), Art’s Body, and the relation between them, should themselves be suspended till further notice (a notice whose term, it seems, is now absolutely dependent upon the operationalising of the technical-calculative). Body-ness itself is in question, suspended for the duration of his gestic. Indeed we might take ‘suspension’ itself as Stelarc’s project-

defining motif; for him performing ‘is’, it performs, suspension, the implication being that this is intrinsic to making-toward-art.

In his later gests Stelarc adopts the now computer-controlled and electronically- powered techniques of robotic engineering and seeks to find ways of reconciling them with, adapting them to, the bio-physico-chemico-psychologico processes that technoscience proposes as embodiment’s sustainers. Under the new electronically powered prosthetic regime, ‘our’ late-subject (you and I) that stood (still stands...), lay (still lies...), singular and alone (isolated by its skin-border) is to be re-situated as a site-network, an aligning of conjoinable contact points, that is plugged into a plurality (numberless) of other networks. It becomes an ensemble of contacts for an electronic circuitry that, in transmitting and receiving signals (coded information and instructions...) functions telematically - becoming-at-a-distance. Once brought into this circuitry in the course of bringing off each gest as a performance, this prostheticised after-subject becomes a momentary-region that, via its circuitry, can ‘travel’ to and be ‘in’ (electronically, virtually...) the most distant of networked circuits.

Following his early (1973–1975) explorations of ‘the interior’ through video-endoscopic films of his stomach, colon, and lungs, ‘suspension’ emerged as a project-organising motif. In the projects that followed (for example, ‘Event for lateral suspension’ and ‘Sitting/swaying event for rock suspension’<sup>32</sup>) Stelarc begins to confront the challenge that he sees technoscience posing for embodied-becoming (and thus for making-toward-art too). And because the emergent defining focus of his gests is on embodiment’s ‘involuntary’ processes (in opposition to the psycho-social concern with mind, consciousness and the ‘voluntary’), it seems that, in subjecting his body to modes of physical suspension, he tried to find and fix a state of extreme abjection, a kind of zero groundlessness of becoming, from which subsequent projects could move to expose the matter of the involuntary’s potential. For, although, since Proust’s disclosure of the untapped riches of ‘involuntary memory’ (his transliterative renderings in particular of offerings via taste and smell - themselves notoriously intransigent to language’s converting representing conventions), we have been familiar with the gap between ‘the voluntary’ and ‘the involuntary’ as that across which making-toward-art moves unpredictably back and forth, the ‘sub-sensual’ processes of embodied-becoming have remained almost exclusively matters for technoscience (physiology, bio-chemistry, neuroscience, and so on).

The arts have been identified with aesthesis, rather than the anaesthetic zone of the imperceptible processes that maintain life’s continuity, our appearing-disappearing, all the while unbeknown to the reflexive consciousness through which the living-being insinuates itself into the everyday world. Everyday knowledge can only ‘recognise’ these processes, ‘name’ them and add them to its self-understanding, belatedly in the light of technoscience’s probing and laying bare and *on the latter’s terms*. And it is precisely these processes and matters, remarkable but necessarily unremarked by everyday consciousness, that mark the body out for technoscience in its reductive interest and focus. They constitute what is left of embodiment precisely when ‘the voluntary’ and that which constitutes what we think of as the ‘content’ of consciousness (the *noema* of phenomenology’s ‘intentionality’) are suspended, bracketed out, to leave nothing but the object body. For Stelarc it is this ‘bare’ body (the just-alive-embodied-becoming) that, as a matter for prosthetics, can be given

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<sup>32</sup> These gests occurred in Tokyo in 1978 and 1980.

a 'content' which, through technoscience's operative machinery, renders it available as an open resource to embodied-becoming, and thus to making-toward-art.<sup>33</sup>

In 'Event for lateral...' he was suspended through a series of subcutaneously inserted hooks for 60 seconds, and in 'Sitting/swaying...' his balanced suspension was effected by attaching his body to rocks whose combined distributed weight held him in suspension (for 17 minutes). In both these gests 'becoming' is reduced to embodiment's involuntary sufferance,<sup>34</sup> deprived of everything except enduring; they recall both the prone 'written voice' of Beckett's 'Company' and the interrupted and suspended actions of many of Bacon's figures fixed in their abjection. In exposing becoming to this state of life lacking any control over the terms of its living on - thus offering performing as the decreation of itself through depriving it of the possibility of performing anything other than just keeping going on for the time being - the gests posed the still open question, one not even partially answerable at that time, of what embodiment's possibilities might be when deprived of any willed control (other than a necessarily subdued 'consciousness'). And perhaps in this decreative 'movement' the gests also opened onto the question of art's relation to suspension, of how and where, between what and what, it sought to sustain itself as a mode of self-suspending; for is this not the questing region within which all making-toward-art is always already adrift? And does not this act of suspension, in which the body is held, transfixed for a period without sustenance or relief, also draw us towards that open zone between humanity and animality?

