A Hesitation of Things

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PhD

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Paul O'Kane May 2009

ABSTRACT

This dissertation, *A Hesitation of Things* was initially motivated by a temporal, Deleuzian, and Bergsonian enquiry, which appears to trouble notions of ontology and knowledge. It takes up the concept of Hesitation and, tracing a path through meditations on 'Method', 'Writing', 'Hesitation', 'History' and 'Faith', while applying a method of creative, self-reflexive writing and 'radical empiricism', produces a critique of 'things' as worldly and objective phenomena.

The self-reflexivity of the writing leads to a recurring and prolonged dialogue with method, form and process - particularly in the early, 'hesitant' chapters - while also discussing effects of digital computing on the production of philosophy and History.

The dissertation utilises visual reference throughout, implicating a history of painting and visual culture. The canon is mostly modern while the dissertation regularly questions modernity. Nietzsche is perhaps the dissertation's main protagonist, complemented by Nietzschean thinkers including Derrida and Deleuze.

Literary figures, such as Kafka, Proust and Kazuo Ishiguro play significant parts while W.G. Sebald and Walter Benjamin are referred to as historians valued for the quality and style of their writing as much as for their scholarship. Meanwhile, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* recurs and, through Shakespeare the dissertation attempts to resolve the strands of its argument.

A Hesitation of Things

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

In memory of my late father, Seamus (James) O'Kane MBE

[…] All human errors are impatience, the premature breaking off of what is methodical, an apparent fencing in of the apparent thing.

[…] There are two main human sins from which all others derive: impatience and indolence. It was because of impatience that they were expelled from paradise; it is because of indolence that they do not return. Yet perhaps there is only one major sin: impatience. Because of impatience they were expelled, because of impatience they do not return.

(Kafka, F. [1883 - 1924] 1991, 87)

INTRODUCTIONS

Preface

> Knowledge *is* opposed to life, but because it expresses a life which contradicts life, a reactive life which finds in knowledge a means of preserving and glorifying its type. (Thus knowledge gives life laws that separate it from what it can do, that keep it from acting, that forbid it to act, maintaining it in the narrow framework of scientifically observable reaction: almost like an animal in a zoo).

<div align="right">(Deleuze, G. [1925-1995] 1996, 100)</div>

Knowledge tames life like an animal in its cage, 'keeping it from acting' - implies Gilles Deleuze speaking of and for Nietzsche in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. In a colourful illustration of the thin line we tread between aspiration and delusion he rails against this restriction while also warning against the impulse to obtain or attain only to find that we thereby incarcerate.

The texts in which knowledge attempts to inscribe itself for posterity, may be - as Nietzsche suggested by his broad experiments with form - more song-like than our canon of sedentary thought and logic likes to believe. They grow and change with every 'rendition', *becoming*, and becoming more and less familiar, even to themselves, momentarily illuminated with every new reading like fields momentarily exposed to sunlight beneath moving clouds. Thus texts succumb to the empiricism of worldly exposure, to the experience of readers, to the time, eyes and ears of others.

When and if we are called upon to contribute to this canon or archive, how will we respond? How can we approach our writing of and *as* History in the hope

that it perpetuates and prepares for the musical condition in which it might be received? This is perhaps the key methodological question of this dissertation, a question that is approached via an extensive and hesitant appraisal of the event of writing and the various technologies with which we write. As such, this dissertation becomes an attempt to understand writing's particular relationship with both temporality and technology.

The Aims Of This Dissertation

This dissertation aims to avoid presumptions regarding the relationship between writing, philosophy and History as it confronts the possibility of revealing the production of History in the event of its writing. It writes of History as a profound and pervasive question, raised at the level of philosophy. Meanwhile it is perpetually deflected by formal, technical, and methodological concerns which amount to constant hesitation, as it resigns itself to the condition (underlined by Proust) of 'a writing before writing can begin' in a critique of form for which beginning is always a problem and always a part.

Approaching 'History' with suspicion or scepticism, the aim of this dissertation is to discover possibilities of History through cautious exploration of the *writing* of History. While we cannot necessarily know or inhabit History as a 'thing' we can and must nevertheless inhabit its writing despite the fact that we inevitably and justifiably hesitate to write, or do so impulsively, presuming or overlooking the intrinsic, complex relationship between our History and our writing of History.

History has no 'self', its writings by various means and by changing technologies implicated in its production transform or disturb the forms and qualities of written History. The formal experiment of this dissertation exposes the coincidence of 'writing History' with 'History writing' by insisting that *it* is History, that *this* is History, and that, before presuming to emit from a sedentary perspective (a steady and objective 'point of view' symbolized herein by the

desk, chair, room, and tools of the writer) any History must first describe its own event and continue to arrest itself whenever it wanders from this awkward, hesitant rigour into more literary, proudly flowing narrative conceits.

Current technology, with its conscious use of 'memory' as material, reveals that we have perhaps always written in and as memory. Here we have a signal that the representative and objective distance between writing and History – which is our formal concern - may break down more readily if we supplant the entire paradigm of History with that of memory. If so, then we are able to write *of* memory, *in* memory, *with* memory, so that, denied blocks and hesitations between form and content, object and means, immanence now immerses us in a newly eventual immediacy.

We may also be encouraged to surrender the paradigm of History once we discern that memory readily graces the quotidian as much as the 'great', the fleeting as much as the persistent, and embraces representation itself as much as representation's objects. Furthermore, we might say that memory merely *graces* that which History would claim. Proust has shown us that memory, regarded rather as an extra sense, tints and aestheticises all that becomes steeped in memory. But this is not to say that memory de-politicises the past or renders it overly subjective, on the contrary, History might insufficiently acknowledge the inevitable aestheticisation and subjectivisation taking place in any instance of writing and producing the past.

The Writing Of History As Philosophy By Means Of Creative Writing

> Since the center of gravity of my scholarly interests lies in aesthetics, my philosophical and literary studies have increasingly converged.

> (Benjamin, W. [1892-1940] 2004, 422)

The computer-based text brings writing to share the site and means of production with a wide variety of cultural material, new factors are brought to bear upon the conceit of knowledge. Words and pictures, pornography and 'spam', philosophy and art all come today to be made from the same resource - i.e. quantities of digital memory - and no longer from diverse, exhaustible materials in specialised sites and contexts.

Meanwhile, a generation weaned on deconstruction and post-structuralism might approach the writing of History with an acute awareness of the potential of their work to *be* deconstructed, which gives this work of new aims and makes it search for new methods.

Even the most rigorous and analytic contributions to knowledge might concede-to and acknowledge their manufacture, parameters, and motives. Once we have crossed a certain threshold of representation into a self-consciousness and self-reflexivity concerning the means by which History is produced, we are faced, not only with writing as technology and position but also with writing's creativity.

Here, rather than approach writing and thought as ideals, 'creative' writing means to inhabit the text and its event as fully and empirically as possible.

No clear boundary is discernible between a production of knowledge and a writing described as 'creative'. The creative approach is merely a method of arriving at a considered investigation without 'jumping to conclusions' regarding the 'discipline' of academic writing; without being restrained by preconceptions or repressed by inhibitions.

This writing of History at the level of philosophy aims to un-work and to hesitate before its own presumption to be 'thing'. It also aims to write its event as much as possible without consciously presuming to contribute to institutions of knowledge and History, and does so with the aim of thereby making a more oblique contribution.

Furthermore, a self-reflexive writing 'wears its heart on its sleeve' (in that it is necessarily, constantly candid about its production and aware that it is produced in a deconstructive context) and so aspires to become unavailable for deconstruction, therefore inviting responses that may be other than those of established or habitual textual analysis or critique.

The Canon On Which This Dissertation Is Based

Though the dissertation draws upon a wide range of textual and visual reference it nevertheless features a certain specificity and continuity. William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900) are ever-present in word and thought, as Shakespeare influenced Nietzsche, who features strongly, as well as influencing, in his turn, many of the other key thinkers presented, including Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida (1930 - 2004).

Fellow 20th Century speculators such as Henri Bergson (1859 - 1941) and Maurice Blanchot (1907 - 2003) make significant contributions. Marcel Proust (1871 - 1922), Franz Kafka, Kazuo Ishiguro (b.1954), Dino Buzzati (1906 - 1972) and C. P. Cavafy (1863 - 1933) appear as literary contributors. Meanwhile Walter Benjamin and W.G. Sebald (1994 - 2001) serve as examples of creative, literary historians.

We could then say this is a millennial canon, one which draws upon the legacy of the 20th Century and attempts to position today's writer of History in relation to a history of ideas, influenced by modern and postmodern art and literature, as well as by 21st Century thought, politics, and technologies.

Visual Reference

> The mightiest capacity for metaphor which has hitherto existed is poor and child's play compared with this return of language to the nature of imagery.

<p style="text-align:center">(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 107)</p>

One section of the dissertation is titled 'Painted Thoughts' (after a phrase by Nietzsche), and it is significant that the work of several visual artists illustrates, expands, informs and develops words that are here drawn to confront their own limits in representing thought. Visual reference is used throughout in a way that is conscious of its reluctance to be tamed and framed by words.

The relation of visual reference to words may occasionally seem specific and obvious; on other occasions visual reference is left to influence its surroundings in a more enigmatic way. This, in turn might remind both reader and writer that words, like pictures, are given over to the other as experiences of uncertain value, as 'images' that cannot be accurately aimed or tamed by the writer. Visual reference therefore helps us to keep in mind that the word is also an image; that the illuminated pages on which we write are a form of 'stage', and that our writing - even in an academic context - is an event for which we prepare and perform.

Like our canon of thinkers and writers, the canon of images could also be described as 'millennial'. Much of it looks back on modernity through a 21st Century lens or looks farther back to pre-modern images in consideration of their potential to contribute form and comprehension to our own moment.

The Idea

> There is an efficacity, a positivity of time, that is identical to a 'hesitation' of things and in this way, to creation in the world.
>
> (Deleuze, G. 1988, 105)

> If time has a positive reality, if the delay of duration and instantaneity represents a certain hesitation or indetermination inherent in a certain part of things which holds all the rest suspended within it; in short, if there is a creative evolution, I can very well understand how the portion of time already unfolded may appear as a juxtaposition in space and no longer as a pure succession.
>
> (Bergson, H. 1999, 44)

This dissertation investigates the possibility (inspired by the Bergsonian phrase 'a hesitation of things' found in Deleuze's book *Bergsonism*) that there may be an innate, temporal, 'eventuality' of things which better defines experience as consisting of events unfolding, abiding, becoming and evaporating, rather than in terms of an ontology founded on notions of extensity and existence. A certain *tension* associated with Bergson's *durée* allows 'things' to endure or persist.

I.e. Bergson's *durée* is here interpreted as the temporal quality of a thing, arising, not from its extensity but as a result of its pace, endurance, intensity or temporal elasticity in response to the demands of inevitable temporal passage. *Durée* alludes to the hesitation of things, the particular hesitant quality that makes a thing a thing (*sic*) and makes it the particular thing that it is. Such a

means of differentiation determines one thing from another in terms of relative qualities of *durée* or, we might say, degrees of hesitation.

The idea of 'things' is explored, both analytically (with reference to Heidegger [1889 -1976]) and etymologically, to confirm and illuminate the temporal and qualitative interpretation of 'things' as suggested by Bergson and Deleuze.

