

TO MAKE-FOR-ART AS A NOT-WORKING THAT DOES DOES NOT TAKE PLACE

“My work (ha ha) has suffered badly...”¹

‘I wonder if it isn’t necessary today, whenever one seeks to analyse what is called a work - literary cinematographic or otherwise - to call into question its very status as a work. Rather than enquiring into the work as such, I think we should ask about the relation between what could be done and what actually was done.’²

Art is Put in its Place and Made to Work...

Can making-for-art (that is, for art-alone, just-art, art-as-such) 'perform' under plight's tension? Perhaps it is art's relation to 'work' itself (and thus to 'place') that is both at stake and in question under art's hybridisation into 'art-and-...'. Culturally, aesthetically, historically routinely, we take it for granted that art produces 'works' (of art) through activities that we label 'work': art-performing is conventionally treated as a form of productive work. Discourses that engage the arts both informally and technically use these terms as a matter of course to 'place', to represent, the arts' performings and their gests. Implicit in this usage is the assumption, nevertheless, that, in spite of being always and already a kind of work, boundaries can be drawn around the performances and their outcomes (gests) which isolate them from other kinds of work. Although a member of the category 'work-in-general', art's difference, what makes it unique (its 'essence'?), still guarantees its separation. But if art's things are hybridised, become 'art-and-...', it may be that the mediation of this mutation takes place on the site of 'work'. Perhaps art is drawn into the play of work, brought under its sway, on different terms to those which we have taken for granted in our conventional framing and placing of art-as-work. And whilst we might replace the dots in 'art-and-...' with a multiplicity of candidates, each of which ('art-and-culture', 'art-and-gender', 'art-and-ethnicity', 'art-and-institutions', 'art-and-textuality', 'art-and-politics', and so on) may take art out of the 'self' with which we traditionally characterised 'art itself', *it is, perhaps, 'work' which collects and displaces all these others*. Has art become 'art-and-work' in ways which may have fateful consequences not only for the kind of 'life' art may be able to lead in this interim (this time-space of suspension), but also for the very particular sense we have given to 'work' in our traditional aligning of it with 'art'? Perhaps the 'work of art' and 'art-as-a-kind-of-work', as we have understood them and continue to place them, become something else if art's edges, its limits, are permeated (and dissolved?) by work.

If the drive of techno-capitalism is to convert every aspect, every 'area' of experience, of 'culture', to a project to be laid bare, opened, through intense work (work as disciplined production of objects of knowledge (objects that embed and display the technical knowledge through which they are constituted) organised through constant reflexive self-monitoring, then art is unavoidably caught up in this process. It is in thrall both as a performance and in terms of

¹ Elizabeth Bishop, 'One Art, The Selected Letters', Pimlico, London, 1996, p. 395.

² Giorgio Agamben, 'Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films', in 'Art and the Moving Image', ed. by Tanya Leighton, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, p. 328. Where Agamben, linking Debord with Godard, proposes film as the interplay of 'repetition' and 'stoppage' guided by 'strategy', making-for-art (here as other-than-work) is approached here as always a matter of context-bound *tactics aside from any over-arching 'strategy'*; making's plight drives it to try to expose something-for-art through its disclosure of the relation between its embodiment (intimacy) and the permeations of context. For elaboration of these matters see other texts in this sequence, particularly 'To Perform', 'To Gest', and 'To Affirm Art's Potential for Intimate Difference...'

its gests. The latter become a specific body of 'products' routinely put to work and constituted in the same ways as other products. Art is gathered up into the life-ways of working as the process through and with which quotidian living is entirely taken up. We are taken up by and in work, consumed by it.

Work is what forms us and endlessly re-forms what we take 'world' to be (including everything we have gathered as 'nature'): the endless conversion process of transforming the now disappearing 'raw', that always seemed to be 'over there', into being right here for us, for representation and use. It is how we are projected and project ourselves - life as a work-project: the end is the endless redevelopment of means (of working). Under technoscience, 'self-realisation' has become our ordinary way of both formulating our suffusion by work and reconciling ourselves to it; this realisation (how we make our selves real) is subsumed within the calculative project's drive to subdue (everything). The raw, the wild, all that which seems to be 'outside' culture and its representing work, is still, the on-rolling eco-crisis notwithstanding, routinely set up as that which is 'simply' present to hand and ready to be put to work on our behalf at a moment's notice; our understanding of the interrelations between things and processes already enables us to put them to work. This defines our self-representation, how we 'see' ourselves routinely. We represent ourselves and 'the world' as a co-production operating through continuous processes of opening out, laying bare, and unfolding. Thus 'life' and 'becoming' (as processual) are treated as if they were always already work, the latter thus becoming the after-god assumption underlying but unfolding the relation between 'human existence' and everything else (what surrounds and permeates that existence). How else could being/becoming 'be' for techno-capitalism other than through and as 'work'?

We want to know how things 'work', where the simplest, often unspoken, metaphor routinely 'at work' is that of the 'machine' whose work is (supposedly) systematic, unvarying except according to the terms of our control of it. We want to know how things 'are made', where making is taken to be always a matter of work, a work(ing) process (causal relations as productive through the end-oriented expenditure of means-ordered energies). What goes into making, then, as constitutive of work, is taken to be a systematically organised process - a machine that works 'for' us.

The systematising of work draws everything into and takes everything on itself - we and 'our' things are consumed for and as a generalised productivity. Work's productivity depends upon but enforces a mutuality and reciprocity that is inescapable; we and things are drawn together and out in endless programmed production lines, planned, designed and modelled (and re-modelled without end). Even though making-toward-art's performance may want and tries to begin by placing itself elsewhere (to one side of generalised productivity's systematising), it finds and loses itself in this permanent tension. It has no option but to address and perform alongside the working-world while seeking to prevent itself becoming the very work that now de-fines us. Once incorporated, it loses the last shreds of hope for an other(ness) - it becomes no-longer-art, an abandoning of the 'longer' through which we trusted art to surpass life's brevity.

Falling Short: Art Pledges to Live-on as Not-work

If making-for-art is always indebted to whatever it is that we gather under 'inspiration'³ could this debt necessitate the scattering of 'work' as making's way of going about its thing, its

³ Making's relation with 'inspiration' is discussed at greater length in 'To Listen Out For'.

performing? Discussing the writer's 'unhappy consciousness', Blanchot suggests this unhappiness is the writer's 'most profound talent', since one is a writer only by virtue of a 'fragmented consciousness divided into irreconcilable moments called 'inspiration' - which negates all work.'⁴ Somewhere along the way making casts work aside and opens to something else altogether.

How 'far' can art go in compromising or adapting itself (its being only for art and not for work) without becoming lost, a stranger to itself, to the possibility of its being for otherness? Perhaps there is no such 'far', for it may not be a 'matter' of distanc(ing) at all. Is it art's contemporary destiny (luck) to be always less than itself - a profound falling short by virtue of its being in the midst of and under the sway of productivity? Are we reluctant witnesses of art as less-than-art (art-without-art), art-losing-art, art-becoming-artless, *art-as-disappearing*? Perhaps art can do no more and no less than fall short of what it might be to become, to show, the outside of the machined dynamics (work's self-propelling, self-re-fuelling engine, before all entropy) of 'working for a living'. If it can only live-on (sur-vive) in this falling short then art's survival is always going to be as a strange thing, as something that is no longer itself, a hybrid, condemned to live out a half-life through the ways it has been enrolled by work. Living on as less-than-itself it is powerless to transform this sur-vival. Perhaps it can only cling to the possibility of being its essential supplement: a performance within this living-on of what is not living-on - the dying off of living-on.