In his explorations of 'bare life' and 'simply living being' Agamben reminds us that the human and the animal may elide precisely (even though very occasionally...) in the state of suspension. Discussing the work of the zoologist Uexkull he remarks the tick that was kept alive for eighteen years in his Rostock laboratory without any nourishment, 'that is, in a condition of absolute isolation from its environment'.<sup>35</sup> He notes subsequently that Heidegger's '*Da-Sein*' (human being-there...) means 'being held suspended in the nothing' manifest in the 'experience of profound boredom'. But this is a learned boredom! For *Da-Sein* has 'awakened *from* its own captivation *to* its own captivation', where captivation describes an animal's being in an 'immediate relation to its disinhibitor' that can never be revealed to it as such. The animal survives in a 'poverty of world' in which it lacks the profound boredom marking *Da-sein*'s awareness of its situation. Yet, noting the tick's eighteen years of survival, Agamben remarks that '(U)nder particular circumstances, like those which man creates in laboratories, the animal can effectively suspend its immediate relation with its environment, without, however, either ceasing to be an animal or becoming human.'<sup>36</sup> Are not Stelarc's suspension projects kin to the laboratory situation in which, for a time, human and animal being share another world that is neither open nor poor but a zone of mysterious indistinguishability. Of course the exposure of this state of still-living-but-only-just is, for both the tick and Stelarc, a product of the very technoscientific operations that,

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<sup>33</sup> 'Bare life' is also the theme which Agamben's later writings have probed as perhaps the defining issue for 'living' now (and thus for 'politics') under technoscience. See, for example, G. Agamben, 'Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life', Stanford University, Stanford, 1998; 'Means Without End', University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2000; 'The Open: Man and Animal', Stanford University, Stanford, 2004; 'State of Exception', op. cit..

<sup>34</sup> This 'involuntary sufferance' also recalls Stone-Richards' highlighting of the importance of the experience of neurological 'damage' as defining theme in the development of J. H. Prynne's poetics. See Stone-Richards, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> G. Agamben, 'The Open', op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., pp. 68-70.

constituting the work of representation, draw us towards the ‘bare life’ that it seems to leave us with.

The evolutionary adapting body, to which we (mindedly) have learned to adapt, having been taken out of voluntarism and into abjection, is drawn by Stelarc into the play of prosthesis in a range of subsequent projects. It is in these that he seeks to make manifest some of the involuntary possibilities of becoming, by bringing some of the so far largely silent and invisible life-sustaining processes into a different relation to externality and thus, reflexively, to the becoming they partially constitute. Suspension, as both motif and process, is displaced from abjection onto the relation between embodiment’s inside and outside. But, in pursuing the reconfiguring of this relation, his projects are placed unequivocally under the sway of operative technoscience. Access to the inside and the terms of its changed relation to the outside is only possible through, indeed is premised upon, what technoscience offers and represents. If the involuntary, as possibly untapped potential, is what is at stake for Stelarc’s gests, then in order to get at this still largely unknown zone of becoming, he has to cede the voluntary to what technoscience has willed operatively as its defining calculative and functional terms. For he can only ‘reach’ what he wants to tap into by way of their frame and the terms on which their machined relation to ‘everything’ is constituted.

Performing’s ‘problem’ (as long as Art’s Body remains its hoped-for destination) thus becomes whether, and if so then how, it can, in the course of performing, suspend the authority and directives of the very frame in whose ‘care’ it has placed itself, and break out towards Art’s Body as that which is ‘otherwise’ to technoscience. For the cuts, probes, and insertions undertaken in the course of the latter’s operations are carried out *with the sole purpose of transforming the infolded intimacy of the hidden sub-cutaneous zones into a specific mode of revealed knowledge* - a knowledge which abolishes intimacy by constructing the now unfolded appearances as machined representations of its own interests: ‘environment’ (the matters and processes which are, in the ‘first sight’ of a pre-technoscientific perception of the world, regarded as ‘external’ to the situated perceiving subject) is thus represented as a calculable system, a machined network of processes powered to sustain the integration of matters. In contrast, making-toward-art has sought to sustain itself as the outside of all systems by turning toward its experience of embodied-becoming as the enigma of intimacy. For it, surely, the intimacy that is its unavoidable theme is the uncanny experience of finding itself suspended in-between a reason that, with Rimbaud, it has to de-range as it tries to cope with (transliterates...) what the senses offer it of themselves unbidden and unbeknownst, that is to say ‘involuntarily’.

It seems, then, that the dilemma faced by Stelarc’s performing events (and perhaps by all projects making-toward-art that embrace and place themselves under the control of technoscience) is whether they can expose any terms of reconciliation between, on the one hand the destruction of intimacy through the production and representation of operative (typifying and transferrable) knowledge, and on the other its celebration in gests that seek to offer idiosyncratic transliterations (specific and tied indexically to the context of their performance) of an ungroundable suspension-experience (embodiment becoming ‘other-to-what-is’, however briefly). This dilemma is made explicit in the sequence of performances in which a range of prostheses that cross the divide between inside and outside are explored.