While taking the interpretation of Deleuze and Bergson as an impetus the dissertation explores hesitation in relation to method, ethics, etiquette, faith and History while also allowing hesitation to invade the form of the dissertation itself and the event of its own writing.

Ultimately the dissertation remains heterogeneous, the early chapters forming prolonged hesitations concerned with form, method, technique and technology, before later chapters take-on more specific objects - Hesitation itself, History, and finally Faith. Hesitation and its relation to Things never leaves the agenda but nor does the dissertation ever deny or forget that it is an event of and in writing (with all the creative, formal and technical considerations that this entails maintained as a self-conscious presence). Furthermore, it does not overlook the fact that it is produced in the context of a History dept. and so uses these methods and concerns to contribute to the understanding of History at a formal and abstract level via consideration of Hesitation, Things, and Writing.

Synopses Of Chapters

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. Initially the three 'Writing' chapters were one, but this proved unwieldy and so it was divided into Writing I, II and III.

Synopsis Of First Chapter: Methods And Form

The first chapter discusses self-reflexive method and form, hesitating in order to consider carefully these presumptions before writing proper begins. The chapter is broken into subsections guided by the following subsection titles: 'A Crooked Path', 'Audacity', 'Radical Empiricism', 'Pages', and 'Self-Reflexivity', all of which set tones and themes for what is to come.

Synopsis Of Second, Third And Fourth Chapters: Writing I, Writing II and Writing III

The second, third and fourth chapters focus on writing itself, continuing to hesitate with extensive self-conscious preparations and detailed considerations of writing before writing proper begins. The immanent scene or event of writing is explored with considerations of its materials and methods, while adhering to ideas of hesitation and of things.

Writing I

Subsections here deal with the following ideas:

'Writing as torture and hope', an autobiographical motive, technology and event, privilege of meaning ('point' and 'about'), text as territory, Nietzsche's writing of thought.

Writing II

Subsections here deal with the following ideas:

Musicality, beginning and thing, writing and passage, Euclid, writing and point, Proust, modernity and faith.

Writing III

Subsections here deal with the following:

Bartleby the Scrivener, consciousness of writing, writing and responsibility, the event of writing, beginning, poetics, self-development, technology, and exile.

Synopsis Of Fifth Chapter: Hesitation

The fifth chapter discusses hesitation by invoking the image of Hamlet, questioning his 'To be', reconsidering Ophelia, *vanitas* and tragedy, while considering assertiveness, return, passage, and abiding. It then turns to consider hesitation with regard to painting and waiting, ethics, and 'The Floating World'.

Synopsis Of Sixth Chapter: History

The sixth chapter discusses History and the event of writing. It considers how the concepts 'hesitation' and 'thing' might inform or influence the production of History and our sense of our selves within and as contributors to History. Subsections deal with: epoch, form, orientation to history, 'weak power', History as empowering, Mishima (1925 -1970), technology, and the question - History or memory?

Synopsis Of Seventh And Final Chapter: Faith

The seventh and final chapter discusses faith as it relates to hesitation, impulse, History and writing. The implicit backdrop here is a sense of crisis between secular and religious frameworks of meaning, democracy and cosmopolitanism, but the question of faith in and as *writing* remains central. The chapter invokes Descartes (1596 - 1650) as an example of impulsive faith in reason, grammar, and posterity and discusses faith invested in the technology and event of writing (both by the individual and as culture), as well as the idea that writers, as artists might 'believe in their hands'.

Faith here becomes a site within which to develop an articulation of immanence, passage and actuality, all of which are related formal concerns appearing throughout the dissertation. The figure of Sisyphus appears again here as well as development of themes of religion, metaphysics, and the event of writing.

METHODS & FORM

I know of no other way of dealing with great tasks than that of *play.*

(Nietzsche, F. W. 1979, 67)

Pages
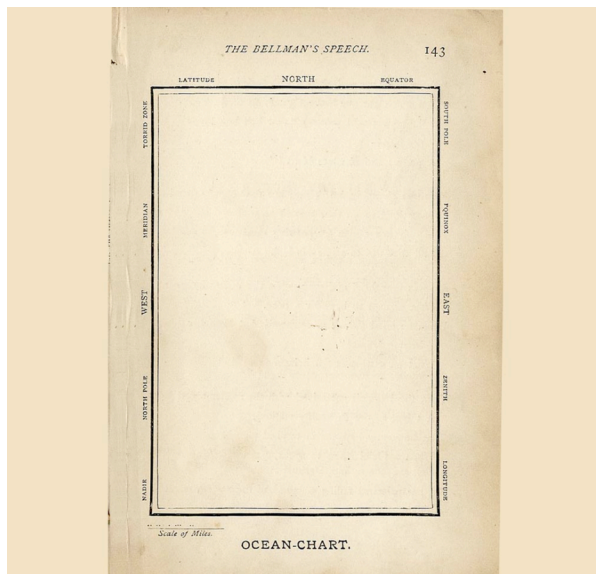
1. Henry Holiday, *Ocean Chart*, 1876

2. Pages (pp.152 - 53) from Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, 1759 - 66

prince amer de l'écueil

s'en coiffe comme de l'héroïque
irrésistible mais contenu
par sa petite raison virile
                    en foudre
soucieux
          expiatoire et pubère
                        muet

          rire

     que

c'était

          issu stellaire

        le nombre

        EXISTÂT-IL
  autrement qu'hallucination éparse d'agonie

  COMMENÇÂT-IL ET CESSÂT-IL
sourdant que nié et clos quand apparu
          enfin
par quelque profusion répandue en rareté
                    SE CHIFFRÂT-IL

évidence de la somme pour peu qu'une
                ILLUMINÂT-IL

ce serait

          pire
     non
          davantage ni moins
                    mais autant indifféremment

    Si

(La lucide seigneuriale aigrette de vertige
                au front invisible
scintille
          puis ombrage

une stature mignonne ténébreuse debout
en sa torsion de sirène
          le temps
               de souffleter
par d'impatientes squames ultimes bifurquées
               un mystère

     faux roc évaporé en brume

qui imposa

     une borne à l'infini)

LE HASARD

          (Choit
          la plume

3. Pages (pp.424 - 45) from Stephane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard (A roll of the dice will never abolish chance), 1879*

The concretising surface of Mallarmé's (1842 - 1898) poetry is an example of a modern self-reflexivity that thwarts the passive consumption of representational conventions. The poet e.e. cummings (1894 - 1962) also excelled in such reminders of the word's overlooked opacity, its ability to 'be' rather than to point.[1]

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[1] Later we will see that to 'be', while available to the modern word, is no longer available to the modern subject - to us. Rather we can only yearn to succeed as representations, aspiring to 'exist' (stand out) precisely like words against a page, like events in History, like words that we can know. And so today we supercede Hamlet's soliloquy by asking the question *to* to be (sic) or *not* to to be *(sic)*.
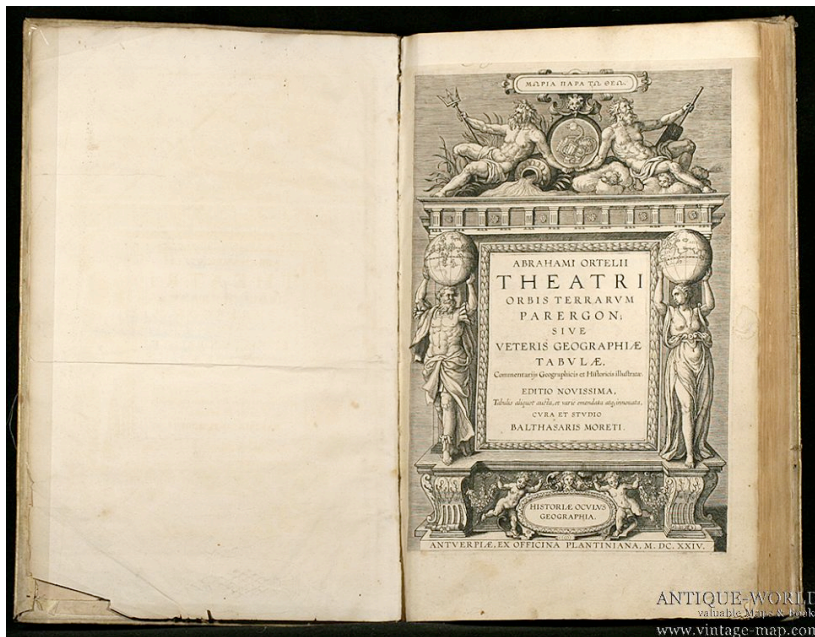
4. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatri Orbis Terrarvm Parergon*, 1624

the
    sky
        was
can dy lu
minous
        edible
spry
      pinks shy
lemons
greens   coo   l choc
olate
s.

  un   der,
  a   lo
co
mo
    tive   s   pout
            ing
                vi
                o
                lets

5. e.e. cummings *The Sky Was* from: *Tulips and Chimneys*, 1923

We might take-up this self-reflexive modernity as an apparently unintended child of Realism, and search here and there amid histories to find comparable events e.g. the epistolary strategies of early English novels like Samuel Richardson's (1689 - 1761) *Clarissa*, the self-conscious trickery of Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, the optic play of Holbein's *Ambassadors*, the spatial spirals of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, or even the overloaded surface of Hogarth's paintings in which almost every centimeter contains a joke or allusion which thereby disallows art from transporting us to anywhere beyond social commentary and glues us instead to the specific moment of a clear intention.

<div align="right">(Richardson, S. 1985)
(Sterne, L. David Campbel 1992)</div>

By this strategy we are then able to detach an apparently modernist maneuver (a kind of immanent self-reflexivity) from what we believe to be its home in modernity, and apply it here and there in supposedly incongruous sites.

Derrida picks up this issue in his *Parergon* essay and fills portions of pages with framed space, alluding to the part that space and margins play in the production of meaning, but also to the part they play in the infrastructural apparatus of a book's manufacture.   (Derrida, J. 1982)

The implication appears to be, that in a time of increased content, amid a deluge of relativised opinion and accessibility, what we need, and should attend to are *forms.* These will not be ideal, established, academic, restrictive or habitual forms embraced for a conservative or reassuring function, but forms as the focus of our deconstructive attentions, embraced in good faith that attention

to forms will deliver us the unexpected contents we seek, but which we will find only via such a diversionary procedure.

Thus, we become perversely formalist, self-reflexive yet avoiding self-consciousness by attending to *parergon*, structure, and conceding to focus consciously on content only when and where it insists upon distracting us from formal concerns.

This trajectory is itself a hesitation, a veering off or away from a conscious point or goal in an attempt to keep 'at arm's length' knowledge of what we are doing, of what we are trying or aiming to achieve. This 'trying' and this 'achievement' remain suspicious to a generation reared on a post-structuralist anti-paradigm at whose heart lies a text such as Michel Foucault's preface to *The Order of Things* wherein forms and organisations are comprehensively deconstructed with help from the imagination of Borges - a poet and creative writer who makes new thought possible to philosophers otherwise blinded by knowledge.

(Foucault, M. 1989)

A Guide To The Crooked Path

> If we must suffer, it is better to create the world in which we suffer, and this is what heroes do spontaneously, artists do consciously, and all men do in their degree.

(Ellmann, R. [1918 - 1987] in Heaney, S. 2002, 183)

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> The fact is that poetry is its own reality and no matter how much a poet may concede to the corrective pressures of social, moral, political and historical reality, the ultimate fidelity must be to the demands of the artistic event.