How easy it is to lapse (more or less permanently) into just living-on, just being consumed with and by the work-world, the on-rushing drive of the demands of production as they spiral away defining what is ahead for us! The work-world offers no way out of itself. Yet art's only chance (of holding on to something of itself as for-otherness) seems to be the anathematising of work, to somehow direct itself towards the elsewhere of work, to be an aside of productivity, design, and model. Given that it is not in art's grant to place itself, to posit itself in any 'where' it might want, the quality of its movement around and within its cultural setting becomes the 'critical' issue: how it might, ever so weakly, turn work away from itself, detract from work's ways. Performing, as a declining of work (Bartleby's 'I would prefer not to...?'), might be the beating of a certain low profile retreat, a falling back by the way-side - an e-venting from the event of work. Where work needs to control out-comes, art's movement, with all the delicacy necessary to nurturance, might explore what is involved in eventing itself (where the event is always an unanticipatable outcome confounding all preconditions). Art would have to begin (a beginning always already under way wherever art seeks itself) aside from all designing, modelling, prototyping, planning and producing, without 'knowing in advance' whether any thing, any art gest, might come out of it. It would have to be willing to submit itself to its own non-event, its goal-as-lack, by allowing its passive resistance to work (to the systematicity of general production) to be its be-all and end-all.

If art can no longer be just-art because of its permeation by work, then it may be that the very way in which we have always taken art to work is at risk in that which art offers to us.

Under modernity we took art to work through a striving struggle to find and put in question its own edges, its boundaries. The result of the working practices, what we came to recognise as a 'work of art', was an object that returned to itself (confirming itself as art in this return, this staying within) only by performing this edgy (sometimes transgressive in its straying beyond

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death', in 'The Work of Fire', Stanford University, Stanford, 1995, p.318.

art's edges) work. What we called 'work' here we recognised as such precisely in its working to confirm, shore up, always just from the inside, art's boundaries which, in the course of this work, were ever so slightly displaced and re-defined. This work was art's work; the work was in the end always on art's terms.

But when art is drawn into work, put to work, on work's terms, then art is incorporated, almost seamlessly (without a pleated fold in which to secrete itself...) into work; the performing of art becomes one more form of work, whose working out can no longer be the feeling out of art's boundaries because these have already given way under the weight of work's demands. Nor can it retreat into some inner sanctum, some essential self, protected from work's take-over and investment. It is left flailing around trying to find some foothold within the world of work which might just allow it to continue on some of what it took its own terms to be. Compromised by the permeations of work, art can continue only by ironising both its past reclusive self and its current lot. 'Art-and-...' keeps going only by celebrating its emergent inauthenticity. Encouraged by its representing institutions, it is persuaded to work very hard at trying to convince itself and us that, far from the compromise with work entailing a loss, the way it now toys with work from the inside is art's gain. It works ironically to try to distance itself from a commitment to either. Yet this ironising, this 'playing/toying' with both art and work, is always performed, inevitably (this is art's fateful mutation), *from within the site of work and on the latter's terms*. It seems that art has no option if it is to be visible, experienceable, in some form and always partially, from within the work-world.

Far from being able to offer to the work-world (to lay it down at and as the threshold of that world) some thing which might just be able to show, to point to, that which is other to the work-world, the working out of 'art-and-...' gives itself away and up in that very working out. In thrall to work, yet still trying to work in the name of and toward art, it becomes inordinately difficult for this performing to open itself and us up to any elsewhere, to not-work, to not-art, to the other-than-what-is. The only other that work can point to is that play(-time) which is dialectically tied to work; work works to generate, to produce, the possibility of play (as, in its turn, a preparation for yet more work). That there could be an other beyond both work and play is inconceivable to work. Yet it is precisely this possible other that used to be the *telos* of art's performing and gestic: to try to draw us out of ourselves towards that other - the outside of the world-of-work-and-play.

There is, perhaps, no going back, no simple retreat, from this world where work has taken over, for the things made in the name of 'art-and-...' are infinitely retrievable by and put to work on behalf of work. Yet, where work becomes ever more encompassing, the need for remembrance of what it has taken away from us becomes pressing. Art cannot be restored to itself, given back some supposed 'lost' essence (for it has never yet found the conditions within which it could definitively grasp such an essence). Yet, outside all strategy (which after all is part of work's compound drive), it may be that a certain unlearning can be inaugurated. Perhaps we need to concentrate on what work has always sought to escape from because it puts it at risk: what threatens work without offering any threat. Passivity, inertia, the uneventful - what withdraws from any contact with work's frame by offering itself up passively to the open: the void of avoidance. Blanchot's *'le desoeuvrement'* - the neutral of worklessness - draws us towards this withdrawing, the no-where that always, from within the hollows of the now-here, withdraws

itself from representation: the absence of any place where some-thing could possibly, with the help of work, take place.⁵

Remembrance on behalf of that which never could have taken place, and yet which preserves the possibility of a place for us to become: a place as yet beyond the conditions of any place we might know, yet which we feel could be held in suspense for us. If the places with which we are familiar, and which we thus use to give sense to our understanding of what it is to be 'in place', are always fixable within some wider containing whole (even though its boundaries may be finally unlocatable), then it is perhaps this fixity which enables the 'taking' in 'taking place' to occur. The recognition that something has happened, has 'taken place' (an event), is dependent upon the securing of identities and differences upon a common ground where things can self-evidently stand, come about, as just themselves: happenstance. To unlearn fixity through a passive giving-up - an inactive finding of the 'out' - might offer an inert challenge to place by releasing boundaries from their ties to a common ground: drifting away from work.

But could the art gest possibly emerge from work? Does it come from a 'where' where work has set up 'place' on its own terms, has taken over a vague 'where' and constituted it as 'a somewhere that work takes place'? Are the study, the studio, the music room, the heart-mind, places where work has taken place in order that the object (composition, ex-position?) may become an art gest? Or does, rather, the performance within those spaces have only the appearance of what is commonsensically called work? In the end, does the art gest owe anything at all to work? Is it, then, not a 'work' of art but rather a some-thing which is the eschewing, side-stepping, and interrupting of work as we know it? Is the work-world (all those places where work rules and which become recognisable places precisely through the work that goes into constructing them) undone, displaced, suspended, when faced by the art gest?

The word 'work' gathers processes and activities that, by fixing up the edges of things, offer us security and comfort, place us and keep us within certain bounds; it accommodates us to the unaccommodatable by hiding, pushing to the outside, that with which we can never feel at home. This 'outside' is where the workless-placeless is, beyond what works and what we put to work.

Studio

“The studio is not a workshop.”⁶

Take the 'studio' as a metaphor for the everywhere and nowhere-in-particular, the 'all-over-the-place' where performing-toward-art gets under way somehow. Hess notes that in the 1940's the New York artists made the decision 'to have their painting mean anything and everything'; thus 'place' in a painting 'swells to include all places'. de Kooning's term for this was 'no-environment'. This no-environment is where the artist lives - 'it is the place of his studio and its environs' ... 'the studio should be everywhere and anywhere.'⁷

In the emergence of the gest, what 'happens' within the space-time called 'the studio' (study, music room, 'office', lounge, kitchen, bus queue, field, bed, wherever) is not some kind of work

⁵ See, for example, M. Blanchot, 'The Writing of the Disaster', University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1986, and the translator's note on *le desouevrement* on p. 148. For a related discussion of the relation between community and work see, Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community', University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2001, *in passim* pp. 31 – 32, and pp. 72 – 75.

⁶ Anish Kapoor, *The South Bank Show*, I.T.V., February, 1999.

⁷ Thomas B. Hess, 'Willem de Kooning', George Braziller, New York, 1959, pp. 18-19.

which has art as its constituent and outcome, even though in their appearance many of the activities may look remarkably like or 'the same as' practices we may, in particular circumstances, ordinarily call 'work'.

As a frame within which something comes to pass, the studio is both absolutely necessary and a sublime irrelevance. Any work which does take place in the studio (the many ways of keeping busy) occurs only as part of a waiting-for-something which does not and never will take place anywhere. Through seeming to have all the trappings of work, the studio gives us the illusion that what goes on within it is indeed work. But perhaps this space-time is a mock-up, a model, of a 'place' that cannot be, a simulacrum of the unoriginal non-place outside of our beginning, that other beyond the rules of work and studiosness. In the radical absence of this non-place all we can do in the studio is to set up ways of becoming (habits and rituals of spending and allocating time, and of allotting time to 'performing', to all the appearances of work) in the hope that this time may count towards, facilitate, the passing through of something-for-art: to make the time-space weighty in order that the weightless, the outside of weight, may tangentially grace the place. Being gravity-dependent the weighty always takes place, falls to earth, whereas art's charge is neither here nor there.