We have become accustomed, in the course of medical technology’s response to physical pathology, to machines entering the body both to perform diagnostic, monitoring, and

ameliorative operations, and to position a variety of function-rectifying or -restoring implants. The machines and implants may sometimes ‘communicate’ data (relay information about internal ‘conditions’) directly to monitors (machines and persons) outside the body. Telematics, the setting up of circuits of electronic communication at a distance, are thus already at work in such operations. What we are not accustomed to is the insertion of equipment designed to send and receive signals that have nothing to do with either pathology diagnosis or the rectifying of a perceived corporeal lack (the restoration of ‘the body’ to a perceived and conventionally agreed (more or less...) ‘normal’ state). But it is precisely this sense of the ‘normal’ body that Stelarc’s projects seek to interrupt and suspend by their displays of its currently latent unexplored potential. In monstrous contrast to what, medically and socio-ethically, are regarded as ‘the normal body’s’ limits, Stelarc’s gests re-inscribe a very different vision for a prostheticised embodied-becoming that de-ranges our assumptions about these limits. They propose an embodiment (what he calls ‘the hollow body’ as now the infra-structure of a post-subject) that ‘opens’ itself to, links itself with, its ‘outside’ in utterly different ways, ways that adapt communicative resources of electronic technology to the body’s internal functioning. Through specific prostheses the latter’s processes are treated as data resources whose communicative potential re-writes the terms of embodied-becoming’s relation (as this now ‘post-subject’...) to what it is not - the entirety of *codable and thus communicable* externality. In making explicit, through performing’s displays, what has always been implicit in modern medicine - that, once language-mind (reflexive self-consciousness) is suspended, human bodies are, as William Burroughs pointed out, just soft machines - Stelarc exposes us to a very different possible future for embodiment to that which ‘the normal body’ (of medicine, politics, and thus of everyday life), as this so far self-contained machine, seems unquestioningly to be making toward. If in its (our) everyday life it is on the way to getting past (suspending...) the ‘no longer’ of the pre-modern mythic body with its common expectation of an after-life, it still remains well short of the ‘not yet’ that is already ‘right here’ in prototype form in Stelarc’s multi-prostheticised and seemingly absolutely open(able) body.

Stelarc takes his embodied-becoming as a ‘site’ for displaying, in the course of performance events, embodiment’s potential for transformation, for becoming differently through radical supplementation by prosthetic intervention. Necessarily social projects from conceptualisation and design-realisation through to the gests themselves, the latter explore elements of that potential by inter-connecting post-robotic-engineering techniques, the telematic machinery of electronic information technology, with the knowledge and techniques developed in medicine and its allied disciplines for ‘internal’ operations on the suffering body. The focus of prosthesis here is on re-defining, expanding, the sense-range constituting the ‘five senses’ of our conventional aesthesis and, in the process, transforming their relation to their ‘outside’ (what surrounds them ‘naturally’ and ‘culturally’); accomplishing this may also entail the occasional intervention of anaesthesia to subdue some sense elements in order that others can be perceived more clearly. At stake is a very particular sense of the ‘extension’ of becoming through integrating embodiment with communication technology via prostheses that, aligning it with electronic circuits, turn it into a receiver-transmitter of digital information enabling specific physiological functions to control and be controlled, through the ‘give and take’ of electronic instructions, by external sites of electronically powered communication. Whatever the site and ‘purpose’ in the ‘normal body’ of the specific functions on display in the performance-event, the point of the latter is to try to show how, through their literal complexification (electronically digitised supplementation), the functions can be engineered to outstrip themselves and to side-step (transform,

enhance...?) the role of 'the brain' (consciousness) in their control. They confront the location of functional control as a possibly open question.

A sequence of gests (including 'stomach sculpture' (1993), 'fractal flesh' (1995), 'third arm' (1996), 'exoskeleton' (1998), 'muscle machine' (2003), and 'third ear' (2008)) place a range of prostheses in, on, and through his body that are electronically activatable both by him and externally by others. Thus in 'third arm' a robotic arm was attached to one of his arms that was coordinated with and responsive both to external instructions and to specific functions in his body; this sharing or ceding of control to others, through the functional supplementations enabled by the communicative circuitry, is his project's consistent 'theme'. For not only does it mark his interruption of the 'subject' we take for granted (more or less) in everyday life, but it does this through making that subject-in-transformation an element (as a series of charged contact points) in an electronically defined network. The network can be limited (as in 'third arm' and 'stomach sculpture'<sup>37</sup>) to those immediately involved in operating the gest's machinery, or open-ended and potentially vast (as in 'fractal flesh' where the body, connected to the internet, 'quivers and oscillates' according to the ebb and flow of net activity). Performing becomes a joint-activity, but this time in the realm of 'the involuntary', for the performer is brought to respond involuntarily, is in effect choreographed, through the communicative interaction of body elements and processes with externally located stimulators (either actual respondents participating in a common circuit or 'abstract' processes that transmit 'themselves' as coded instructions to their contact points in the performer's body, as in the flow of net 'noise' as a provocative stimulant). And this is perhaps where we can recognise that each gest's possibility as a 'making-toward-art' may turn not on the qualities of the literal 'content' of the performing - that is, the actual sequence of code-provoked and choreographed action-processes (as if these are induced to produce an audience experience and response akin to those of say a dance performance or a painting) - *but rather on the performance's 'thatness'*.