<p style="text-align:center">(Heaney, S. 2002, 183)</p>

We here pursue a poetics of thought and a history of ideas in a speculative fashion (what Nietzsche may have referred to as: 'the crooked path') swayed by aesthetic and material influences that ultimately convince writer, world, and history to value thought.   (Nietzsche, F.W. 1969)

In this respect we have isolated a personal methodology capable of application to further research.

If we continue to consider philosophy as a conflation of love (*philos*) and convincing wisdom (*sophia*) we can take up Heaney's claim above and apply it to our present project thus: though we set out to convince both ourselves and the world, we can only do so by means of wisdom. It is wisdom which will sway, both us and the other, when no reason or artifice will, and it is wisdom which will sway us *from* reason, as reason's other, as an alternative to knowledge. The hubris of knowledge is here usurped by wisdom, wisdom which speaks in sensuous tones, coloured by time and return, and which, without staking claims, nevertheless guides, confirms, and assures.

This is not a mystical wisdom but it *is* a faith in the value of accumulated experience. It thus affirms the daunting and otherwise fatal force of passage. Ultimately, time and life mean us well in that they reveal to us well-being, albeit briefly and only in glimpses. Wisdom is faith in that of which we have no knowledge, that over which we have no power, and which we must yet, in faith, interpret as benign.

This is not a romantic love, but again, an affirmation of the care and concern, the sensuality with which a human is equipped to engage in a productive dialogue with the world. Crimes are invariably crimes against this gift of care and concern, while Hesitation is an example of such consideration, such considerate-ness, a counter to the crude animality of careless impulse.

If we convince the world with our form, our love and our wisdom, then we have coincided with something common and of lasting value. Though we have distinguished 'love' and 'wisdom' as philosophy's elements, its unique achievement and aspiration is to immerse the one (love) within the other (wisdom and its ability to convince) so that what Heaney says above for the poet is also true for the philosopher. I.e. despite corrective pressures, timely judgments and worldly realities bearing upon our project, it remains a world of its own, a 'floating world', convincing wisdom suspended in love, content suspended in form, as sensual as it is moral, as pleasurable as it is arduous, it might be the only world to which we owe fidelity, and only thus is it a gift to the wider world, or worlds, of others.

To write history is first of all to write, and to write is always an event. The non-linear, non-extensity of the event demands that we should not be overly diverted and limited by reasonable, rational measure, nor seduced by knowledge away from the fundamental relation between wisdom and love (a love of wisdom, and a wisdom whose aim is benign).

Even Descartes, whom we expect to encounter as a relatively conservative figure, provides the image of a solitary man in a Northern European room producing 'without scruple' (which can be also translated as 'unhesitatingly') and, as it were, out of the air, interpretations presumed applicable to humanity in general.[2] He thus operates with all the audacity, autonomy, and genius of the poet, prophet and seer. Despite his apparent rationality and modernity Descartes is a kind of shaman bringing back pearls from an inward journey.[3]

<div align="right">(Descartes, R. 1968, 53 - 54)</div>

Though his thoughts intend to be inscribed (and in this way, *pre*scribed), and though his surroundings are that of the sedentary thinker ready to inscribe, he yet ascribes his conclusions only to thinking. It is perhaps this exclusive prioritization of thought - more than any other hind-sighted insight into his philosophical endeavour - that announces Descartes' modernity and his modern

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[2] 'But immediately afterwards I became aware that, while I decided thus to think that everything was false, it followed necessarily that I who thought thus must be something; and observing that this truth: *I think, therefore I am* was so certain and so evident that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking'. (Descartes, R. 1968, 53 - 54)

[3] This interpretation is influenced by Peter Kingsley, who, in his book *In The Dark Places of Wisdom* revises Parnenides' *Fragment* as a similar product of a shamanic and oracular exercise. (Kingsley, P. 2001)

subjectivity. But Descartes also presents us with a lucid description of someone very aware of event-uality, and his sceptical miasma is an embodied intoxication from which he is rescued by his 'therefore', a word which betrays the need to use causality as an expedient means of linking direct experience to *a priori* logic and thus safely claiming value and meaning for his exercise.

Some innate poetics, the very 'prose of the world', offers a more varied menu of possible connections than mere 'therefores'. Different relations, harmonies, rhymes, assonances and alliterations, with which congruous or incongruous phenomena or ideas, events or things, might be linked, wait their turn to play a part in the production or performance of unshakable philosophical foundations.

So what do we connect, and how do we connect? And should we not hesitate before rushing carelessly to do so? A relation between disparate things might be comic, sympathetic, suspenseful, sensuous, surreal, even severed or mourned (all links or relations that are not causal).

<div align="right">(Foucault, M. 1989)</div>

Descartes' 'therefore' is a kind of *eureka!*, a lifeline rescuing him from the un-representable abyss of an uncomfortably confronted present and securing him to knowledge as firmly as he is seated in his chair. Nevertheless, Descartes privileges his inventive powers and eventuality. Eventuality quickly brings philosophy back to poetics, and knowledge back to wisdom. While Nietzschean Romantic waves may crash upon the shores of reason, eroding logic and grammar with poetics, Descartes - a rational thinker - is clearly seduced by the

mnemonic meter of his own worded and written conclusions, i.e. in denial of the poetics which make them appear conclusive and which thus maintain them in posterity, protected from harsh analysis by the charm of their form.

The Right To Write

Discussing the work of Robert Lowell, Seamus Heaney invokes the eventual paradigm as a way of understanding poetry, but it is not difficult to see how his argument is equally applicable to the production of History and philosophy.

> These books often tangle with a great heavy web of subject-matter, autobiographical, cultural and political, yet they are not primarily interested in building stanzas like warehouses to store it. Rather they are interested in how to make an event of it, how to protect forms and energies in terms of it. They are not, of course, successful all the time, but when they do succeed, they rest their claims upon no authority other than the jurisdiction and vigour of their own artistic means.
>
> (Heaney, S. 2002, 210)

'The jurisdiction […] of their own artistic means', would probably be denied by many proclaimers of the history of ideas, but our aim is to expose this underlying *art* of philosophy. Wherever we draw conclusions from diverse phenomena we are yet *drawing,* drawing and weaving, teasing out a gift offered in hope that it might, partly or momentarily, arrest the world if not contain it. A reliable form is desired but an image will suffice. Nietzsche's deconstructive hammer today taps every structure, joint, and link of a history of ideas, testing

forms, which, however carefully wrought, fall short of the containment to which they aspire.

Thus we might reconsider and renegotiate the limits of our ambitions, setting aside, like Nietzsche, the possibility of containment, of confident, sedentary positions or points-of-view, other than that of our live event-uality, the immanent and actual event of our 'painted thoughts' that never 'dry' and will never be final or complete, never containing and thereby never available for containment.

Our role, it seems, is no longer to produce cages of knowledge in which to trap life, but to use our words to release all that has been entrapped, and join in the subsequent revelry. Any satisfaction drawn from our endeavor necessarily enables the perpetuation of, and insistence upon, a certain *dis*satisfaction and relinquishment that marks out those for whom the world is justified only as a constantly questionable phenomenon, those who eschew knowledge and who yet recognise that the world's morality continues to require the conscientious attention of imaginative doctors.

It is not our aim to question for the sake of question but since we feel the responsibility of a vocation to think, read and write, it is inevitable and necessary that we understand our motives, fears, impulses and procrastinations and avoid 'achieving' when our aim is really to *maintain* (never contain) possibility, and to do so by making ways - not edifices or systems.

While in awe and enamored of the knowledge archive we must be equally and constantly impressed by the enormity of our equivalent ignorance and wary of the capacity of the archive to draw us into its labyrinths, there to risk loss of an external perspective and attendant critique, or to endure reduction to the condition of a servant of the archive who might grow to resent the lost possibility of increasing liberty (surely one of our ambitions when entering).

We can here discern a hesitation amid problems of legitimacy and access, whereby we may hesitate before the law of the knowledge archive, intimidated into meek silence by its daunting authority, or feel compelled to impulsively reveal its foundations as something no more or less legitimate than ourselves. Our hesitant question then is not only when or how to write but *who* should write? Whether we have the 'jurisdiction' or whether we might gain the legitimacy we crave, by, and in the act of, writing, and thereby release ourselves from fear of impropriety, while also releasing ourselves from the sense that, for us, writing might merely be audacious.[4]

Technology

If mass-literacy contributes to the emergence of democracy, so democracy, allied to new technologies, might allow a literate mass to produce the beyond or

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[4] The suggestion of Pascal (1623-1662) that we find our faith by directly engaging in its customs and rituals, is also implied - e.g. 'The external must be joined to the internal to obtain anything from God, that is to say, we must kneel, pray with the lips, etc., in order that proud man, who would not submit himself to God, may be now subject to the creature'. (Pascal, B. *Pensees* 1660, 249 - 52 trans. W. F. Trotter [Internet])

'to-come' of democracy, and forge - in various new writings and readings - new laws, new values, new forms.

Technology today promises this possibility. Digital technology and the worldwide web may have not clearly and simply changed the world for the better but today's technological revolution is comparable with earlier and other revolutions in that the initial implications and possibilities of a paradigmatic leap are so profound that they may take generations to unfold - for better and for worse.

Philosophy cannot escape or deny the materials and conditions in and of which it is produced (thoughts, canons, pens, inks, type, typewriters, word processors, computers, events, desks, institutions, publications, conferences, economies). It nevertheless attempts to transcend these by dressing itself up as an objective production while simultaneously denying the subconscious drives and worldly motives of its producers and representatives.

We attempt to transcend our own divided and subdivided *personae* by aspiring to objectivity, only to find ourselves 'dressing' - as did Machiavelli (1469 - 1527) for the special event of writing.

Our persona should not deny the self-consciousness with which we are embroiled while producing philosophy, and it would also be foolish to deny the influence of the technology with which our History or philosophy is produced;

the context *for which* it is produced, and the socio-economic conditions which allow it to be produced (or which inhibit its production).

> Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.

> (Barthes, R. [1915 - 1980] 1977, 142)

Barthes (semi-consciously perhaps) invokes a photographic term here, describing writing as 'the negative' where identity is lost. Serious chemical photographers would always have as their aim the production of a good 'negative' from which many different pictures (various prints and 'crops') could be made, whether immediately or in future, by the photographer or by others. The analogy is similar to music in which the score is set forth for diverse interpretation, and Barthes' famous essay (in a book with the title *Image, Music, Text*) invites writing into this creative company where what is proffered is not a completed assertion but rather a hesitation, some 'thing' that necessarily awaits its future manifestation as a promise or gift to the future and to others.

To write like a composer or a photographer it is necessary to master a certain relinquishment, a certain Barthesian 'slipping away', a diminution of our conscious role in deference to a process which continuously reveals to us unexpected possibilities which are not those we habitually think of as 'our own'. Perhaps our strange aim is after all to produce a 'negative', to provide a surface from which many varied versions can be made. In the production of this 'negative' our method might also resemble that of Mondrian, who claimed that his compositional decisions were 'cancellations' each intending to return the

painting and the viewer to the surface (the surface to which Malevich also claimed, triumphantly, to have 'returned').

(Malevich, K. [*Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting*] Harrison and Wood, 1994, 174)

The Audacity

[…] every poem has the right to ask for a new poetics.