A possibility to be faced: everything done in the name of 'work' in the study/studio, as dedicated space-time, manipulated time-space, is of no avail in art's becoming.

What is made available in the studio is a certain hope-time for the not-work to pass through, leaving the faintest of traces. Perhaps something like work has to be going on, taking place, in order for it to be interrupted by this not-work. But then, again, perhaps not...

As the condition of not-work (the near-bargain it offers to the performer), the study/studio and the working studios subject give way to the work-shy. No longer the working subject (subjected to and by work), unsubjected, the performer is what remains from the fall out, the falling away, of work. And this performer is no longer one but several, dispersed: remaindered elemental processes - interwoven wave-particles.

Huddled remains, waiting in an agitated patience of anticipation for the art to pass through, striking them with slight glancing blows as it drifts through the gaps between them: waiting to be touched.

A studio is a vacant lot.

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'What remains when I am wrested from myself by the Other?'

'Remains that are no longer yours.'

'And perhaps never were.'

'Yes - remains of some things that you never possessed.'

'Remnants of what was around before I was taken over by possessing, by possessions.'

'Before you became self-possessed.'

'Possessed by self-remnants I never knew existed.'

'They didn't until that very takeover.'

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At the end of giving up is will-lessness - the arrival of weakness. How difficult it is for us to acknowledge, let alone celebrate, the weak softness that we were, the remains of which the patient wait may still reveal to us as what surrounds our self-possession. This lack is the vacuum within which everyday-willing, its little forces, take place; it never disappears and yet is itself the disappearance of our familiar controls.

Our softness is what gives us away and up... sometimes to that other with whom we can have no relation.

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'I have no relations left to speak of.'

'But you have me to speak to whenever you feel the need.'

'I have no need.'

'Yet we are talking together here now.'

'Perhaps, but only because you need constantly to hear someone articulate your own unadmittable lack of need and relation.'

'I only come when you call and wait.'

'Nevertheless you are no relation of mine.'

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Can we leave work to one side by offering art as a certain (but unknowable) form of 'performing'? Perhaps a focus on the pragmatics of generating the art *gest* may avoid gathering this performing and its end under the sway of work?

Fortunately, we do not know what it is to perform, to make, towards art in our culture. We do not even know whether trying to make-for-art is nothing more nor less than the search for what such a performing might entail.

It may be that what we think of as makers' performances-for-art are no more than perennial rehearsals (as in practising a musical instrument) for an event (art) that is always yet to come, preparations in advance of and for that which never can arrive, never take place. Yet there is only, after all, performing. It is what we are left with in the hope that all this performing may lead to, may become, something much more than just preparation - the real thing, art itself. Yet, in the search for what it is to perform art, these self-same performances remain both far ahead, far behind, and always to one side of art as it recedes: they are entirely approximate.

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'It's so far away I can almost touch it.'

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For the artist as this performer everything remains unfulfilled, unfinishable, abandoned after many years even though only just begun. Performing towards art is trying to find out what it is to just begin, to get under way with art, again and again and again and ...

The opening night and then each subsequent performance is always only ever the final, the latest, dress rehearsal.

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'Are you still making for art then?'

' I'm out of work but I perform still.'

'So after all these years it's still come to nothing?'

'It's the smallness of that little nothing for which I'm searching still.'

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Perhaps it is the still-ness of performing that sustains it: what it is to keep going still, in spite of everything. Performing is the inactive search for the continuous movement of the very still. Performing-*still* isn't working. Perhaps if I stay very still then that which isn't-working might just turn up...

... for perhaps I am what disappears in the stillness of performing. Still-performing puts off, puts to rest, my controlling 'I'. I am that which must be stilled for performing to come about, otherwise I'll just keep on working. If performing is to have a chance of giving way to not-work then I must recede into my own oblivion, which ceases to be my own as I pass out and into it. There, worklessness, in its inordinate weakness, may come to pass me by. The weakness that just about passes through replaces what takes place, turns it aside. In an undetectable movement of substitution my I gives way to a sweet still destitution.

But this des-and-sub-stitution is not a happening, not an event in which something else appears instead of my I. There is no point in asking 'what happened?', for nothing has stood in place of my I, no happenstance. Like enduring 'life', it passes through and by us without ever making an appearance.

Perdurance. A still wave. A motionless tremor. A chargeless current which will meet only the slightest resistance, always providing that performing has carried through its enabling suspensions.

Beyond the silicon belt we have to become sites of least resistance where what is fastest (infinitely faster than light) can overtake us in no time at all, just for less than an instant, the 'one' (it may be an infinity of instants) instant it takes for something to come from what feels like nothing. Deliverance - chance deliverance. Always inopportune.

Performing can hope for no more than the chance repetition of the conditions in which a little nothing may occur as I decline. Substanceless, the sweet substitute (dstitution), that will never take place but can only by-pass the place of the I, is an in-stead that never stands in for, takes the place of, the I. It passes through a stead that is without, without the I, the without of place. It stands its un-ground at a stand-off from me, from us, without ever ceasing to pass away and beyond: the stead-fast, the out-stead.

This still stead-fast hovers-floats where there are no grounds for security and comfort; it never gets closer than its passing us by, being already disappearance without ever having appeared. And yet performing carries on its little repetitions always in a loving and hoping that it will find

ways of breaking into and staying afloat in this medium without thickness: it wants to become steadfast without getting stuck fast in its own rigidities.

Hoping: remaining open to the possibility that, by becoming steady and fast, a fleeting something will pass by and, perhaps, through, gracing the not-I with its traces - a fleet that transports the 'I' away while leaving in its stead a glimpse of fast steadiness, allowing something to be put down - a trace of what never took place.

This carrying off of the 'I' (in the de-twinkling of the I, beyond speed as we know it) is the passing through of the unsupportable. Performing's challenge: how to hold on to a trace of this unsupportable that can never come to rest in worlds with which we are familiar (and especially not in the work-world). It wants to hold fast to some kind of remainder from the worst possible 'vantage' point, its rootedness in everyday contingencies. And what may remain, markless traces, begin and end as the very vague, gatherable only in and as their avoidance of everyday categories of fixity, clarity and knowledge. The most they can do (which is already a least) is to gather together for less than an instant the several remains left behind by the disappearing 'I' and bring them into passing contact with each other. Traces are this passing-touching - a chiasm in which differences are collapsed and the specificity of the vague is re-membered.

The unsupportable's passing-touching: as if it puts out feelers on the way through, brushing against the barely coagulating remains of the not-I, gracing the remnants' featureless surfaces, catching only the irregular undulations of their Mobius strip-twists. Perhaps it is these little irregularities, separate but clustered without pattern (each undulation a distortion of surfaces tending always towards flat smoothness), that receive what's given off but never away in and by the unsupportable's passing.

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' Scents on the breeze of the I's evaporation.'

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What's given off is never a gift because it has no destination, is not sent to any one in particular, is not in a relation to a receiver. Receptors, the fragmentary undulations, are not caught up in the obligations of gifting. And yet they become gifted, so fleetingly, through what is given 'off' ... but not 'to': acceptance without obligation because only the I has obligations and it is not the I that has been touched. Returning, the I may make nothing of the gifted.

So what holds up performing? What keeps it going, sustains its movement, is its blindness to the fall between onward leaps – unseeing, it presses on. Yet in its search for its own way through it needs precisely to hold itself up differently - to bring itself to a halt, momentarily. Interrupted it falls away from itself, haltingly, in the gap between the last leap (now receding) and the leap yet to come (delayed). Held up ever so slightly it falls out of itself, staggers, limps, stumbles - a delayed momentary collapse deferring performing as we know it. Within this split the utterly impractical throws pragmatics off course and opens the smallest of ways for art's weak potential to pass through. It passes away in less than an instant leaving us with nothing but its after-image of less-than-nothing.

Staggering making: limp writing, maimed drawing, torn composing – pre-aesthesis before and beyond all prosthetics.