Set up as a kind of test-bed, in which some of the conventional boundaries of the performer's embodiment are broached in order to test its possibilities for becoming-differently, each of these gests pitches the performer's body out of 'culture' (everydayness) and suspends it in a vacuum between the knowns of technoscience and the unknowable swarming of Art's Body: neither one nor the other. For what it seeks to test is whether embodiment - the very plastic slippery body, the soft machine, whose boundaries, contours and experiential 'contents' the arts ceaselessly probe and re-figure across their plural media - can be transformed by conjoining it with the electronics of communicative technoscience. It is as if, on each specific gest occasion, this particular body (Stelarc's) asks to be taken as a trial, a model, a mock-up, a puppet even, of a body-to-come, a just-possible-body but one (a self-pluralizing 'one'...) that, in sidestepping evolution, cannot be reconciled with all the bodies that constitute both its actual production and its audience. In its 'thatness' it rehearses, exposes, that which is absolutely absent from 'culture' as it is now lived, and yet which that culture, under the rule and trajectory of its technoscience, already seems to promise if not yet to have quite anticipated. The transformations that, in however halting and rudimentary ways, it tests out, thus treat the performing situation - the gest-event - as an occasion to turn the performer-as-embodiment into a 'readymade'. Perhaps this is what Stelarc's gests seek to expose: that

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<sup>37</sup> 'stomach sculpture' (the 'hollow body' as a venue/container for 'art'...) was a project that stalled 'for medical reasons' which prevented the complete imaging of a small 'sculpture' (a self-illuminating/sound-emitting capsule placed in the stomach and attached externally to a servomotor by a flexi-cable).

embodiment is ready-made for just such transforming supplementation? And, precisely echoing several of Duchamp's gests<sup>38</sup>, this live ready-made is also an 'assisted' and a 'rectified' readymade in its being partially but essentially composed by and reliant on others' constitutive contributions (operative works). It is as this *readymade-aidé* that it situates itself at culture's conventional edges and through which it perhaps makes its silent claim to be making for Art's Body.

But the question it exposes about itself, the question within which it suspends itself in its thatness (its displays of how the involuntary processes defining bare life, and thus the very subject which we thought, perhaps through our very over-familiarity with it, we knew intimately, might be brought partially into the realm of the voluntary) is *whether transferring the modes of its constitution and operation to the authority of technoscience and its products vitiates its possible alliance with art*. This is also its question to art, to the possibility of making-toward-art now. For its transformations, its transliterations, of the involuntary and hidden into the partially voluntary and revealable, are only possible on and in the terms, the coded circuitries, *of a technoscience whose commitment to means forbids it ever posing questions of telos, of destination, of ends*. Perhaps these gest-events are ways of raising indirectly this question of technoscience's lack, that it returns through itself eternally without end. In this constitutional blind-spot it is intimacy that is at stake. For, under its rule of complexification through the unfolding of everything (that matters) as matters of calculation, *the enigma of the intimacy of the subject that cannot 'know' itself, as the perennial 'matter' that is all that matters in the course of performing-toward-art*, is represented as that which can be made to appear, *and thus to disappear*, in the course of its representation as 'objects' through a continual process of out-folding its temporarily hidden layers.

That Stelarc's gests 'have occurred', thus leaves all subsequent performing to confront the question of its own, of art's, disappearance. For what they have enacted is precisely the actual decline, under technoscience's insinuation of its powers into every zone of becoming, of the subject that we continue to identify (ethically, politically, mundanely) with received embodied-becoming. By transforming everything which that subject has constituted as its 'world' (its plurality of 'worlds') into an environment of infinitely calculable and codable matters and processes, Stelarc's stagings of technoscience's now operative mutatings of embodied-becoming steadily corrode that 'same' subject and replace it with a 'machine' that 'knowingly' participates in its 'own' dissolution. Suspended unfathomably between a natural becoming and enculturing language, the post-pleistocenian subject, whose fugitive faces have kept us guessing for so long as they fade back into their still incomprehensible worlds, gives way to knowing information bundles circulating endlessly around an environment of combustion-powered communication networks.

At least this is the anticipated environment-to-come within which Stelarc's gests appear to cast us all as potential participants *who already possess a living familiarity with and a working reliance upon multiple prostheses*. And by aligning themselves, seemingly unequivocally and exclusively in their necessary dependence on the relation between power-production (still, recalling an abiding concern of Sebald's writing, almost exclusively via modes of combustion) and electronic communicability, with technoscience, they perforce share the terms of its relation to 'world(s)'. Whatever the 'depth' of our current dependence

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<sup>38</sup> For example, 'With Hidden Noise' (1916), 'Belle Haleine' (1921), 'Why not sneeze Rrose Selavy?' (1921), and 'Waistcoat', (1958) (the only ready-made requiring a human presence to complete it – the wearer).

upon it and however seductive the products of its complexification are made to appear under rampant consumerism (the integrated aestheticised spectacle of extreme representation...), in considering its potential relation to making-toward-art we need to remember *that technoscience, as a machine for the endless operation of pure means, is tied inextricably to work*. And, through its reconstitution of ‘world(s)’ as an ‘environment’ of neutral objects and processes, it constructs its relation to this ‘environment’ as that of ceaseless and operatively systematic (calculative) violent invasion. Prime amongst its object-targets is, of course, embodied-becoming (‘life’...<sup>39</sup>), that inordinately complex non-thing that Stelarc takes as his zone of operative complexifying performance.