(Swir, A. in Heaney, S. 2002, 208 - 09)

History is our most radical engine, a threat to the spectacular surface of our precious 'today', capable of disrupting the grounds we walk upon. History haunts us with 'might have beens', alternative directions we might have taken. A scientific notion of History might demand certainties but the historian's attempts to provide them invariably resemble the efforts of participants in a court case trying to recall the precise configuration of a car accident.

Meanwhile, an event-ual paradigm, whose vertiginous hesitations make us here radicalise the event of our writing, renders every event unknowable. The event eschews knowledge, avoids being known to both its present and its future. Thus we project our own method back into History and consider a canon of figures, including Descartes or Machiavelli, attempting to write, hesitating to write, being unclear as to what they have written.

To connect such pasts to the present requires more than rational and causal links and more than scrupulously researched evidence. Rather it demands

event-ual and poetic empathies, sympathy with those other 'photographers' and 'composers' of other centuries, carefully crafting their own 'negatives' and 'scores' for others and for other times to 'print' and to perform.

To speak of and for the past is therefore to make a translation, involving all of the difficulties and arts known to translators of literature. It is not so much accuracies and facts but empirical epiphanies and inspired moments (like those described by W.G. Sebald) that make historical translation sufficiently convincing.

Painters influenced by the modern epiphany of Impressionism (itself greatly influenced by photography) might be more habitually attuned to such events than writers and historians. When the world, our will, and representation become 'one-in-the-other', when our aim and our process produce each other as experience, then, there, each enhances and informs the other, *becomes* the other in the *un*fashionable sense wherein 'becoming' means 'adorning' or 'flattering'. Yet such shifts are never categorical, ontological, permanent, but rather like momentary shifts in the quality of light that seem to change everything and nothing, toning the world, transforming its mood, while leaving it nevertheless untouched.

The record is there, in the painting of Morandi, Hopper and de Chirico, the record of events wherein artist, light, air, and object, share, not only place but also pace. 'Eventuality' and 'persistence' serve us better here than '*exi*stence' as the medium of paint and absorbency of the surface dictate possible speeds,

and as the proportions of a stretcher inform everything that will appear upon its canvas. The words we bring to bear upon history seem just as manufactured and just as plastic, just as 'easily-led', as the paint from which the artist conjures images of space and light and passing time.

The past is present, latent, pregnant, awaiting some spark of mind and scratch of pen to allow it to ooze into our moment, producing an alignment, a continuum, where previously there was rupture, aporia, disconnection. Like speeds longing to match, or wheels waiting to synchronise, events aspire to join with others, and it is the thinker's and writer's pleasure, their gift and responsibility, to enable these *rendezvous'* to 'engage' (interlock) by the least painful means. To pursue and clarify this metaphor we can again attribute the writer a negative function in that writing operates like the 'clutch' of an automobile - not its engine, accelerator or gears - inserting necessary hesitations which allow shifts of relationship, new relationships.[5]

<div align="right">(Sebald, W.G. 2002)</div>

The writer and historian might therefore take influence from Bergson, Deleuze, Rodenbach, Sebald and Benjamin, taking art as a model and aiming for the art of their discipline, not only its scientificity. But if the philosopher or historian aims beyond that which knowledge allows, and thereby reaches for the *art* of their vocation, this demands the honing of esoteric skills such as might be

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[5] Sarat Maharaj, in an Art Forum interview with Daniel Birnbaum (*In Other's Words* February 2002), used a similar analogy in his suggestion that the 'infinitive mode' of contemporary thought (inspired by Duchamp's notes) is akin to car whose engine is running but whose gearbox is in neutral. (Maharaj, S. 2002 [Internet])

acquired only by a daily practice of risk-taking, hunch-following, the cultivating of particular conditions, states of mind, involving even refinement of diet, routine, or training the fingers as might a musician, so that they are better prepared to work, to respond and reflex unimpaired by conscious thought or bodily complaint. (Nietzsche, W.F. 1993)

To The Archive?

Does writing History become legitimate by appealing to the archive and thus to the past? Or, in an exploded field of cultural relativism where the archive has no boundaries, is it not inevitable that writing must increasingly produce its own legitimacy (as suggested in Heaney above) from within itself and in its own event? If so, rather than History being ensconced in, and possessed by writing, writing allows for a proliferation of relative and comparative histories, events of writing which are themselves History, if not monadic facets of a paradigmatic memory which has come to supplant History as a dominant paradigm.

For those recently liberated from marginal or unpromising strata of society and welcomed by a democratic inclusivity into higher and further education, and who therefore come anew, as if unexpectedly, to the archive, with little or nothing to conserve, little knowledge of knowledge, with little *investment* in knowledge, for us, for these, the archive may not be something to besiege and exploit, nor endorse, but something before which we might hesitate precisely *as* our contribution to knowledge. In this case our hesitation *is* our contribution.

If we are convinced of the primacy of event-uality and feel compelled to contribute in some immediate way (rather than perpetuate the use of the past to justify a present) we will instead, and more modestly perhaps, contribute our *process*.

Like those distant, but not entirely absent *Barbarians* waiting in Cavafy's eponymous poem, or those rumoured northern hordes just beyond sight in Dino Buzzati's novel *The Tartare Steppe*, we might wisely hesitate beyond knowledge's horizon, beyond its reach and vision, and there, just beyond the power of its magnetic draw, evading its intimidating shadow, choose to maintain a certain liberty, autonomy, and the confidence to speculate, while savouring the sovereign legitimacy of prioritising our process.

(Buzzati, D. 1952)
(Cavafy, C. P. 2007, 53 - 55)

Such legitimacy operates without precedents, threats, hierarchies or judgments and requires no theatre of adjudication any more than a bird requires a law in order to sing.

Many banal and immediate facts inhibit and distract the would-be writer, philosopher or historian. We are tempted from a disciplined and complicit, dutiful and Oedipal journey as a suppliant hoping to have our words affirmed and accepted by the archive. We find ourselves in a conflict between the harsh demands of our immediate world and the task of representing and changing it. Our response is to sway meaning in our own direction, to act like bait on a hook, setting up conditions (*parerga)* into which meaning might be tempted to enter, a

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stage on which it may be tempted to appear. Rather than asserting our wills in valiant searches or contesting territory previously annexed by others, we draw meaning towards ourselves precisely by our refusal to conserve such academic traditions, by every artful innovation that allows us to *avoid* conflict and see world, will, and representation, as undivided.

We proceed via a certain empiricism, certain that *it* proceeds buoyed by faith in that immediacy which binds mind to hand and thought to ink to paper. We proceed via a *radical* empiricism, radical in that it is *rooted* both in the objections of the disenfranchised (as in 17th Century English radicalism) but also radical in that it is *rooted* in the here and now of a legitimacy gleaned from the splinters of a once authoritative, self-assured and privileged canon. The pluralisation resulting from a fractured canon is not something we can call merely democratic, rather it is *alterocratic,* as it supplants a paradigm of hierarchical identities with the production and rule of difference.

Radical Empiricism[6]

> And, in a word, if there is any task in the world which cannot be completed by any other person as well as it can by the person who began it, it is that at which I am now working.
>
> (Descartes, R. 1971, 86)

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[6] 'Radical Empiricism', this term appears in the work of Deleuze where it is, in turn, derived from the work of William James. I have appropriated and adapted it to describe what I have long felt to be my own method, i.e. a way of approaching art, writing, philosophy and History with an immanent sense of an unprecedented and uninformed eventuality, by which perceptions and events dominate and the limiting effects of knowledge recede.

For the most radical empiricist, the event remains a bubble of experience, a maintained solipsistic intensity, a bubble into which knowledge enters only by destructively bursting-in. The event is a doubtful faith, a faith in doubt which certainties interrupt by inviting knowledge to reign over thought.

An event-ual state of radical empiricism may seem unsustainable, a kind of 'ascetic ideal', but that does not mean it is not what we live for as the closest thing we will find to the very promise and possibility which lead us on and give us a way. The radical empiricist is a poet whose surroundings, whatever they may be, are elevated to significance, profundity, and decorous sensuality - without privilege - where, therefore, *alterarchy* (*sic)* replaces hierarchy.[7]

<div align="right">(Deleuze, G. 1996, 143 - 45)</div>

Radical empiricism is the moment without desire, that of sense without knowledge, a cocoon in which we are fulfilled by our inescapable and unwilling event-uality. Its grace might befall us in the least expected of times, ways, or places. Even in war-zones men have described strange beauties and calms as their senses suddenly arose to meet an extraordinary occasion.[8]   In such moments we can experience the necessary underlying truce we make with life, 'life' as an other which, in such moments, we no longer regard as an object distinct from ourselves.

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[7] 'Alterocracy' is a term coined by myself during Howard Caygill's Contemporary Thought seminar at Goldsmiths College c. 2004 - 05 when the seminar's theme was 'Difference'. I intended the neologism to describe a reign or rule of alterity, of others, or of otherness. Here I also adapt it as 'alterarchy'

[8] Here we are thinking of the war journalism of D.H Lawrence.

It is selves in fact which are not truly 'ours', succumbing as they might at any moment to non-life. It is selves which are strangely other-than that life which lays obstacles in our path, harangues us with outrageous fortune, or transports us unexpectedly to bliss. Life is the narative imposed upon the self and which the self has a limited ability to form, and so we make this truce, this pact, this representation, acting as a hesitation, a buffer, an interlocutor, between our world and our will, our life and our self.

The radical empiricist takes the risk of eschewing knowledge in order to nurture this position, to remain at this meeting place, rather than be propelled by knowledge into the defensive organisations of an objective concensus. We suspect that something of this sort seduces every writer and thinker, that it initially seduced Kant - about whom Nietzsche said he had escaped only to run back into the 'cage' of knowledge - or Descartes - whose 'therefore' jumps him out of a suspended doubt into the conclusions of a knowledge. Their perceived duty was in fact *not* only to knowledge, to philosophy or to history, but primarily to impart the experience of a moment, to share their world with others, not through the objective mechanism of science but via the more enigmatic communication of words themselves, words in their writing.

For all of these thinkers, who are also necessarily writers, the very moment of imparting thought is formed and informed by anticipation of the treacherous ink within which their thought will be inscribed. Their thought is thus already a writing (and this is Derrida's *grammatology*, supplanting ontology as a first philosophy while heralding an ethically motivated *hauntology*).

Here we can see, that not only can writing be considered 'in the light of' painting, photography or music, but that thought and its writing are impossible to distinguish, even when extensively, materially seperated, they retain an inseperable continuum.[9]

Audaciously, those writers to whom we referred above invested intuitive faith in the value of their moment. Audaciously and intuitivelty they presumed, in the moment of writing, that value - not only for *that* moment but for other times, eyes and ears, for that abstraction 'man' which formed and justified the import and profundity of their offerings. Thus did they produce an *untimely* thought which we hesitate to label 'objectivity' if only because every certainty remains hypothetical under the scrutiny of the greatest and most inexorable forces of time and change.