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'With one lamed saltation she almost reached the other side, the side that remains always just out of reach.'

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What could performing possibly recover from this split that is both deep within itself and almost immediately sealed off, entombed (performing's greatest skill is, perhaps, its ability to expertly suture the wounds that threaten to tear it apart)? Seared onto its inner buried surfaces the after-image awaits excavation.

The after-image is the nag and goad of performing. 'To perform' is becoming-persuaded, -convinced, that that which was never present and yet has already passed, can return, echo itself through us in a coming-before-us-again: its task - to find and show the indelibility of what passed through and to set this down again before itself and us: 'to art' into becoming these after-images of the unseeable, the legacy left behind by the not-there, what it gave off freely of itself outside of any pressure or cajoling.

Unable to be witnesses of our own passing we try to catch its after-images, belated left-overs of the non-event of its unself. These disclose its un-self-ishness precisely as the withholding in which it gives off something of itself to be going on with. This something (given 'off' but not 'to'), in its lessness, its self-diminishing, is all we may have left of our passing through and away.

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'Aren't you out of work at the moment?

'Actually I find myself in permanent full employment. They fully occupy me.'

'But surely no-one will employ you with your lack of qualifications?'

'Certainly there's not much demand for the lack which is my only qualification.'

'What's your ploy then? How do you sell yourself?'

'Oh, I have things on offer all the time. I've always got some little nothings available.'

'They can't bring much in. What do you charge?'

'They're free. I leave them at the wayside.'

'How do you survive?'

'I live on only through my endless search for left-overs.'

'Well, surely you don't find many scraps round here? Nearly everything is recycled now!'

'I admit it is something of a desert, but it's that 'nearly' which enables me to keep going. I just about manage to survive by picking up what's been overlooked or passed over. It's completely absorbing.'

'You ought to try getting a real job. This is no life for us humans.'

'Exactly, and it's still vital.'

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The wherever-studio: crossing the threshold into worklessness (there to be fully occupied by the indefinite murmurings of the others), an apart-ment where the out-of-work 'one' is jostled, crowded out, by the specific loneliness of the very vague in the course of giving work up.

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'The others gave up some time ago.'
 'I know I've been searching for it ever since.'
 'Then you need look no further.'
 'But I've found nothing so far. Not a trace.'
 'Your search is their legacy. It's all they left.'
 'They mentioned nothing of this to me at the time.'
 'You barely knew them in those days. And in any case they didn't give up to you alone.'
 'Where are the rest at the moment then?'
 'Perhaps some will turn up as you search.'
 'So it's all down to me now?'
 'Entirely - for the time being. Are you up to the task?'
 'I will never be sure. Yet I am possessed by the hope of perseverance.'
 'That should suffice.'

>

'...throughout the day I threw out the day...'

>

Tasked to Not-work: The Vigil-Wake for the Outside

The task is a vigil on behalf of and overseeing the very faint, what is always fainting away - whispers of before-becoming or the outside-of-becoming that goes along with it. This is becoming's surrounding supplement, the external touching its skin without ever breaking the surface. The merest touch suffices - a caress, tangential to becoming: it remains of the dark.

Vigil's task is to recall, to re-member, this caress: to suggest it, to show it as 'effect' only. To limn the liminal, grace the membrane but always from the outside, this membrane, so very thin yet so very strong: impervious and turned in upon itself. Its centripetal energy is a drawing in that holds everything together. The vigil is at the membrane, where it edges away, dissolving into nothing.

But even at the edge our eyes can only look backwards and inwards - swivelling round towards our presumed 'centre'. Yet they desperately want to squint outwards, away from the drawing power of the rooted centre, out there to where nothing connects, where the inadvertence of collision might just lead to graceful touches of the unknowables.

Vigil - to turn out the self and become a powerless uncharged receptor of the weakest signals that, coming from nowhere, are not constituted by any desire to 'get through', to 'be heard'. Of the faintest, they only brush up against our outer edges fleetingly. Neither for nor against us they are intimations of what we are not and never will be. And these intimations rely on an intimacy⁸

⁸ For further discussion of 'intimacy' and its involvement in the possibility of 'relation' itself see the later remarks in 'To Leap'.

of unbalanced fragility; only the discontinuity of interruptions can open onto an intimate that is beyond any subject(ivity), outside of 'feelings'. What might it be to be 'intimate' with the coldest, the hottest, the touch of that which is beyond any form of life, yet which contains, hems in, life without ever leaving its mark behind?

>

'It's as if he did not want to leave his mark.'

'Perhaps because he had no mark of his own to leave.'

'Yes, there is that, feeling as he did that marks were what he held and made in common with the others and hence were not his to leave.'

'The marks that remain from him, then, are already ours as much as his.'

'And even these scant remains recede when we try to grasp them.'

'Evaporate, leaving invisible deposits that manage, in their very inaccessibility, to side-step our probes and pass into us without our ever knowing how or when.'

'They're good at that.'

'It's just their duty.'

'Yet they are under no obligation.'

'You're right. Being before and beyond they have avoided the binds of all ligatures.'

'We are the ones that are bound to ourselves.'

'Thus they hem us in.'

'I'm dying to meet them.'

'We will.'

>

In the blank alertness of the vigil what is awaited is not enlightenment but the appearance-disappearance of some slight tear in the surface opacity of what hems us in: to break through the veil of surface opacity to glance up against its impossible outside - deep opacity - what is beyond the surface skins patrolled and mapped by technoscience.

To learn to see with our damaged eyes the damage done to our eyes by the first light - its overpowering burning; the first light that cauterised the possibility of seeing beyond, seeing the outside, seeing outside, seeing outside seeing, out-seeing seeing, the before-and-after of lighting up time.

Out-seeing light (the hope-faith beyond reason) takes off, takes flight, as the afterwards of Minerva's owl: art already flies into the heteronomous, called forth by the unending drone of the outside.

And the other too is taken to be coterminous with this outside, the other for whom 'I' am responsible - art is on behalf of this transcendent other that, perversely, is immanent within me. The art thing is cast off, cast out to the artist's beyond, so that it may just make a 'spot' for the other, may draw the other out beyond him/herself - a beyond that is unattainable, unconditioned, and yet which is where he/she is for me. It is where I have to both take responsibility for and make allowance for the other's transcendence.

Art is what allows the opening onto the elsewhere of 'over there' - it enables us to jettison ourselves in an active performing that is not work but rather ob-lig-ation - how I am bound to, up against, the absolute other in my becoming.

A becoming-artist is someone who makes out, where out is the nowhere 'place' that the other belongs to, and where, whatever else it may be 'to become', to become in that not-quite-there is to become longingly - a longing for becoming other.

Perhaps we could call the outcome of this becoming, not 'work', but the 'make' of art: feeling made, obliged, to do it: the absolute inherence of the maker's 'performing-becoming' as debt - an owing to and a dedication to the transcendent unconditioned other within ...nisus.

>

'I make no apologies or explanations - it was something I had to do.'

>

Out-Performing

Bound to what is beyond conditioning, the becoming-performer making-toward-art cannot 'know' or feel in the making-out, the out-performing (the working-out-of-work), whether her/his obligations will be met. Only an other can tell us this: whether the making has preserved or perhaps even constituted for the first time her/his own freedom-in-difference. Has the make, the obligature, of art revealed, disclosed, the maker's obligation to unbinding? Does it offer a way of engaging the maker's binding tie to the other in and as her/his unbinding of totality's binds? Does it allow a glimpse of recognition of the other's unconditionality, the other's unboundedness?

All this making-out is necessarily approximate. The making never quite makes it to a definable knowable other; it is condemned to become forever only in its proximity, in its neighbourhood. Becoming nigh, but never there (there is no 'there'), it can celebrate only its becoming-as-proximity. It wants to make itself the spotless spot where the transcendence of the other and its commemoration are drawn together simultaneously; sharing this proximity they become, fleetingly, the com- in commemoration.