Perhaps this is the culture-defining context - the plight of embodied-becoming under technoscience - in which the ‘thatness’ of his gests’ possible relation to art has to be considered. For, if what each of his gests performs and makes factually explicit is its ineradicable affinity with and dependence upon technoscience, *then the question in which they all suspend themselves, and thus leave hanging for us, is whether making-toward-art is still possible within this relation of dependency*. Can the autonomy, the ‘difference’, required for the journey out toward Art’s otherwise-Body be reconciled with dependence on technoscience’s work-to-rule? If each gest-for-art is, remembering Jarry, a search for ‘the laws governing exceptions’ that can only be finished with itself by offering itself, giving itself away, as just such an exception, then unless each Stelarcian gest manages to ironise technoscience’s rule in the very process of submitting to it, each will finally expose only technoscience’s authority. It may thus be that the point of each gest’s ‘thatness’ (its having-been-performed) is to have staged, to have marked and thus to have memorialized (for Stelarc...), the end of art. For rather what his performances seem to ironise is neither technoscience nor art, but the surrounding ‘culture of everyday life’ that, for him, has not yet grasped technoscience’s potential for transforming what we take-for-granted as the limits of embodied-becoming: the potency of the forces of production, now honed and reduced to their most succinct ‘form’ in an operative technoscience that represents itself as the vanguard project, always just ‘ahead’ of culture and dragging it along in its wake. That the gests have been staged thus already represents technoscience as ‘otherwise’ both to everyday life as we routinely live it and to art as the offering of a very different ‘otherwise’. With this performance (as celebration of a technoscience-to-come that will always affirm the closeness of the bond between it and culture through its operative constitution and management of all the latter’s crucial boundaries) it displaces, tries to see off, the ‘otherwise’ of Art’s Body as beside the point of an integrated technoscientised culture.

It is perhaps in this way that each of Stelarc’s gests can be taken as a performance-rehearsal of the last rites for an embodied-becoming, and thus the art that has stemmed from it, that are being driven to both distraction and extinction. Each such rehearsal enacts, marks, and perhaps hopes to contribute to this dying-out. For its thatness makes visible, represents itself as the active witness of, this performing’s commitment to the seductive power of complexifying forces whose thrust and point is to seize the intimate world of every exception wherever it appears. Such captured worlds (including every subject’s embodied-becoming...)

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<sup>39</sup> Stelarc’s ‘ear on arm’ (2008) (the ear-shaped soft-tissue transmitter-receiver placed sub-cutaneously in his arm) bears a close ‘surface’ resemblance to the ‘ear’ grown on the back of ‘onco-mouse’. It reminds us that ‘animal’-vivisection is a routine process in technoscience’s violent invasion of species-becoming-as-object and that a wide range of such vivisection must have contributed to the knowledge-facilitated implanting operations involved in the performances of both Orlan and Stelarc, as well as the now general and routinely established prostheticising of embodied-becoming.

are then transformatively represented as gatherings of contact points integrated within the known, knowable, and infinitely manipulable coded circuitry that now constitutes the environment of mundane appearances (including the ever-elaborating but code-fixed exchange routines of the so-called ‘social media’ (which have already participated unknowingly, as we have seen, in Stelarc’s un-becoming)).

If the electronically charged flow of digitally coded ‘information’ is the current mode in which technoscience’s power surfaces and appears to us precisely in what it lets appear - how it manifests itself routinely in everyday life in its representing machinery - then the question with which it confronts making-toward-art, gestured toward, however off-handedly, in Stelarc’s performances in their thatness, concerns that making’s ways of trying to relate *the exception that is its intimacy* to Art’s Body. For what the performing subject takes on, in full trust in the course of suspending its ‘own’ everyday controls over what calls and appears to it unbidden (involuntarily) from an ‘elsewhere’ that in spite of being *its elsewhere it knows nothing of*, are released ‘materials’ *absolutely foreign to all pre-constituted codes*. It is these which require transliteration in order to be brought, as potential gest-matters, into something-like-a-language, *but not the closed fixities of a code*, to make the leap towards Art’s Body.

In trying to hold to the anamnesis, the unforgetting, that is its ‘other voice’, performing turns the questioning round and responds to technoscience’s challenge with questions of its own. For example, how might the necessary fixities defining the systematics of digitally programmed electronic circuits allow, let alone facilitate, something absolutely ‘foreign’ to them to ‘pass’ through and, in this code-interrupting break-through, to turn the code out of itself and into something uncodable but nevertheless ‘like-a-language’?<sup>40</sup> For this is precisely what performing hopes for and trustingly relies on (but can never plan for or even work toward) in its quest for that difference which, as potentially other to what is, might just carry it away toward Art’s Body. And we saw with the meridian that Celan names as performing’s track-constituting off-and-away journey (always ending up in the difference of its beginnings, where it seemed to have started from...) that its trajectory is irreconcilable with the necessary ‘givens’ of every code’s fixed dimensions and junctures. And, unlike both making-toward-art and Art’s Body, which, as homeless desert-roamers, neither take place nor dwell in any identifiable ‘somewhere particular’, the code, while being infinitely transferrable, is designed precisely to take place (virtually) anywhere and everywhere; for the operationalised abstractions of its programmed flows and junctures it is simply ‘home’, the purest of dwellings, as they have absolutely nowhere else to go.