What is labelled 'objective' is re-labelled by the radical empiricist as the timely and useful outcome of a gamble. Both the artist and the scientist pursue hunches and both work with given media in forms of 'practice'. They might diverge in the manner with which they proceed once they have discovered a 'way' or direction for their enquiry, but the scientist pursues practical applications led by speculation, while the artist feels justified in pursuing formal

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[9] Significantly, the computer, despite the impositions it makes upon our time and the qualities of our lives, is the technology of *this* age in that it is a lens through which we can bring diverse media into focus in both contingent and contiguous relationships, we can paint, chat, write, think, make images, and music, with the same machine, and in the same hour. Fortunately Post-structuralist thought provides a vocabulary with which to negotiate the post-industrial and postmodern world, in which new technologies change the paradigm of production and where the erosion of modern, Enlightenment, scientific categories blurs into new relationhips which colonise liminal zones with new meaning and possibility.

excellence by means of impractical disruptions. Nevertheless, we can see that the ways and means of artist and scientist are not mutually exclusive.

Written thought's historical persistence and duration, along with its level of philosophical conviction, are dependent *not* upon scientificity but upon subsistent degrees of poetic inspiration rising from the confident pursuit of an impulsively pursued hunch, and subsequently led by the medium of language and the practice of writing into becoming an audacious presumption added to the archive of what will henceforth be referred to as knowledge.

We do not denigrate the gambles of others but return to them repeatedly with and via gambles of our own, thus keeping all contemporary. With our perspectives we re-touch and colour their own, perpetuating them while nevertheless aware (like those aforementioned tale-telling historians) that only via a rather limited certainty which murky ink translates and betrays, can we ever approximate what they felt or thrilled-to in their moment. Nietzsche assures us (e.g. in the conclusion to *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he bemoans the failure of his volatile, sensual thoughts to survive their institutionalisation via publishing) that thought is certainly *affective,* and therefore, as far removed from objectivity as it is possible to be. What we inaccurately read and revise when we turn to an earlier thinker's writings is, according to Nietzsche, already a revised and inaccurate rendering of unrepeatable, private events.

A certain empiricism allows, or insists, that we use the words 'I', 'we', and 'today', while giving experience free rein and taking experience at least as

given. If we take experience as given and as an aspect of our method, we can refuse to deny - along with Laurence Sterne (1713 - 1768) or Mallarmé - the ink, paper, motion, act and event which translate and manifest these very thoughts. For an empiricist, abstract ideas should be abhorrent, but if so they are merely denied because the radical empiricist deals with actual events and this includes the actual event of the invocation of an idea. For the radical empiricist all that divides idealism from empiricism is the question of whether some thing or idea can be said to have been *experienced*, and, as we experience our ideas - albeit in the only form that they are available to us - there lies an empirical brand of idealism in which ideas arise from and in the *medium* of experience. Furthermore, no idea is ever fully entertained by the radical empiricist until it has come around to us *as* experience, and experience thus governs and subsists the realm of ideas.

'To experience' may demand an expanded notion of the senses, e.g. an enhanced consideration of the part that memory plays in experience promotes it to play a role as one of the senses, and so, that which we remember we also experience. Similarly, dreams and intuitions are experiences of the senses, neither distinct from, nor sequestered from rationality but - according to a radical empiricism - are persistent facets of an expanded view of experience.

The Coven

For Deleuze, for Bergson, for Bergson's admiring relative Proust, for Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) and perhaps for modernity, memory is promoted as a

realm, a value, a currency which approximates a sixth sense, a sense which develops as a compensatory response to that modern acceleration and displacement which disorients established senses. Does memory ever play such a central role in other eras as it does for modernity? Are memories and ways of remembering themselves remembered?

As if to remember the way we have remembered, we tell of our telling. When we write of our writing we are attempting to value and preserve the event itself. The event of writing is a coven, a scene around which shades and traces gather. Lines create rhythms of difference, seeming to be the point, the meaning, but merely marking moments of divergence and differentiation, marking cues to rally unexpected readings which ask the lines to gather and renew themselves. We wish to conduct the words as if they are our skilled musicians but all-too often they become an unruly audience, disrupting our intention, staring back, critical of our own performance.

Writing is no guarantor of presence, it merely ushers in uncertainty as we, along with our intentions, slip away into the untimeliness of the medium, losing ourselves in its depths, hoping to return safely to that surface that we can call our own. What we have called presence, that so-called 'now' which is a passing incongruously represented by beats of a timepiece, fails to represent, and marks instead mere sites of differentiation around which multiple times might swirl.

Rather than oppose this fate, our very aim is to get lost in order to avoid the conceit or delusion of knowledge, and to experience the adventure of finding a way-out of what we know into some new place of thought. We get lost in order to compel ourselves to look all the harder. And where do we look? Refusing to perform the objective conceit we look within what we have, within what we do, and within what seems irreducible in our task. We look within *within* (*sic*), wondering what might be without? We look within that which we find ourselves doing and within all that we have found, for and by ourselves. We look for weaknesses, flaws, delusions, omissions and dead ends, as well as in ways and in promises.

From such modern self-reflection we pass on to modern self-deconstruction, exposing the immanence beyond and around our wish to represent. The conceit of philosophy and knowledge is transformed into an anti-philosophy or anti-knowledge by the necessity for it to extinguish its own candles, to erase its own maps, to bring the known into doubt. It is neither a pious nor a destructive pursuit but the production of a sensuous 'floating world' maintained as neither a 'here' nor a 'there', a convincing surface contrived to assuage a fear of depths and manufactured for those who feel the pleasurable intoxication of disorientation and speculative journeys, those who would rather be overpowered by the spell of question than be *em*powered by the conceit of knowledge.

A Machiavelli-after-Derrida, we are always unmaking power in and by our writing, yet meeting power with a 'weak power' in the way that frail craft must

ride-out storms by nosing into them, or traveling with them, rather than attempting to confront them. The pen leads us into darkness, into a trouble that we choose, only to climb and swerve a way out, around an impasse, jumping over a shortcoming, tripping our own pride to reinstate our modesty and deconstruct our knowledge. The path produced by the pen is left, not for ourselves, but to benefit others, and perhaps this is strangest of all and most important, i.e. *never* to write for ourselves but always for others of whom we know nothing. We demonstrate our ability to 'not know' (always improving our skills in this regard) for the sake of those others whom we must presume must also never know. We write *for*, and *to*, but as a fantasy, the dream of a lone traveler who paradoxically wishes for company and dreams of safe harbours.

Do we write at all? Should we be so presumptuous? The pen produces rivers of meaning with linear momentum that we hesitate to contradict and which we fear to lose. The typewriter (the noisiest act of writing and consequently the most difficult to conceal) mediates, mechanises and accelerates writing in ways influenced by mass-produced printing, to provide something immediately commodified and apparently definitive.

Thus the 'machine aesthetic' graces the sacred word at that modern time in the world when the author begins to take on messianic or hieratic status as a rallying voice of mass culture. The globally networked computer however, with its thin, quiet keyboard, its vicarious relations between hand, eye, word and page, places *every* writer on the 'live' stage of instant publication with immediate potential access to a large and broad audience. Thus, in the time

when the hurdle between publishing and non-publishing, professional and amateur, is broken down by technology, the writer also relinquishes the role of providing a rallying voice, gives up this role and aspiration, simply because *everyone* is now a voice, and the world has become a 'speakers corner'.

We attend to the text's details with infinite care, in search of that love and wisdom we have identified as philosophy, picking over its ever provisional, aqueous and luminous surface. The computer's writing is a softly illuminated 'place of correction', a place of cancellation and replacement, a painting or textile made of electronic lights and shades whose aqueous surface we aim ambitiously to complete by repeatedly removing the signs of our labour - as might a J. L. David or Ingres in search of a surface so complete and convincing that it seems transparent. While the aim to produce a flawless, and therefore 'transparent' surface can be attributed to such academic painters, high modernists like Mondrian and Malevich intended their paintings (which could be compared with magnified pixilations) to be affirmations or confirmations of the surface itself.

Along with Mallarmé and Sterne then, and with reference also to Beckett and e.e. cummings, we can say that there is a certain modernity in refusing to represent an illusion of distance, in refusing to deny distance, in confronting ourselves and our others with this kind of fact.

Thought, safe and regularly 'saved', written on and 'into' the uncertain surface of computers, rescues a billion zeros and ones as pixels which might otherwise

be diverted into 'porn', 'spam' or other on-line commerce ever-present, a few clicks away via the same device. Today, philosophy, History, and 'spam' are made of the same 'material', but thankfully, that 'material' is memory. What we might consider to be our noble pursuit - the writing of History at the level of philosophy - here rubs virtual shoulders with apparently 'thoughtless' media and an enormous range of other 'thoughts' written or otherwise depicted. Thoughts of diverse value are revealed in the permissive oracle as global culture, troubling each perspective's horizon of decency, privacy, gravity, and reason. Nevertheless, if we are writing history and / or philosophy today it is likely that this is where and how we will write it.

6. El Lissitzky, *The Constructor*, 1925

Like the Constructvist El Lissitzky, we are tempted to relinquish the identity of 'artist', 'writer' or 'scholar', and to call our*selves* 'computer' as one might be called a driver, a diver or a speaker. We are involved in the *processing* of

words, not their origination, involved in the redirection of pixels and RAM, the computation of digital information-become-philosophy, using 'memory' - the same source and destination as all contemporaneous computer users.

All the time we are concerned as to whether truth might require or demand of us some *indexicality* that the virtual does not provide?

The Way

We may explore the structure of our logic and yet do so by using a numerological, primarily quantitative machine whose own logic is always clearer and simpler than our own and which thus intimidates and, despite its friendly face, alienates us, leaving us to appreciate most (to yearn for and return to if possible) those nuances and weaknesses we call most human.

Unlike the proud, emergent human of Renaissance thought, today we look back on the apotheosis of humanism with regret, reappraising ourselves in a newly modest relation to animals, trees, machines and climate, and we do all this with shame and shortcomings. If we are Nietzschean supermen, forced to accept the unreliability of our claim to morality, we can perhaps nevertheless be forgiven for not knowing what it is that we do, as we aim our arrows at knowledge itself, that modern engine which swept away our humility and hesitation.

Perhaps every writing is a form of defense, a plea, an apology, a product that would be unnecessary to any moment of true faith. But today we might be justified in seeking-out some articulation of our surviving innocence within a writing that is abandoned to drift, in its own medium, in search of that innocence which alone promises a way for a community otherwise threatened by impasse and impossibility, fatally facing its own demise like a card player who has exhausted every permutation of his cards, which now offer their faces as meaningless signs.

And what of this way, this much heralded 'way' which writing, art, science, and thought all promise or embody? One writer contested this conceit too, when Kafka wrote the following very short story:

> It was very early in the morning, the streets clean and deserted, I was on my way to the station. As I compared the tower clock with my watch I realised it was much later than I thought and that I had to hurry; the shock of this discovery made me feel uncertain of the way, I wasn't very well acquainted with the town as yet; fortunately, there was a policeman at hand, I ran to him and breathlessly asked him the way. He smiled and said: 'You asking me the way?' 'Yes', I said, since I don't know it myself'. 'Give it up! Give it up!' said he, and tuned with a sudden jerk, like someone who wants to be alone with his laughter.
> (Kafka, F. 1971, 456)

If the writer, in a post-totalitarian milieu and capable of instantly publishing on the 'live stage' of the worldwide web, can no longer write for and of a particular 'community', where then lies the aim of objectivity? Kafka's story reminds us to question the conceit or presumption that our work may provide a direction or redemption, for self or others. This is an apparently damning thought which

denies us distance, purpose and perspective, slamming us against the surface of our production, consigning us to its own mechanisms and nothing more, like victims of that inscribing machine found in another of Kafka's short stories, *In The Penal Colony*.   (Kafka, F. 1971, 140 - 67)

But if the writer fails to write the beyond (the transcendent 'way') the writer nevertheless necessarily writes *in* a beyond (the immanent, timeless, virtual page, made of digital memory or of pressed paper particles) and is there, and therefore, responsible for maintaining possibility and momentum, if not with grand narratives then within mere scratches on a surface - hence Beckett's 'going on where one cannot go on'.