Approximation, being without the clarity of defining boundaries (never quite knowing where it is), is intrinsically vague. It is placing outside place, without fixity. Like the 'moods' of the quotidian that invest us and carry us along and yet lack any contours or boundaries, evaporating and changing as soon as we probe them, so the very vague (and the vague is never less than very) offers itself but never as such, only and always as receding from us while containing us. We can only approach the neighbourhood of the other, outside's placeless proximity, vaguely. Yet the make of art seeks to hold to and retrieve something of this brush with the very vague only as something absolutely specific. This is its point.

The task that takes up the time of the vigil is thus condemned, even before it gets under way, to an endless falling short. All it can hope for is that, in this in-between territory in which it wanders, it will neither lapse into chatter (remain within a quotidian frame) nor succumb to a claim for a 'truth' via criteria that are outside its own realm (through importations from technoscience or metaphysics). Nor are there criteria for deciding how far this inevitable falling short may have fallen.

In the face of the gaze of the maker the vague always fades away. Studios are places constituted in and as the coming and going of this gaze. Neither inward nor outward the gaze tries to 'take

on' this fading away (that has never quite been present), and to do it in a way that will hold on to something of this fade in its fading: to catch the evanescence of fading. In the studio the hope is that the fading will take the place of the non-place that is the outside. Yet the gaze already 'knows' (has known as know-how from the beginning) that fading, as the becoming of lack, has no place: it is the taking away of place - the becoming uneventful of the event. The studio becomes a metaphor for this disappearance - lacking all solidity it can be anywhere (wherever the gaze steadfastly takes on the fading away) and need be nowhere in particular (its only particularity is defined by the quality of the gaze through which fading's displacement comes to pass away).

The inert struggle between appearing and fading away leaves very little behind. This 'very little' (dimensionless *residua*) is the inevitable displacement of the unreachable untouchable Nothing. Left behind, abandoned by Nothing, these 'littles' (our smallests) can only drop a hint of absence, pointing to it just beyond themselves.

Almost Nothing: its intolerable joys. We make what we can of this almost of the smallests; it leaves us stranded with and on the not-quite. Not-quite-art.

>

'And what on earth do you call these paintings?'
'They're not-quite-paintings.'

>

Turning to the Distant Near-By

Returning to the studio: simultaneously both the absolutely other space-time to the quotidian 'life' and the region where 'life' is given back to itself (where 'life' is allowed on its own terms) through what and how it dictates. It is, perhaps, where 'life', in being suspended in the course of being turned back on itself (the task of making), tries endlessly but always unsuccessfully to fulfill itself in a falling short. It (the studio) turns into the faltering place where what Blanchot calls 'an easy death'⁹ is 'confronted' and engaged: death as impossibility engaged by art as the hoping of a making possible - art-making as the taking on of the 'ease of dying', in order that it might just make (this is its task) the ease of dying slightly, ever so slightly, more difficult. If performing entails holding life in suspension, pulling back from it while remaining on the brink, in order to get closer to it, then this turning of life back upon itself marks the self-dissolving 'place' where 'my' life gives itself up, gives itself back to the stream. Acknowledging its own exemplary nullity in and through this striving turning, it wants to approach an infinite passivity (which it can never quite reach) to allow the other life, life-in-general, to take it over, to take its place. 'My' life then becomes the site of passage for Life: the desired endlessness that keeps going aside from every (so easy) (including my own) death: a participation, but without 'me', without the 'I', in this other Life. It is what passes through me and keeps going after and beyond me. Long after I have gone...

Does each attempt to 'set up' the possibility of this passage rehearse, each time, as 'pure rehearsal', the 'ease of dying', as 'I' pass over (transgress?) into the other Life? Is it a rehearsal of loss, the losing of life on behalf of an easeful death, where Life absorbs death rather than the other way round, somehow keeping going with and through it?

⁹ See M. Blanchot, 'Friendship', Stanford University, Stanford, 1997, p. 166.

Jostled, crowded out, by loneliness, the 'I' becomes disjointed.

The point of being in the study/studio is to put oneself out of work: to become the out-of-work artist. In 'The Step Not Beyond' (*Le Pas Au-Dela*), Blanchot proposes that the he/it, as subject, in launching the sentence is the alibi of another he/it '... which would not play any role, would fill no function, except that of putting itself out of work in repeating itself invisibly in an infinite series that analysis tries to catch and to take hold of again, after the fact, each time.'¹⁰ The subject is doubled up without the other (the double) ever being locatable, touchable. We can only watch out and search for its disappearance, to find the gap within and between the subject(s) where the subject is put out of work, out of action as we know it.

To whom/what might the subject owe itself? Not perhaps to any hidden double which begins to appear to be just a second centre, a replication of the 'I'. Rather the other that makes itself felt is an 'it' that, in this doubling up, recedes in the face of all attempts to give it a place, a role. We are reminded of this recessive other by the art-thing's inscrutability in the face of the repeated 'discoveries' of new 'its' as its supposed sources. Every time we attribute the making-performance to an 'it' positioned in a knowable place through the work of analysis (which after all is the goal of analysis), the thing, in its blank weakness takes itself off to an unlocatable distance.

The only work we can say has taken place is thus the work of analysis, which continues to project itself into and as 'the work', putting in its frame its own 'it' as the thing's heart (a formal construct essaying to be true to the lights of analysis - its grounds, trajectories, and self-reproduction). The object is a self-enfolding whose apparent openness (its invitational offer to us and our seduction by its appearances) turns out to be a closing off in the face of analysis of the very things that the intensity of analysis drives it to seek.

If making-toward-art is the response to a demand, then analysis endlessly seeks the 'source' of this demand, as if finding a source (analytically) would enable us to place the thing that is the upshot (the *gest*) of performance. Analysis seems to ask 'who demands?' and 'where is this 'who' that demands?', treating the supposed 'who' as if it were a component of some known self that would be like (or even the same as) the speaking 'I' that we think we know and that seems to be doing the 'work' of making. It is as if our (and analysis's) need is to reconcile this other with the I that we believe we have firmly in hand. We identify the object with and as the person that we 'know' made it, as 'one' facet of the kind of person we take them to be.

We only have 'our' pronouns (and the 'identities' to which we believe they point) and prepositions to place and name what we take to be making's 'work'. As grammatical functions these appear to be very precise but limited divisions between singularities, each of which collapses into the very vague as soon as we begin to explore them. It is as if, for analysis, at a crude level, the 'voices'/accents/intensities, that seem to come from 'me' in the course of uninterrupted thought-talk's stream, are coming from some-'one', as a sub-particle of an embracing self. In our everyday and analytical modes we find it hard to accept that these intensities may be detached, disconnected murmurs of other 'forces' taking shape (and as quickly dissolving) without ever coming to be as 'ones' or as constituents of some embracing 'one'. Irruptive repetitions, these autonomous others are getting their own back on sense; they shape, endlessly re-form, the surface textures of language and representation without our 'knowing' it,

¹⁰ M. Blanchot, 'The Step Not Beyond', State University of New York, Albany, 1992, p. 20.

and without any help from the subject (except from its limitations which sometimes they may re-define). *They are what making-toward-art relies upon.*

Repetition - the insistent return of the others that hauntingly inhabit and will not go away: an insistence that insists on nothing but the openness to fleeting take-overs.

The others usurping the subject seem to be atemporal-non-spatial, coming from no where and no time experienced by the subject; they define the outer edge, the outside surface, of experience, and seem to draw the subject outside the Law all unbeknownst. For the takeover is a seamless break, tossing aside the subject in less than any instant we could ever measure - the 'I' is abrupted, pushed out of the way in a gentle unfelt violence. The 'I' does not give way; it has no option - way is not in its gift.

Anywhere that provides an occasion for the abruption of the 'I' is a potential studio. Being vigilant, like the attention insisted upon by Celan, seems to require a state of alert readiness (for the anything that might take over) yet, simultaneously, the 'I' must be in a state of distraction, on the verge of distraction. For the take-over takes over only when the 'I' is not attending, is not paying attention, but rather is held by inattention: "To awaken his attention: there was nothing to that; he was always awakened to the point that all that seemed to remain of him was the emptiness of a vigilant wait, the distracted absence, nonetheless of inattention."¹¹

Yet perhaps there is no 'he' or 'she' that waits in inattention. It maybe that to be in a state of readiness (vigilant inattention) the 'one' (s/he/I) must already be dissolving. The 's/he' is a veil for an emerging vacancy that may be filled (although not necessarily completely) by the multiple of the take-over. Inattention is an ally of distraction and the emergence of the very vague.