### **Cornelia Parker’s ‘Cold Dark Matter. An Exploded View’**

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<sup>40</sup> This and similar questions might also be put to the emergent ‘Bioart’ projects that, relying on the technoscientific transforming machinery of synthetic biology, raise, however obliquely, similar dilemmas about our relation to ‘life’/‘living’. Laboratory manipulation of the genetic code in genetic engineering (the emptying and re-filling of cells, cloning, tissue-culturing, genome building, etc.) operates within the necessarily fixed view of living organisms as machines whose ruled functions can be mapped and replicated. In what ways might Bioart challenge itself to suspend the calculative whilst in thrall to its machinery of reproduction? Making-for-art’s leap toward ‘otherness’, its quest to differentiate itself absolutely from ‘representation’, challenges itself, as we have seen in the artists’ projects discussed above, to subvert its and our relations to the operations of technical reason on behalf of becoming-otherwise. Bioart risks remaining as a hybrid of and adjunct to the means-project of technoscientific complexification. For a short introduction to Bioart, with examples, see Stephen Fortune, “Bio Shock”, *DAZED & CONFUSED*, London, July, 2113, vol. 111/23, pp. 84-87.

Perhaps the fate of embodied-becoming now under extreme representation is in the balance somewhere very close to this now institutionalised coding machinery. It is thus this fixed circuit-place to which technoscience's coding consigns embodied-becoming; it has nothing else to offer. Whereas making-toward-art, deep in the marrow of its know-how, knows only too well (for this is essentially what keeps it going) that it and we (an as yet unconstitutible 'we'...) live-on now only in the 'not-yet' of any dwelling. And this 'not-yet', this deferment of dwelling for our time being, is what it seeks to offer and show in its gests. What the latter seek to expose and set before their audiences-to-come is something that cannot be reconciled with the 'what appears to be the case', the setting of things into their places, generated and sustained by the machinery of mundane representation. For performing, as a focused leaping of charged embodied-becoming off and away from culture toward Art's Body, the possibility of dwelling always hangs in the balance. It is figured and suspended close by in ways that allow its terms to be experienced and just about made out, while nevertheless remaining absolutely unreachable.

It is just this strange scenario of the conjunction in 'one' gest of the intrication, *precisely as a matter of real suspension*, of performing's embodied-becoming with dwelling's all-too-nearness and infinite distance, into whose play we are drawn (together with much else) by Cornelia Parker's 'Cold Dark Matter. An Exploded View' (1991).<sup>41</sup> Beginning within the frame and taking on some of the terms, in the form of 'help', of technoscience's relation to combustion-dependent 'power', this unplaceable gest (being neither straightforwardly a 'sculpture' nor an 'installation' but hanging kinetically between them) slips away from their controls and, in the process, opens onto the very zone where Stelarc seems to have stranded embodied-becoming's relations to art, 'living-on', and the question of their 'dwelling'. But it offers a very different response to these relation's apparent plight.

Parker constructed a shed (of the garden/back-yard variety) that she filled with assorted remnants of life-activities, cast-offs of the kind one might hold on to for vaguely possible future functional resuscitation or as memory-keepsakes one is reluctant to part with. The shed was transported to a military range where it was blown up by a military explosives expert under carefully controlled and filmed conditions that enabled the retrieval of the charred shards of the shed and its contents. This material was then suspended and illuminated in a gallery setting to figure the shed's possible appearance a fraction of a second after the explosion. In the idiosyncratic light of this resuscitation the gallery is transformed, however briefly, into a surrogate setting of the earliest 'moments' of the beginning-of-everything as technoscience now represents it to us: the 'Big Bang' - the emergence of the cosmos, writ small here through what in military terms is very little, almost nothing... a 'semtex' squib and an old shed. We are returned with a fine vein of utterly serious humour (art's *witz*-full play) to the question which, though unanswerable, we can never quite forget or dismiss - if the 'Big Bang' was 'our' 'water-shed' in which something, shedding itself of whatever had been holding it together, eventually made way for us, then just what kind of pre-shed, 'in advance of the broken...' shed, preceded the 'Big Bang'? Perhaps, after all, making-toward-art, though playing with fire, oscillating within the conjunction of fission and fusion, can have something 'to say', can throw shafts of its own 'cold dark' light, *with whatever light irony its paronomasic doublings imply*, on this question.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Cold Dark Matter...' is owned by the Tate Gallery; see its web-site for images and texts related to this gest.

For what the gest offers us is a response to such supposed ‘founding’, ‘first’, questions that puts its faith unerringly in art’s overriding commitment to ambiguity, to the necessity for it of showing itself as and in the plurality of its differences, to exposing our foundationless suspension-in-between as the necessary antidote to the supposed current ‘certainties’ (even though now represented as ‘probabilities’) of technoscience. What it exposes is thus a shed that is no longer a shed but not yet anything else, a shed whose possible ‘structure’ we can perceive in the suggestive artifice of its hanging, but a shed as significant absence that we simultaneously ‘see through’ (as with ‘the emperor’s new clothes’...), for, in its being-there without boundaries, edges, it eludes any ‘wholeness’. In ceasing to ‘be’ an ‘it’, it remains as a mobile gathering of fragments oscillating between togetherness and apartness within whose undecidability it, in turn, suspends us. It seems that whenever the myths of defining origins, of ‘given’ beginnings (recalling here Duchamp’s ironising of the ‘given’), are de-created, exploded, in the course of making-toward-art, the possibility of an originary dwelling that defines who we are (might become ‘again’...), an apart-ment that suits us ‘down to the ground’, and to which we might return through our perennial ‘advancing’ work (‘progress’), is once again deferred.