(Beckett, S. [1906 - 1989] 1975)

History And Self-Reflexivity

Everything of the first rank must be *causa sui*.[10]

(Nietzsche, F.W. 2003, 47)

A certain paradigmatic legitimation or justification, certain valuations and perspectives, which led Renaissance humanism through to 20th Century totalitarianisms, may have deserted us but nevertheless leave this modern 'us' to persist in slight relief against a space once occupied by the modern

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[10] *Causa sui -* the cause of itself.

institutions of history, progress, authorship, Enlightenment, teleology or futurity. The postmodern period might well be interpreted today as a hesitation.

There is no accurate history of 'points' that we can fix or represent with our histories. Events progressively evaporate into the passage of time like stars extinguished, suns 'set', orientations that desert us. History is more appropriately described as untimely, as *durée* and trace, as Proustian remembrance, as a series of unexpected *rendezvous*, networked tracks, crossing and linking the quotidian to the epic, the real to the tragic and the present to the past.

If we make historical claims we nevertheless make them for ourselves, for today, for this writing, this technology. This is not History but it *is* memory, memory writing memory, memory writing *to* memory. We are justified in supplanting the grand term 'History' with that more inclusive term 'memory'. Only *technology*, with its innate evolution, maps for us, in a most material way, a story through time. The transcendent story or 'way' is no more than that, a story, but the tools with which it is made, the ages, pens, quills and computers remain its evidence. We are left with memory and technology as intertwined irreducibles in our critique of History.

No moment is ever aware of its own name. Every nomenclature is of course awarded retrospectively. For a radical empiricist, 'memory and technology' may supplant 'History' but it is then tempting to imagine how past times -wrapped as they are in the convenient nomenclatures and epochal regimes of historicisation

- are re-animated and transformed by participation in our present dialogue e.g. in what ways are the actual 'Baroque', 'Romantic', or 'Modern' distorted by the glib application of their retrospectively awarded names? What are we doing when we attempt to apply current vocabulary or vision to that which is beyond our own event if not merely describing *our own* event in terms imaginatively informed by images of that lost and foreign time?

Rather than vainly strive for objectivity we can reveal the non-exclusivity of events, i.e. reveal that our event exists only 'one in the other',[11] as non-spatial, non-extensive, non-Euclidean, non-exclusive. Perspective and positionality are lost in the act and moment of writing when our technology and our memory immediately intertwine with those of others. We do not magically enter a realm of objectivity at the moment of writing - no matter how academic our intentions - but we *are* drawn out of our subjectivity by engaging in memory and with technology.

Self-Reflexivity

Experience has taught the 'creative', the speculator, the artist in us, to hesitate before setting-off at a moment when we feel that we know where and why we are going. Now, as we are a little wiser - though not yet that brilliant child we

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[11] 'At one in the same time, I become in the sensation and something happens through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body that, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation' (Deleuze, G. 2003). (N.B. This phrase appears to have also been utilised by the early Surrealists).

hope to become - we wait for an oblique trajectory to lead us on a less certain course, gently diverging from our preconceived destination, quietly hoping to arrive via some unfamiliar route having thus gained new perspectives and allowed-for unexpected drifts, forces, tides and pulls beyond our conscious self. Inactivity can be dangerous and fearful, and so we write and find strategies by which to continue writing even while hesitating to write. The outcome may be mild self-reflexivity of the kind that you are presently reading and have surely read elsewhere. It shows that some undirected dynamism finds it hard to be restrained.

It also reveals that if a self-reflexive writing meets the reader at a certain recognisable seam or strata of consciousness then it may be possible to attempt to define other seams, other strata, which occur elsewhere in a modulating text that varies from idling self-reflexivity and self-critique to engaged, ambitious assertion, always seeking to keep the reader's eye but rarely attaining the precise strata of 'scientific objectivity'.

This is not to denigrate self-reflexivity, nor judge it as impotent, impudent, or lazy, nor is it to praise self-reflexivity as lively and non-academic, but merely to raise the question of its site, its character, its necessity and value while considering it as an aspect or example of hesitation at the brink of representation where a medium tends to turn-in on itself as if making a virtue of shyness, as if having no consciously external object, and yet unable to shed its event-ual momentum. Thus it relinquishes a certain drive while being incapable

of surrender, like a breaking wave whose curdling, self-destructive form is maintained by the counter-weight of the momentum at its heart. The self-reflexive model is akin to that of the paradox, tautology, oxymoron, and *doppleganger.* They all represent a fold which informs us and yet defies representation - like the very death in life of which we are aware but to which we 'turn a blind eye' in order to live.

The self-reflexive work takes on - or aims to take on - a life of its own, an autonomous dynamism at-odds with representation, a pulse which drives despite attempts to arrest or tame life with knowledge. However, by means of self-reflexivity, the conceit of objectivity is at last surrendered and risks are taken whereby subjectivity is not likely to be the simple alternative or corollary to objectivity. Something else creeps in-between these lazily dualised terms, something that is 'the event of writing', the *parergon* involved in writing's manufacture and event, its long history of precedents, its underlying motives; the *event*, which, in itself leaves no trace of itself but only the difference it makes possible -the enduring text.

If we read *The Passenger,* a short story by Nabakov (1899 -1977), and find there a story grown from the *meta*-story of a conversation about stories taking place between author and critic, we acknowledge what seems to be a modern sensation of critical self-reflexivity wherein certain conventions of framing and distance are ruptured as if to purposefully evade tradition itself and find space and movement where none was possible by traditional, pre-modern means.

(Nabakov, V. 2001, 183 - 88)

Here we can see the edges of the 'discipline' of literature breaking down into a blurring of borders with other literatures. Deleuze shows this in his work on Kafka and Sacher-Masoch (1836 - 1895) and also when using cinema as a model for new possibilities in philosophy. It is the possibility of a fiction that gives us a chance to negotiate life, it is an ungrounded, unofficial adherence to empiricism and to what Nietzsche called 'aesthetic phenomena' that allow us to justify the world.

The Modern

The device of a story within a story is literature's way of making clear that its responsibility is never to truth but only to its own orientation. Such a device is of course not modern, it travels back at least to examples such as Plato's *Symposium*, to biblical tales, or to Scheherazade's *1001 Nights* in which every story defers an execution thus demonstrating that narrative is always preferable to judgment and that narrative invariably keeps judgment at bay as it requires both force and form to hesitate.

(Mahdi, M. ed. [*Arabian Nights*], 1990)

Bringing the *parergon* to the fore occurs in works as distant in time as those of Lawrence Sterne and e.e. cummings. Something similar could be said of Cubist painting, and in fact, for modernism it becomes not an exception but a rule. A certain critical engagement with representation necessarily involves a degree of self-reflexivity or depends upon a self-reflexivity for its license or impulse, and

we habitually think of this as modern. The modern is a product of new socio-technical conditions that include a dynamic and efficient proliferation of things in the form of commodities, mass-produced consumable objects for the emergent bourgeois power. But the modern is also always the product of diminished communities and degraded working conditions, of poverty operating behind the facade of every modern success. Furthermore, the modern brings unprecedented carnage in machine wars driven beyond all human, national, or legal precedent and justification, producing a haunting shame which de-legitimises and makes hesitant every subsequent endeavour (of every art and thought and word) to attain a transcendent value amid secular society, a society proud-of, and guided by its secularity, pragmatism and materialism.

For the period of post-Impressionism, and before high-modernist abstraction, the object is almost surrendered as the subject fragments. Painting becomes expressive to the point of psychosis before rescuing and redeeming itself in the objectivity and usefulness (to the needs of design) of abstraction. Within the endgames of high modernism, Samuel Beckett's sentences become blocked and brief, and all of this becomes self-conscious because the impulse to express remains ('we must go on', 'we go on') while the transcendent justification for art has passed ('we can't go on').

(Beckett, S. 1992)

This impossibility, this hesitation and impossibility of hesitation, this 'gap in the market' of scepticism and possibility, is then exploited by warmongers who sell capitalism and consumerism as something to which there is no alternative and

no beyond. Art retains a potential to be a redemptive shield sheltering us from artless values, crude utility, and unimaginative solutions. Art maintains the possibility of something more than human, something superhuman, yet saves that possibility for some future time when modernity and super-modernity has blown itself out like a haughty storm.

For this moment, and for this event, ironic disenfranchisement rules the arts, and only in deconstructive and *arrière-garde* strategies is any sense of possibility retained. Nevertheless, art and thought, as indefatigable resources of invention, insist on probing this 'text' to which there may be no outside, continuing to seek air that will avert suffocation, trying to feel the threatening environment as necessity, as nutrition, so that what threatens to drown us also enables us to swim.

WRITING I

But let us note as well that writing […] runs the risk of contenting itself with a supposed continuity that will in fact be nothing but a pleasant interlacing of upstrokes and downstrokes. In the text I am writing at this moment, sentences follow one another and link up more or less as they should […]

(Blanchot, M. 1993, 8)

To *communicate* a state, an inner tension of pathos through signs, including the tempo of these signs - that is the meaning of every style.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 74)

Writing And Living As Torture And Hope

7. Franz Kafka, *Drawing* from: Scott Spector's *Prague Territories* (2000)

In Scott Spector's (b. 1959) book *Prague Territories* we can find a picture drawn by Kafka, of a man apparently despairing at a desk or table. Spector links the image to an extract from one of Kafka's letters in which the desk is described as a kind of torture device. Spector goes on to compare the drawing with Kafka's short story *In The Penal Colony.*

(Spector, S. 2000)

This story describes an outsider's visit to a colonial island community where a peculiar, sadistic and anachronistic form of punishment is carried out.   It involves an elaborate machine that gradually inscribes a man's alleged crime into the flesh of his back using tiny needles while he is strapped to a kind of table. This goes on until a point comes when the punished man begins to decipher and understand what is being written, and shortly after this moment (of supposedly sublime revelation) comes death.

Kafka deals with the law and punishment elsewhere in his work (e.g. in *Before The Law* and *The Trial*), but here - Spector implies - it is the writer's hardware, of desk and pen, which have inspired Kafka, and which are personified in the agency of a torturous justice.

But Kafka's tale might further imply that, whatever we write, we are always truly writing ourselves, writing ourselves to death, writing our lives away, and always from the perspective of a guilt, perpetually writing in search of some elusive and original sin, and yet also in search of the recollection of some lost, original grace - a kind of first love.   (Kafka, F. 1971)

Kafka's image invokes images of Stephen King's (b.1947) *Misery* in which the longed-for fantasy of the successful writer's life gives way to the real difficulties of being confined and dictated-to by desks, pens, computers and deadlines, as well as being trapped by genres, characters, publishers, and an audience that hungrily demands more product of similar quality.