And aside from all work, vigilant inattention can only hope for luck (that which may be in play but which cannot be summoned or ordered). Even attempts to construct distraction as a waiting-hoping are pointless (except as forms of self-comfort), for luck, radically and rigidly impersonal, is beyond anticipation. Luck ensures the hopelessness of expectancy. The she/he that gets lucky in the course of making is no longer the s(h)e as controlling subject but, becoming impersonal, is transported to the anonymity of the Neutral. The law of the subject to which the subject is subject, begins to founder, is transgressed by this other law - the iron law of lawless chance... a clueless law.

>

'And where are you heading for?'

'I'm off to seek my fortune.'

'It won't be yours to find.'

'Perhaps not, but it may pass through me on its way.'

>

Luck doesn't work - it is the disempowering of work by dispossession of the subject-of-work's subject: luck's worklessness. And if, in the dialectic of work and play, both require active

¹¹ M. Blanchot, 'The Step Not Beyond', op. cit., p. 23.

subjects, luck outplays both of them by being radically impersonal. Even though it dispossesses the subject, luck never appears; we don't 'see' luck - it just takes over by removing the seer's clarity of vision. Separating the subject from work, from all law, it takes the sub- from the subject, turning it into a dis-ject, an ab-ject, or, at the end, a -iect alone, a -iecting of the innumerable: a multiple that swarms away from work's orderings. Dispossessing work of its subject, luck takes off to a subjectless region where work's law cannot be assembled. The intricacies of work's relations (the binding together of its particles) are cut so that the particles are flung beyond free-play. Time, as we order and experience it in the quotidian (the order of past-present-future goal-bound continuity), bursts.

Luck's untimeliness is a condition of making (arting) that is unconditional, for it is the non-punctual point where conditions give way, give themselves away, in losing all their claims to be necessary preconditions. As conditions are bound up with, indeed are typically used to constitute, what we call 'context' or situation (and thus 'place' in time), luck is the suspension of their application. Place goes missing; only nothing takes place, for taking is deprived of its will and authority in and as some present: takeless placeless pitiless luck.

But the demand to make-toward-art cannot wait for luck, even though it may hope it will pass through. Weakly weightless and lacking any sense of direction it nevertheless bears down upon the hapless would-be art-performing subject, insisting that the making get under way in spite of luck's absence.

And this demand to art, to make art, the ob-ligature of this *nisus*, is a kind of neuter 'force' (forceless force) that bears the one (person) into plurality. Demand comes from no 'source', no place of origin, no 'one': demand is already a swarming and not an 'it', just several. Under the sway of demanding, the emergent performings (with their becoming-gests) come to face (perhaps with their faces half turned away) the question of their relation to other, responding, writings, especially those that would seek to 'know' them, to place them as objects of knowledge. These other writings are in a contest with the demand to make-write; they keep going under the illusion of continuing victories over their others, feeling secure in their abilities to place and fix the objects. But it is always place on their own terms, a place constituted by their own interests and working habits. Coming from no 'where', radically displaced, making-writing always remains in its own specific vagueness, proximately distant perhaps but ungraspable, in its 'own' desert – desert-ed.

>

'The near is always only near.'¹²
and,
'The near promises that it will never take hold.'¹³

>

Nor will it ever be taken hold of. Art's gests are always only near. And in this pure nearness they hold one off, keep one at bay, and in so doing keep themselves at an absolute distance. It is this very nearness that tantalises; they tantalise in and as their very nearness. The 'very', here, is the verity, the truth, of their nearness; it allows us to place our trust in them, to place ourselves 'in

¹² M. Blanchot, 'The Step Not Beyond', op. cit., p. 70

¹³ loc. cit., p. 71.

their hands', all the while 'knowing' that, although almost graspable, they remain just beyond our reach settled in their own inertness.

In coming to the very near, art's gests always miss the mark. And yet this missing is their target: they aim to miss. Marks do the work of placing and fixing, but the very near is unmarked and unremarkable - the vicinity of the markless. So that the writings that seek to hunt it down remain at a loss (although frequently convincing themselves and their readers that they have hit the bull's eye) because all they can do is to put down markers.

And for the would-be performer, s/he who-would-art, the barrier to the very near is piled up by everything that the will carries within itself. For the demand to art seems to call for a perpetual beginning again that, while being a seeking/searching, can only get under way by becoming artless: a searching to one side of any willed direction, a lying-in-wait that has to give up on what it already thinks it knowingly feels. It has to will itself to the 'point' where will collapses in upon itself, leaving only a de-skilled receptivity as some kind of opening onto passing chance. Yet it cannot pay attention because the latter is tied to will; it needs the inattention of a passive avoidance that might just be interruptable by the otherness of a time that is the outside of its own, an untimely timing that does not pass by or through but that carries away.

So all the habits that constitute the frame of the studio/study, being tied to work (practices ordered around a vision of productive outcomes to disciplined time), have a determinedly necessary uselessness. They set up studio-time as framing work in order to make the wait, which attends only through a will-less inattention sustained by a hope without anticipation, appear to be disciplined; they offer only some ungroundable assurance and comfort that everything possible is being done to allow for the interruption of chance. The habits of the frame are the only things we could call 'work', yet they turn out to be para-works to one side of unprovisional chance. It is only by chance that a gest may emerge in and from the studio. Such an emergence owes nothing to work.

Some 'one' disappears as the passivity of will-less inattention entails a displacement of any singular authority, any one place from which a voice might speak, a hand might authentically mark. The stranger displaces. But this stranger is an undividable noun-adjective, adjectivised-noun, that offers us the-more-than-strange, a movement beyond, out of, the strange - the stranger-than... It is the beyond of the 'I' whose characteristic is that it is not-suffering: the outside of feeling that is not unfeeling (as in 'heartless'), but rather feeling-less. Displaced by the stranger-than, the author (maker-composer-performer...) gives way to the feeling-less, becomes a region of absolutely restless immobility that forces, by a coherent stammer, something out, where the something that emerges bears no connection to the 'psychological' state and feelings of the author (the suffering-happiness of everyday life). This region is the performer's 'own' beyond, yet it will never belong to her/him nor she/he to it. As the outside of possession, it hints at what possession might become under different circumstances, while remaining always stranger-than.

But the 'I' doesn't go anywhere else (it does not sit on the sidelines resting or watching). Rather it is folded in upon itself, enfolded, creased up for the time being, dis-patched. This folding up of the 'I' is no loss but is the gaining of no-thing - the no-thing gained by the coming (that never quite arrives) of the anonymous: the just-about-coherent of the vague that cannot arrive because, lacking contours, it cannot take place. It is this unnameable that surrounds and hems in the enfolded 'I'; it encloses, hides away, all the markers that we gather within the singularity of the name. And the precisely vague (never more but never less than very vague) is what allows the anonymous many to enclose and obscure the 'I', however fleetingly.

The precise vagueness offered by the *gest* thus leaves no markers of the 'I', for the 'I' has had no hand in its emergence. And, apart from its use as a tool-shed, perhaps the studio's potential lies entirely in its provision of a seclusion where the 'I' may be detached and enfolded in relative safety. Entering the studio the would-be maker hopes to become a de-tachist, to become several through severing the links (*taches*) that bind the pre-subjective *disparates* into a singular subject: to evacuate the metonymic continuities of surface meaning that keep the one, the 'I', going on and on and... For most of its life though the real studio remains semi-detached, a place where many attachments are inevitably maintained, so strong is their hold over our becoming; it is these attachments which endlessly leave their marks all over most attempts at making art. The other threat is equally great: that the price of detachment, with its enfolding of the 'I', is the risk that what remains from the severing of the links will be nothing but *disparates*, marks of chaos. These remains, the residues of detachment, then have to play a waiting game, for their reception as 'art-potentials' will be dependent on their post-studio half-life. The wait may be brief or interminable.