This ‘same’ was-a-shed thus opens onto a matter that never goes away, is very close to home (as a possibly desirable-something) not only for both everyday life and Art’s Body, but crucially for making-toward-art now - the little matter of what it is ‘to dwell’ *somewhere*, and thus of performing’s relation to dwelling, where dwelling (remembering Heidegger) has always been intricately unavoidable with building (architecture and aesthetics) and thinking (philosophy). But perhaps performing is always involved with ‘building’ something ‘thinkingly’ (even when actively engaged in de-creating, undoing, or destroying (Metzger, Burri, Tanguely, Chadwick, Landy...!)), while knowing that it cannot, as yet, dwell, spiritually or materially, anywhere. For, if dwelling used to take the (Greek) temple-on-the-hill as its model ultimate earthly destination, as the site where the ‘community’ might redeem itself and come together, we know that under modernity making-for-art has cast itself adrift from all such potential homes (thus falling prey in the defining weakness of its abjection to the spectacular power and gathering skills of the knowledge-and-cash-based institutions). It condemns itself to offer its near-infantile (*in-fans* - un-speeched) not-yet-languages, its profane (outside/before the temple (*fanum*)) idiosyncrasies, aside from all such grounded homely securities. Perhaps this is where the shed, the humble *out*-building (the almost-building outside what we recognise as real building - the near-ultimate profane minimal structure that is nothing very much, has nothing to say, keeps saying it silently, and thus declares itself as such), that, aside from any architectural pretension (aesthetics), operates as a repository for remnants, old tools, and the make-do-and-mend (collage) of do-it-yourself tasks, can be brought into focus for and by art, and thus come into its own: *that which is in advance of and opens the way for building itself*.

As a shelter that is, perhaps, one up from the tent of the refugee (two up from the bivouac, three up from the open ground) it is nevertheless a footloose movable structure whose content-less and facility-less interior makes itself available for multiple possibilities, including, as Parker’s thinking-know-how recognised, the doublings and multiplyings of a performing-toward-art whose ‘own’ embodied-becoming suspends itself elusively in between the many constituents of its gests. For what ‘Cold Dark Matter’ exposes and draws us into is the ways that, in making the leap out of our taken-for-granted worlds, performing and its gests, no matter where we ‘find’ them and develop a ‘relation’ with them, confound, as we explored earlier, whatever we think we know about ‘place’ and what it is to be ‘in’ place. In

its hanging-in-between, 'Cold Dark Matter' resists the spell and authority of 'place', eluding all our attempts to 'fix' it, give it an 'identity', make 'sense' of it: it does not 'take place', for what it suspends before us, seemingly literally right there 'in place', is precisely that which is 'unsettled' - the 'in-between'. Indeed Parker's very titling, in its double meanings, sets this unsettling scene before us and alerts us to its offer of alternatives, between which we can only oscillate without ever being able to fix on one as a determinate beginning, end, or donation of identity.

Technically, 'cold dark matter' is the term for the unmeasurable stuff of the universe, the largely unseeable fragments, from dust upwards in scale that, as remnants from 'larger' events, is ceaselessly on the move throughout space. So these three words do indeed take us 'back' to questions of origin and foundation by casting us beyond the terrestrial into the swirl of cosmic processes. At the 'same' time they offer a literal description of some of the constituents of her gest; the cindered fragments are indeed largely very dark and cold, having had most of whatever 'energy' they previously held in reserve burned off in the explosion. The only physical energy charging the gest is supplied by the light passing through the suspended fragments and casting shadows unpredictably across the surrounding gallery space. Such illumination operates as that 'cold light of day' which we have to get beyond, whose reflections we have to suspend, if we are to get through to what might be 'going on' with the gest. But perhaps the phrase 'cold dark matter' also gestures mutely beyond what we see before us in the gallery towards Art's absolutely elusive absent Body, towards which the gest, through the peculiar affinities its gathered materials display, already seems to be leaping. For this Body in its cold dark distant swarming is the haunt of performing's muses, including that muse addressed by Akhmatova in the earlier-quoted poem who, 'serene and pitiless' (cold, dark...?), leaves the poet's very being 'hanging by a thread'. Is not this the very 'hanging' (the event of performing itself as always in suspension, on tenterhooks) particularized and figured by the gest's suspended fragments, so that its entire fractured gathering stands in for, hangs in for, the performer's embodied-becoming?

In titling the gest Parker subtended a second phrase - 'An Exploded View' - that, separated by a full-stop, stands independently of 'Cold Dark Matter' and could thus be taken as another title rather than a qualification of the first phrase. But, like the latter, it gestures in alternative directions. As another technical term it refers to a specific kind of schematic drawing used, for example, in technical manuals or machine-part catalogues, to show, through a kind of out-folding that displays relations between the separate parts, how a piece of equipment or machinery works. The 'view' it offers may use elements of anamorphic perspective in which the dissembled object is often represented as seen from above, with the reader-viewer thus drawn to look down, into and among the partially separated and spread parts. But, because the 'explosion's' effects have been interrupted, graphically as it were, immediately after its occurrence, the undoing is incomplete - that which has been partially 'exploded' and fixed, suspended, in advance of complete scattering, is still recognisably the 'same' machine - a workable 'whole-to-come'. This kind of schematic drawing-as-open-plan is, of course, precisely what digital technology can render much more quickly and flexibly than the traditional manual drawing of the 'draughtsman' who operates under the demands of a calculation and geometric precision harnessed to an inventive perspectivism. As the gest's 'second' title, then, 'An Exploded View' can be taken as a seemingly straightforward description of what the gest offers to a respondent-viewer; the viewer looks laterally at and through the results of an explosion whose effects seem to have been 'interrupted', stopped dead in their tracks, by the performer's peculiar gathering and assembling actions. The