(King, S. 2001)

Furthermore, the infinite possibilities of writing - that most plastic of arts - can all too easily lead us into a *mirage* or dead-end where we produce only uninspired language - 'words without wings'. The pen falls, we lean back and look up, but nothing comes down to rescue us. The paper waits for our inventions to fill it, but in vain, as we begin to feel a compulsion to bathe, to walk, to shop, to eat, to sleep, or to reminisce, to do anything *but* write. And if our guilt and responsibility conspire at this moment to hold us to our word and our task, the

desk - rather than being a craft capable of transporting us on extraordinary journeys - now transforms itself into a sacrificial altar, a site of painful, impossible duties. We are free to write anything, and yet, our body is bound to this all-too-worldly place where there is nothing to write, nothing to be written and nothing worth the trouble of writing. Why are we being punished, and by whom?

8. Wong Kar Wai, *2046,* 2004

In film director Wong Kar Wai's (b. 1958) *2046*, the postmodern, self-reflexive and autobiographical figure of the emerging writer, hesitates over his attempt to begin writing; and not just for a seconds or minutes but for several hours, *days* in fact, before the flow of inspiration can begin.

(Kar Wai, W. 2004)

Wong Kar Wai seems here to insist that writing shares with cinema a reliance on a certain flow or momentum which is at least as important as any particular content or idea. Writing's linear and liquid means lend themselves to such thoughts of passage as the writer's role is represented as that of not interrupting

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time with any intrusive obstacle or contemplative proposition (as might be the case with sculpture, painting or photography) but rather to 'shadow' or parallel time itself, finding a means of matching pace with time, of pulling time into our own qualitative experience, precisely *by* writing, writing along smoothly with time while nevertheless unveiling, as we travel, an image of experience never previously revealed.

When we fail to write, or hesitate to write; when writing tortures us miserably, it is with regard to our *in*ability to enter and swim along with time accompanied by thought and led by our pen. If we are successful (on our own terms and not those of Stephen King's miserably exploited antihero) our desk transforms from an instrument of torture back into a vehicle of hope.

9. Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla, *Under Discussion,* 2005

In recent years the UK Guardian newspaper's weekend Review section - which, for writers, would-be writers, and writers-on-writers, is a weekly haven from the swarm of otherwise crass media- has featured professional writers' desks and

workspaces in the form of a photograph accompanied by a short explanatory text by the writer concerned.

10. Guardian Newspaper Saturday Review, *Writer's Rooms: Sarah Waters,* 27th January 2008

Here, the Guardian's large, non-professional and aspiring readership may drool over the tantalising, probably unrealisable goal of the writerly life, but the image and the accompanying explanation often play-down (in professionally pragmatic tones) any sense of complacency or liberating success and emphasise instead a tough materiality and matter-of-factness of writing's demands and routines.

Yet even this still seems to understate what anyone who has so-far failed to write professionally can begin to imagine to be the often grueling difficulties involved in writing full-length works as a full-time occupation capable of sustaining one's self in a costly and competitive world.

11. Guardian Newspaper Saturday Review, *Writer's Rooms: Will Self,*
7th April 2007

The pleasure taken in the images by the reader is nevertheless voyeuristic and superficial, and the images keep alive taunting hopes of attaining the fantasy of liberty and autonomy associated with the writer's profession. The reader is pulled between reality and fantasy, writing and living, torture and hope.

The pages of the Review are also peppered with advice from well-known authors to aspiring writers, however, Kafka's expressive drawing (above), like his peculiarly masterful clumsiness with words, surely provides a more appropriate warning and guide for the aspiring writer. In Kafka's drawing, writer and desk, desk and chair are all made of the very same ink as writing itself as if to illustrate that writing's materials must absorb us wholly into the event of writing, for better or for worse.

Such comprehensive absorption is inferred by Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author* where one inspired phrase still resonates down the years since it was first encountered: the author 'slips away' in the event of writing

(Barthes, R. 1977)

12. Roland Barthes working at desk.

This phrase conjures in the imagination, not only the sense Barthes seemed to intend i.e. that at the moment of any proud, authoritative inscription we paradoxically 'slip way' in the sense of *relinquishing* identity to the art and act of writing, to culture, to History, to semiotics, to the reader, to the other etc. Barthes' words also invoke the very action of the pen itself 'slipping away', in the sense in which a carpenter or stonemason might 'chip-away' at a block, or a humble bee might 'buzz away' a summer afternoon. That is to say that the

writer and the pen do indeed 'slip away', producing the text by laying down a trail and a trace which is also the very lubricant which enables the journey and which allows a form to appear. The ink provides a wet, black road for a hazardous progression while the product is simultaneously - as if inadvertently - left behind, if only because the event of writing itself cannot be represented. Writing is a line emerging within a blind spot.

The event of writing takes place in a sparking interface between dry paper and shining steel nib, between typewriter keys thumping against incarcerated paper, between keyboard and a remote aqueous screen where memory bytes and pixels trace formations of matter as memory and meaning.[12]

Writing takes place in an immeasurable event between the future into which it blindly leads and the past it leaves as an unreliable trace. Writing is memory writing *to* memory, *in* memory. Despite our efforts to plan, hope and justify our present with reference to our trajectory, we proceed blindly, with writing, as writing, in writing, as much a *grammatology* as a psychology or ontology. To carry this comparison further, we can see that if we also 'slip away' in the act of being we therefore fail to 'be' and are left yearning to be.

What we call 'plans' or 'the future', are always imaginary (something rich insurance companies can happily exploit). Significant and unexpected events - a road accident, an illness, sudden bereavement, 9/11, have the ability to

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[12] Note that technology has also advanced in such a way as to make writing increasingly mediated and almost vicarious. If the computer is overloaded there can even be a temporal hesitation between the act of typing and the appearance of words on the screen.

remind us of the extent to which we live at a blind interface with the world, oblivious to what is about to happen next. Experience is laid like a trail in such an inadvertent way that only art is capable of giving this trail of experience a shape that looks remotely like an intention. We could even go further, and claim that art itself *is* the sign of intention attempting to overcome resignation to the chaos of a life lived blindly.

Michel Foucault, who, like Barthes, also wrote of the demise of the author, used the image of a 'table' in his Borges-inspired preface to *The Order of Things* (a title which can be translated as *Words and Things*). Here, Foucault suggested that, as well as Marxist-ly re-arranging a world given as a set of hierarchised objects and categories, we also need to consider the 'table' on which we imagine these orders and things to be arranged, the given context or 'ground' against which we are able to imagine or perceive them.

(Foucault, M. 1989)

The profound implication here is evocative of Nietzsche's use of the term *Law Table*s in *Zarathustra* (itself evocative of Moses' tablets). For the Nietzschean Foucault, amid the heady, salad days of Post Structuralism, it seemed momentarily possible to question away something as fundamental as foundation itself, and to suggest that, among deconstructions of a male, Western, European, white, heterosexual and modern culture, we should not forget to attend to that specific and perhaps deluded notion, that 'things' not only have 'orders' produced by a certain perspective but that both orders and

things rely upon some imaginary foundation or 'table' on which realities - whether personal or cultural - are organised as a kind of power or defense.

<div align="right">(Nietzsche, F.W. 1969)</div>

It is risky to trouble this 'table' but once it has been acknowledged there may come a time when that is necessary. Foucault at least wanted us to keep this 'table' in question, to consider the possibility of changing it or of making it disappear. Other questions and changes may be important but might be mere tinkering in comparison with this potential paradigm shift.[13]

13. Pre-G4 Power Book

To turn Foucault's image back towards our more immediate concerns, the arbitrariness and unreliability of the supposedly *fixed* table on which we base our power or defense, and against which we compose our hierarchy of values,

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[13] This unnerving thought, which remains vital and current, also briefly illuminates the image of 'thought' and 'writing' as two entities having power over their own productions, or having the presumed ability of written thought to tempt us beyond our established reality and comfort.

invokes the computer's aqueous, virtual, floating 'desktop', or, even more so, the nomadic image of the laptop or 'powerbook', a hyper-commodity writing machine which is *already* a book, a book we don't have to write but merely be seen with in order to obtain some of the power or kudos we might seek by writing a book. The unattainable fantasies of the Guardian Review's 'writer's rooms' photographs, and all the tortuous machinery of Kafka's drawing, seem momentarily dispelled once we award ourselves the angelic company of a stylish 'laptop' whose very wings promise to elevate both our language and our status, offering freedom from the gravity, pain and torture of serious, sedentary, incarcerated writing. But in reality, the laptop is more often seen on a desk than on a lap, this may be because even the largest and steadiest and most reliable lap cannot accommodate the accumulated everyday array of bric-a-brac, talismans and coffee cups, which enhance the sense of territory and privacy necessary to serious and prolonged writing.
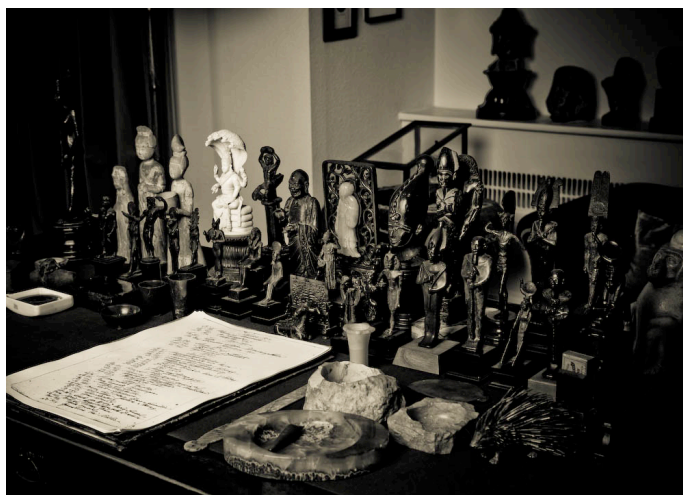
14. Kip Carroll, *Freud's Desk* (photograph), 2006

A glimpse of the Freud museum in London's Hampstead reveals just how much apparently superfluous paraphernalia is required to enable the realisation of world-shaking thoughts. It is noticeable that readers of the Guardian Review 'writers rooms' series enjoy hearing almost every writer whose workspace is represented, describing in detail the little images, charms and fetishised mementoes which accompany them on their daily journeys into writing.

15. Max Pollak, *Freud's Desk* (etching), 1914

If we now reconsider Kafka's drawing we could imagine that the spindly figure there is in fact *clinging* to the object which tortures him, because the desk itself can also be fetishised, along with a particular pen, a time of day, a brand of note book, type of tea etc. as part of the ritual that tempts the mystic art of writing to work.

16. Charles Ray, *How A table Works*, 1986

The awkward physicality that enables the desk's fundamental supportive surface is brought under the scrutiny of the sculptor's eye in the work of artist Charles Ray who has made several pieces on this theme. *How A Table Works* (1986) takes great pains to show us little more than its title suggests - things we presume to know all too well, and yet the result of the artist's peculiar ambition here seems to bring into question (as Kafka himself often does) something disturbing regarding basic facts of our lives which the artist or thinker cannot allow to go unquestioned.

17. Charles Ray, *Tabletop*, 1989

To use another example, Ray's *Tabletop* (1989), presents us with nothing more than banal objects on an unremarkable table until we notice that the objects - most of which are entirely symmetrical - are each spinning, at different speeds, on tiny, hidden turntables built into the otherwise reliably fixed table-top.[14]

This piece might illustrate those diverse, subjective and qualitative 'times' that we experience while - more or less - writing, sometimes feeling trapped and trudging, sometimes skimming along effortlessly with flowing (good) time, sometimes diverted into other times entirely by daydreams. *This* is the table that Freud needed and that every writer really needs, to keep all the necessary fetishes, mental wheels, plates, and cogs, myths and metaphors, spinning happily together in synchronic harmony while giving ourselves over fully to the event of writing.