Detachment can turn any place into a virtual studio, but only if the detached 'I' disappears in its enfolding by the several. In this enfolding, detachment itself must lose out in order that it does not maintain the 'I' as a separate but still present 'being', a laconic observer perhaps, on the sidelines. This detachment is not the detachment of science, the ordinary suspension of everyday interests in the name of some claim to a communally approved 'objectivity'; it is, rather a detachment that keeps turning back upon itself in order that the 'I' gives way to the otherness of the several, to what does not gather or maintain.

Right up to the 'end' (up to the turn, the break, the interruption, the leap) of work's unbecoming at the hands of art, work's becoming out of sorts with itself, work remains a working out still entailing work (even though this work is the disappearance of work, its dwindling to nothing, to the point-less where work crosses over and cancels itself). At the turning, work has exhausted itself, not through the running down of entropy but in the turn into an other time-space where a neutral energy, neither positive nor negative, a directionless charge, holds some thing up, allows some thing to appear. Whereas work and light cooperate, effacing themselves to make something appear, unworkable art lets some thing appear in its lightness, allowing lighting up to become.

The challenge which chance throws up for the making performance is whether it can begin to bring forth, in an other than work-full way, the unworkable, the workless. Performing has to face up to the possibility that everything done in its name (say, to make and sustain a condition of 'receptivity', of fructifying waiting) may be no more of an 'enabler' than the totality of performing's outside. Holding itself up in this plight, performing can be no more than the passing through of hope. Perhaps the only hope for states of 'readiness' is that this 'readiness' be shattered by the surprise of some thing for which the one was unready, the one turned out of itself into the several. Performing can never be ready for the undoing of the one. The artist-to-come is always unready. Everything in the studio (real or virtual) is preparatory to this unpreparedness.

Journeying to the studio, then, to the study, to the performance site, entering it, we leave work behind, abandon it, leaving it to its own devices. Arriving there, crossing the threshold, we put ourselves out of work. It is not a place of work. What occurs there may turn the studio out of place. It may be that the studio (and any 'where' can become a studio in and as this very turning) names the displacing of place, its turning out, undoing the boundaries of a there. What happens at the studio is the ungrounding of place. And, unable to say what has happened, we can only

suggest that nothing may have taken place. In its becoming-whenever, a studio is the happening of something that will never have taken place: siteless occurrence.

Although on the move, incessantly, the would-be artist has no journey to work. For there is no place of work, no place where art takes place, takes its place as work; perhaps there is only passage, a movement that may or may not pass out, which always outstrips any journey because it is without origin, measure or destination. Yet this very with-out (that which might just emerge from performing's struggle to be [with] out), as the eventing of the gest, appears before us in its absolute concreteness and specificity: it is the nothing-else (but art) that may just allow us to pass out of here and ourselves (to be beside ourselves), if we are in luck...

>

'I'm afraid I'm a poor judge of my own work.'

'But why would you wish to judge something for which you are not responsible?'

>

'Aren't you its proud possessor?'

'Pride doesn't enter into it. I've never possessed it, but nor have I ever given it away.'

'Perhaps not, but it still possesses you.'

'Yes, I can't seem to stop myself searching for the what that possesses me. But after all these years I'm still clueless.'

'That you are still searching is its only clue.'

'Possessed by a possessionless searching - what a fate!'

'It's this fate that prepossesses you.'

'Yet how unprepossessing it leaves me feeling.'

'You should be used to that by now.'

'Maybe I am, but my way of searching and its target has been to undo and to try to suspend all those things that I am 'used to' on the assumption that they perennially hide what possesses me.'

'But perhaps, too, one can get too used to searching. With disastrous consequences.'

'It's this disaster, undermining searching even as it searches, that I'm after.'

'Unfortunately as long as you go on searching it will always be before you. This is how possession works.'

'Then I shall have to find a way of dispossessing myself of it.'

'You're still caught in the same net. Finding a way is dependent upon searching. Your only chance may be to try to stick with your unprepossessing feeling and to take what it offers.'

'In the hope that my taking doesn't become a grasp that turns the offer into a possession.'

'Just as long as it possesses you and not you it; this is what you risk. Where are you going?'

'I'm off to lie in wait.'

>

Groundswell of an Elsewhere

'It remains to be seen.'

'What?'

'It remains to be seen.'

'What does?'

'Whatever still remains.'

'Only to be seen? Not to be seen whether, to be seen if, to be seen as, to be seen through?'
 'No conditions to be attached - just to be seen.'
 'Where then?'
 'Over there.'
 'Will this whatever still be there when I look?'
 'It remains still, but only by coming over can it be seen.'
 'It can't be seen from here though?'
 'Of whatever there's nothing here.'
 'No trace of remains even?'
 'It left nothing in its wake.'
 'It's gone for good?'
 'That can only be answered when it's seen.'
 'Is there a way I can come over?'
 'There's no way. But there may be a chance.'
 'Can anyone take a chance?'
 'It may not be a matter of taking but rather of submitting.'
 'Can anyone submit?'
 'Anyone can submit but not everyone gets the chance.'
 'But given the chance I could submit to it?'
 'Chance is no gift. It passes through almost before one realises it. Submitting would require you to abandon both the nothing left behind by whatever and the you that's used to abandoning things.'
 'I would have to give up nothing and nothing but myself to come over?'
 'If there's nothing for the you that's here then that's what you'd need to overcome in order to come over.'
 'So it's not a matter of giving up but of overcoming?'
 'But without a struggle.'
 'Yet surely this overcoming cannot be effortless?'
 'It calls only for a frictionless slide into the passivity which carries over.'
 'If it is passivity itself how can it carry anything?'
 'Passivity is nothing but an allowing of everything to pass over and away.'
 'Pass over what though?'
 'Pass over what's left after the you has been abandoned.'
 'Over what are these remains borne?'
 'Over the taut line preventing here from ever displacing itself and giving way to there.'
 'Is it a line or is here a boundaryless place that nevertheless de-fines us?'
 'The line is so fine it allows no de-fining. We are always on this side of it.'
 'Yet it's clear enough for us to be able to see when we've crossed it?'
 'We see nothing for it is not we who cross, it is always and only the others who are continually before us.'
 'So whoever crosses over there it will not be a we?'
 'No whoever, only a whatever. Whatever still remains over there.'
 'Still remains that are no longer ours though?'
 'Nor yet anyone else's.'
 'Whatever will become of us then?'
 'It remains to be seen.'

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Inactive

The risk of a performing which, abandoning work, passively allows itself to become the subjected objecting of its searching...

Performing always risks coming back with, ending up with, nothing essential (even though the performance may have been essential to finding this out). Is what one comes back with something (art) or nothing (not-art)? Performing has to let others decide. Performing is the lack, then, of what Blanchot calls a 'definitive here'.¹⁴ One risks repeating eternally not-art. By working through only what has already passed as art, inhabiting and being inhabited by the already achieved, one risks falling into the distant echo of art.

Perhaps, then, the search for the sourcing, and thus the getting under way of the making-toward-art, is the hardest thing, because it knows from the outset (this is intrinsic to its know-how) that it is the drive to do what can never be achieved. This eternal falling-short does not know whether what it brings out of the search will be taken up and gathered in by those others who endlessly re-constitute tradition as the essential supplement (a defining supplement) to the making-performance. The passion of the drive to make, then, is passion for what might be and might become vital to art - the absolutely necessary without which art cannot become - that is - the individual art thing, the gest-on-its-own. Yet the dilemma for performing is that this 'absolutely vital' cannot be known in advance - it is not subject to or a subject of truth or knowledge. And it may be thoroughly belated, occurring long after the making of the thing.

To open onto what might be vital to art the performing occurs as a search for the sourcing of its own vital attachment to, longing for, art; but this is never a search for a possible object of knowledge, a knowable-something just lying in wait for the appropriating observer. Rather it is a making-toward that seeks to make manifest the 'thatness' of the need, to open out, unfold, give access to, what 'took place' in and as the search. The gest, as residue of this search (a remains/remainder), can stand only as a hoped-for celebration, a memento, of the life of the search, of its vitality - why it had to 'take place' (without ever 'knowing' in the making whether what it was doing could ever become, would ever be recognised as, a taking over, an occupancy, of art's place).