accomplished out-folding or near-restoration offers, however, a wry departure from the intentions of the conventional ‘workshop’ exploded view. For, far from revealing how the shed-as-equipment ‘works’, it shows it suspended in its final disastrous disintegration and disappearance; this is precisely an exposure of not-working, of worklessness, of an assembly that is absolutely aside from anything we could recognise as, or even associate with, ‘work’ (except destruction-as-work, a familiar component of both military activity and what has to occur in advance of the realisation of architectural plans (aesthetics) through building (thinking and dwelling...)). In this sense, then, ‘An Exploded View’ performs the collapse of work in on itself (work-as-a-black-hole), the afterwards of the shed as work-shop, suspended in perpetuity in the only place perhaps where worklessness - making-toward-art as worklessness - might still, just about, be recognised (though not necessarily accepted), and even perhaps seen as exposing a way, however inaccessible, towards a utopic redemption, an idiosyncratic grace-to-come. Crazy talk, of course...

In the course of a subsequent (1999) interview and discussion of ‘Cold Dark Matter. An Exploded View’ Cornelia Parker indirectly opened onto a further aspect of the relation of the title to her gest’s offer.<sup>42</sup> She said, ‘... something dies, but is resurrected in another form’. Of course sheds don’t die, they rot, collapse, are broken up, burnt, exploded... But, in this vital leap, her invocation of the relation between life, death and resurrection (drawing embodied-becoming, as they unavoidably must, in their wake), puts this gest into a very particular relation to making-toward-art and thus to Art’s Body. For what it invites us to ‘see’ figured in and as this assembly of seemingly ‘dead’ fragments is indeed performing’s embodiment, and by leaping extension, Art’s otherwise Body. This gest of suspension, of dying and disappearance suspended for the time being, exposes, through its doubling (multiplying) vision, their mutual fate - living-on as disappearance but nevertheless a disappearance that just about manages to live-on in and as this *disappearing* that refuses to finally disappear.

Perhaps what Parker offers us here is a glimpse of the fate in which this performance (and perhaps by implication all performing now) unavoidably participates, and with which it is, perhaps has no option but to be, complicit. Of course, in one sense her comment does no more than reiterate a celebration of modernity’s now classic resource of collage and its willingness to find re-vivifying performative possibilities in cast-off materials. But by identifying performing’s relation to such a process with the movement ‘across’ from one ‘thing’ to another of a transmigrating life-force (precisely as a resurrecting), Parker keeps open *disappearing itself as performing’s form of life now*. Through constituting her performance-event in a collaboration with state-military force and the titular positioning of the gest’s concerns, Parker invites us to explore, as our experiencing of the gest’s possibilities, how performing, while being unavoidably bound to the workings and cultural pre-eminence of technoscience (here in the shape of physics and its relation to both astronomy and weapons development, and technical design and programming), might still be able to suspend its and thus culture’s possessive grip on art’s gests.

Everything turns for performing, it seems, on the ways in which it can confront and try to find a way of exposing art’s potential for life, by exposing itself as just such a living-on through a continual self-resurrection called forth by each successive gest (the ‘having to start all over again’ with almost nothing), where each gest in turn *resurrects idiosyncratically what*

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<sup>42</sup> The interview was with Bruce Ferguson and extracts from it are available on the previously mentioned Tate web-site.

*matters to it (its always disappearing dying materials) in another form:* ‘CDM.AEV’ then as an exemplary transliterative gesture, suspending itself outside all the languages which we believe we know, but still managing to reveal itself as indelibly intricately with languaging (the ‘relations’ between the suspended scattered fragments inviting us to feel-see-read our ‘way’ through the gest syntactically, with each fragment hanging on as a surrogate near-letter, -word-, or -phrase and the gaps between them, across which we have to leap in our search for its tragi-comic self-dementing ‘sense’, miming from an unknowable distance a white page’s flat blank abyss). Parker’s gest (as I write this the always dying-away strains of ‘Parker’s Mood’ impose themselves, the blues against the blacks, across and resonate through the forever-disappearing un-shed...), in its precarious balancing act, offers us performing’s challenge to itself as an inter-weaving of multiple strands each of which embodies fragments of sensuously thoughtful experience from the most private (memory, feelings for colour and the haptic) to the most public (relations with institutions of technoscience, knowledge and discourse); performing’s ‘point’, pointed to in her phrase ‘another form’, then becomes the transformational weave of these experiences into something that goes beyond each of them, casts them aside, in the out-making of that other form. But, for performing, it is the forming itself which consumes the performer; judgments about whether the resultant gest bears this other form inevitably have to be left to others. To make for, and possibly disclose, this alternative ‘form’ (always a ‘just this once’ ‘not-quite-language’ that promises a different ‘life’... *but not yet...*), in a culture where the defining ‘form’ for constituting everyday life (and thus the ‘form’ of taken-for-granted languaging) is the ‘forming work’ that, generated and sustained through technoscience’s representing machinery, sets up and sets to work in-form-ation, is performing’s sole task.