Perhaps the maker's vitality has to have already begun in, with, a kind of resignation, an acceptance, that its chances of being gathered up (into tradition) are extremely slim. What has to define performing routinely is its going on in the face of this acceptance; vitality's perennial accompaniment, the companion that permanently shadows it, is the acknowledged uselessness of its passion - its 'going on', continuing, is its real-ising (the performance as making-real) of its hazard: the absolutely open relation between what 'goes on' in any performance and what becomes art.

Performing has thus to accept at the outset its founding inadequacy (according to any norms of relating means to values, to desired states or ends) as 'work'. According to what we take work to be in everyday life, making-for-art is simply not, and can never be, up to the job. The uselessness of its passion, of the way this passion gets 'worked out', is made manifest in and as the course of its being-done. This is, has to be, its point. And this 'working out' is to be taken not in the calculative sense of the working out of a problem, but rather as the disappearance of work as we know it: putting work out of the way, working out of, away from work, falling away from, declining it - performing becoming itself, coming into its own through the loss of work.

¹⁴ M. Blanchot, 'The Space of Literature', University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1982, p. 238.

Work undoing itself: a shift into a mode of becoming in which the vitality of the passion makes what is done 'in its name' unrecognisable as work, while remaining detached from any other identity. Not-work but not-anything-else either - undefinable. On every occasion an absolutely particular becoming of the vague - the indefinite coming into its own.

In the face of the demand for 'works' (of art) and working, for generalised productivity, Rilke shows us the vitality of inactivity:

"...I have often asked myself whether those days on which we are forced to be indolent are not just the ones we pass in profoundest activity? Whether all our doing, when it comes later, is not only the last reverberation of a great movement which takes place in us on those days of inaction? At any rate it is very important to be inactive with confidence, with surrender, if possible with gladness. The days when our hands do not move are so uncommonly quiet that it is scarcely possible to live through them without hearing a great deal..."¹⁵

Performing: the 'doing' that 'comes later' as the 'last reverberation' of something that has already 'taken place in us', and this something as a wave or waves that have already passed through us. It seems, then, that we are occupied by this movement in silence and unknowing; yet it is a kind of hearing, a hearing that occurs precisely because these days of indolence are so 'uncommonly quiet'. How are we taken over by it in our silent buried spaces where it takes effect (or has effects - the oscillations of reverberation)? Somehow these waves come to the surface, find a way out, a form of escape, evacuation, and, in this process reform our doing:

"Oscillation is our foothold."¹⁶

So 'place' here is our secret hidden space(s), a 'site' or 'sites' through which some kind of movement can pass leaving its traces, taking effect in ways that will allow it to emerge subsequently in specific shapes and forms.

Tremors, alternating currents, resonances, whose reverberations are so quiet in their sourcing but whose passage through is the opposite of a dying away, as if entropy were to be thrown into reverse through a charge that could increase itself without help: a negentropic magnifying generator running counter to the run down, swelling into an eruption at the surface where what we call 'experience' comes about - begun perhaps as a lightless spark that always predates the experience constituting our mundane knowledge.

For Rilke it is gathered round, helped by, 'confidence', 'surrender', 'gladness', as the ideal accompaniments of inactivity. And confidence here is, perhaps, a kind of trust in this other beginning and surge, an acceptance of the invisible unknowable takeover: accepting that one is being (might be) offered something, told something in the strictest confidence, an offering the generosity of which, its fructifying effects, can only be experienced and thus appreciated later (perhaps very much later).

'Surrender' might thus be the accepting movement in which the 'self' gives itself away, a necessary support for confidence: an openness to whatever comes tremblingly, a kind of unknowing anticipation in which the self is allowed time out, is put off-guard in a state of absolutely lazy readiness - the indolence of alert inertness. This inaction needs the succour of the warmth of 'gladness' - a well-being suffusing the state (simultaneously steady and unsteady) of

¹⁵ 'Rainer Maria Rilke, Selected Letters, 1902 – 1926', trans. R.F.C. Hull, intro. by J. Bayley, Quartet, London, 1988. The quotation is from a letter of 24. 8. '04 to Tora Holmstroem. See p.74.

¹⁶ A line spoken by 'Mrs. Potatoes' in 'Packet Piece', a play by Michael Brodsky, in 'Project', Guignol Books, Tivoli, N.Y., 1982, p. 194.

preparatory relaxation: eustasis as the ground for ecstasis, a being-in-readiness, to one side of willing, that is ready to allow a falling away of the tensive binds of demands and obligations.

'I left "work" and came over here thinking I'd listen to...'¹⁷

As the absencing of work, this forced indolence, whether forced by external or internal demands, is precisely a release from the concerns that tend also to define 'performing' for us, and in particular from all those things we associate with a productive doing. For, while indolent, another kind of activity that is not yet a 'doing' may be passing through (our unplaceable place) all unbeknownst. Inaction, whether as recovery or recuperative time or as *ennui* (where the seeming being-at-rest as a time out-of-action seems to be 'about' nothing other than itself - allowing time to 'just pass'), becomes a cover for another kind of activity, a taking-over that sets aside all the terms which we conventionally attribute to action. And, out of the confidence that accompanies indolence, this taking-over is supported by a hope peculiar to the possibility of generating some thing that might become art. This other activity, this (in)activity, begins hopefully, the hope (an optimism borne of confidence) being that some (art) thing might just begin to emerge, eventually... however long it may take for the reverberation to 'work' its way through, to expand and force its way to the surface (the performer's surface and, perhaps, eventually the surfaces of 'culture').

Hope is the necessary acceptance, in advance of any performance, that this specific indolence (an indolence suffused by confidence, surrender and gladness) is a precondition for, a constituent of, the break through or breaking out of performing in some indefinite future. The interim, the 'mean-while' between indolence and performing, can only be withstood in and through hope's sustenance, for this in-between, which is neither the presence nor absence of action but a certain pregnant waiting, appears at its surface to be made up of nothing; during it nothing seems to take place. What comes out in the mean-while is nothing but the flow of coming out 'itself' - the 'pure event': it is what goes through, passes through, us without our ever being 'involved' (actively...willingly) in real-ising it ('Life' itself?) - a pulsing coursing latency of which we will never, never can, be aware, for it is what enables awareness 'itself'.

The implication for what might be loosely gathered under the term 'artistic practice(s)' is thus that, while this 'profoundest activity' may be best enabled by the indolence that is alertly unready, this state of readied distraction, it is (may be) also 'going on', 'taking place' beyond any place, all the time, providing it is accompanied by these lived states of well-being that tacitly make ready for it. These define, set out, the terms on which the movement will 'work' its way through as the 'doing' that will indeed (this is the certainty of Rilke's 'when') come 'later'; they allow it to be 'on course' - it courses through them.

Organs - eyes, nose, ears, mouth, hands, all extremities and surfaces, will be directed by reverberations that 'began' (yes but when? where?... those untimely-displacings immemorial, the outside-inside of felt thought) as the upsurging of performing's potential: how we were entered into becoming, how it drew us out as an eventing possibility, we as e-ventings, comings-out, outcomes of an otherness whose place (no longer just our, my, place) is always an elsewhere.

It is thus that the place which had always seemed to be my place, which I thought I had made my own and with which I am familiar and comfortable, and where I believe I am standing firm

¹⁷ Elizabeth Bishop, op. cit., p. 591.

(enough for the time being), turns out to be an emergent region of unknowable contours drawn out from, extracted from but still carrying within itself, the groundswell of an elsewhere that is not-mine (but belongs to no-one else) - an inside-outside from which I have been withdrawn. The emergent thing that is trying to make-toward-art marks the indebtedness of this withdrawal, knowing all the while it will never pay off the debt because each new emergence incurs a further debt. Extracts of otherness, we are caught up in and caught out by our interminable withdrawal, our being-withdrawn endlessly by our circumstances, from this elsewhere that is not in our possession, yet will neither let us go nor allow us to (just) be ourselves.