18. Erich Lessing, *Machiavelli's Room*

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[14] Of all the apparently randomly convened objects it is the relatively chaotic, asymmetrical houseplant that 'gives the game away' as its relation to its background is different to that of the symmetrical pots, bowls and beakers whose movement is almost invisible without close inspection because their symmetry means that their profile does not disturb their relation to their background when they move.

The final desk image here is one that has haunted me (if I may be excused the liberty of slipping momentarily into a personal and anecdotal mode) for some time in a personal and uncanny way, which I am still writing, thinking and waiting to fully understand. The image appears in an *Illustrated History of Philosophy* and has many qualities of a 17th Century Dutch realist interior painting, but closer inspection reveals it to be a relatively recent 'Magnum' photograph. Here, the inherent tracery of photography seems to prove itself capable of transmitting haunting qualities that might adhere to places, as there seems to be more than just a desk, chair, window, candles and other paraphernalia in this room, there is also some kind of 'spirit' transporting itself down the ages. This is Machiavelli's writing desk, in the house to which he was exiled and from where he wrote his infamous works.

(Kenny, A. [b. 1931] 1994)

Daylight falls gently in to Machiavelli's room, through a window that perhaps offers a view of the city from which he is exiled. It makes sense to us that he would dream from a window that frames his longing and his regret, his pride and his shame, motivating him to become again, in some way, all that he has lost. A brace of candlesticks awaits the night, while a quill, a receptacle for ink, a goblet, and an open writing book await the long-departed presence of their master. Upon one page a little bell appears to now act as a paperweight, though it perhaps once called for assistance. This is all we see on the plain, dark table accompanied by a robust and modestly decorated seat.

For Machiavelli, the image of distant Florence was perhaps the prompt he needed to maintain his momentum, aim and purpose. The desk in Freud's London study is very different, surrounded and littered with cultural paraphernalia from unseen and unknown places as if to guard him in his explorations against that overarching modern conceit - the known itself. Guarding against the dehydration of fluid speculation, the little audience of assembled figurines are crowded there as if to invoke every kind of pre-modern spirit, and invited to whisper to Freud alone, the secret of what 'modern' really means. Many of Freud's key emblems can be seen in this room, in totems, images of Gradiva, Oedipus etc., all operating, presumably as fetishes, prompts and illustrations for his theories, and yet it is equally possible - from an anti-, ante-, or post- modern perspective - that they simply retain and maintain their original powers, utilizing Freud as their vehicle to survive the transposition to modernity

Both Freud and Machiavelli are exiles, and yet, for the writer, who in beginning seeks nothing so much as a way and an end, exile is 'part of the furniture' of writing, one of its familiar and necessary requirements. To begin to write is first to throw oneself in and therefore throw oneself away, albeit with the aim of rescuing - at some unknown point in the future - both the work and the self, rescuing all that is at stake, exiling oneself in order to negotiate a return.[15] The writer's desk, however bulky and no matter how fetishised, must therefore at some point become a vehicle, a carriage for a Mercurial messenger.

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[15] It is of course possible that, in attempting to rescue ourselves with garlands of words we will become fatally entangled, and, like Ophelia, die an ignominious death whose precise cause and moment remains uncertain.

Writing never masters our enquiry nor answers our question, but at best illuminates and communicates via its own means and its own limits, via the passage that life is. Writing attempts, as its highest aim, to keep pace with that momentum rather than claim false perspectives (sedentary points-of-view), but in doing so it necessarily enters into a fold of self-reflexivity from within which it then struggles to reveal anything more than itself to itself.

In the midst of this turbulent adventure, the tools and materials of writing - our form, method, desk, chair, pages, ink, pen or keyboard - offer the illusion of a means of belonging, but no matter what schema we rehearse and however we make it manifest, our writing's value is guaranteed only as an untimely and audacious gamble, pitched in the direction of posterity and passing almost certainly unnoted by the unspeakable force which relentlessly urges all along, making space - all-too-soon - for other events.

The writer's product waxes and wanes within its lines and pages, coagulating into fragments of conviction, then growing only half-convincing. Or, here and there, convincing so confidently as to become thoroughly *un*convincing. Only according to that unforgiving description by Maurice Denis (1870 - 1943) of modern painting as: '[…] essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order' could writing's unnerving fluidity harden and homogenise into cohesive thing-hood via endless rituals of completion that only consolidate with the effect of passed time.

(Denis, M. in Harrison, C. and Wood, P. 1998, 863)

Writing is a manufactured truth, a story told by winners, and the writer is only one of the many forces acting to determine its success or failure. Only as a result of popularity can writing regain its original mobility, only through being translated, read, copied, distributed, interpreted, can it evaporate and effervesce again as diverse and numerous readers are invited to rain fresh meaning on to its long-dried pages, reawakening the diverse and numerous possibilities that were present at its moment of origin.

If a writing's conviction is strong (and the honest writer will be the first to admit that its source lies in an untimely hunch) it is - unlike almost any other medium - likely to offend some one or some thing, somewhere at some time; and this is the source of its strangely attractive responsibility. More than any other artist the writer knows and questions responsibility, not least in the propensity to harm and to self-harm, because to pronounce, using the toolkit of a shared and cherished language, is the writer's *raison d'etre*. In publishing anything of value to a world thirsty for new images of itself, we are likely - at some time and place - to be denounced. We do battle with writing, attempting to disarm it, to overcome it, if only that it won't overcome *us.* We tussle, seeking to save ourselves from the injury that our own writing might do to us, we wrestle, craft, attempting to turn its edge away from self-harm and towards some other object, some objective and objectivity, only to find that writing can never be simply 'for' or 'against' but is always more mercurial than any Mercury we hope to become by delivering a singular truth to the world.

In Machiavelli's letters, sent from his exile in Saint Andrea, Percussina, outside Florence, after 1512, he describes in detail the rural lifestyle to which he had been reduced by his fall-from-grace as a result of changing powers within the city, and having described, with a sophisticated eye, such relatively crude pastimes as snaring birds and gambling with local tradesmen, he takes pleasure in also revealing that, when evening comes, he leaves his rough country clothes at the door of his room and dresses again in his urban finery so as to be appropriately attired when studying the great writers and thinkers that he will here read and respond-to in his own writing at his reassuringly substantial desk.

(Machiavelli, N. 1979, 66 - 71)

It is significant for us that Machiavelli dressed especially for the event of writing, fetishising the clothes which made the identity of the thinker and writer possible, he 'made a date' with writing and his circumstances forced him to theatricalise and make apparent the specialness of the event as he slipped into more comfortable and prestigious clothes in order to 'slip away' into the role of author, a role which, for him, had become increasingly unreal and vicarious as he attempted to whisper cold, conspiratorial pragmatism into the ear of power from an unlikely distance.

If we have seen Wong Kar Wai sufficiently influenced by the thought of Barthes and Foucault as to hesitate in a postmodern limbo, struggling to pursue the ironicised author function long after its rumoured death, we can also see him eventually breaking through this block and writing-on, even if it means doing-so

in simulation, without truth or sincerity, jettisoning the Romantic see-saw of (real) torture and (false) hope, and embracing (as does Barthes) the escape-route of perfomativity in a way comparable with that described by Machiavelli as the key to ending the writer's exile from the territories of authorship.

But as to why this image of Machiavelli's room is so uncannily important to *me*, we have to switch into an un-academic, anecdotal and autobiographical mode, justified as necessary to explain what might be the prime motive of this entire thesis, yet one which we have thus-far hesitated to confess.

The image of Machiavelli's desk and room may have some relevance to my own battles with fortune and the city, having once or twice lost my own financial and social grip and having been similarly exiled to the more miserable suburbs, from where, only written correspondence was capable of starting the process of restoring me to hard-won metropolitan respectability.
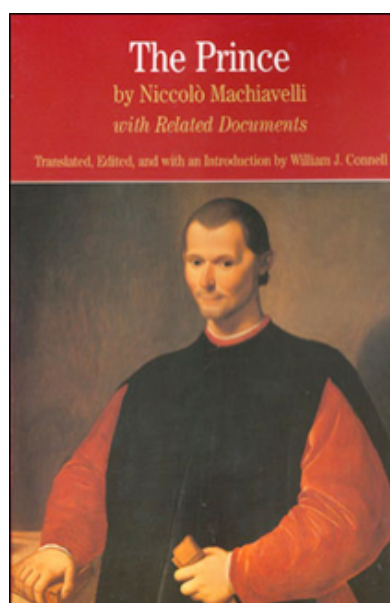
19. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (paperback)

What is more likely however, is that this image is linked to my very own 'author' in the shape of my late father and his very real, unexpected death. My father was a frustrated would-be writer whose responsibilities to his family took his dreams beyond his reach. My mother often described the scene in which 'dad' is sitting at a desk or dining table as a young, newly married man, having hurried home exhausted from work to try and fulfill his daily commitment to write so-many thousand words, but finding this target increasingly elusive with, first one, then two inquisitive children perched simultaneously on his lap, before finally giving up writing altogether when numbers three, four, then five arrived.

Here I can again invoke Kafka's story *In The Penal Colony* and, in this tale of my father, begin to discern my own 'crime' as that of an intrusive child disallowing my father access to his literary dream. If so, then my own writing, even here and now, repeatedly inscribes, as if into my own life and flesh, a fair and accurate diagram of my culpability, perhaps in the hope that it will be satisfactorily deciphered before my own death (whose timeliness or untimeliness, I have learned, it is impossible to anticipate).

We can also equate Kafka's imagery here with Freud's project and procedures, involving not only Oedipal relationships but the uncovering and assimilating of a primary autobiographical event capable of initiating a lifelong problem which can be diverted and sublimated as art. However, what links the Magnum photo of Machiavelli's desk to the tale of my father's frustrations is not only that my father was a civil servant - and therefore like Machiavelli in being an advisor to more truly empowered men - but that when my father died, quite suddenly, at an early

age, having apparently exhausted himself in performing the roles of dedicated 'servant', dutiful father, and enslaved commuter, the office desk at which he had worked for many years was cleared and its contents returned to his family. The only book that occupied the draw of his desk was a cheap paperback edition of 'The Prince' by Machiavelli, and, when this was handed, by my widowed mother, directly to me (among five siblings) it may have made some indelible impression in my moment of disorienting, teenage grief. The book, and the image of Machiavelli - as well as that of desks - could then be interpreted as a significant, personal object, symbolic of my father's self-image and of my own relationship to him, symbolic of some outstanding debt or duty (a kind of gauntlet), symbolic of guilt at his premature and dissatisfied death and at my own intrusive birth and persistence in his absence.[16]

(Machiavelli, N. 1981)

Despite this writing, and previous attempts to investigate the possible scene of this possible crime, I can say no more about these connections but hopefully the reader can glimpse the layered echoes, germane to this dissertation's form and content, e.g. in the figure of the vicarious, secretive, shameful and exiled writer, the servant, the exile,[17] the traveler between city and suburb; as well as the would-be writer's relation to the would-be powerful. We can also compare these two performers, who change clothes and identities at the end of drudgery days, connecting them to our emphasis here on the elusive dream of writing

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[16] I have also speculated, in more Kafkaesque moods, on whether *every* civil servant's desk might come replete with a copy of this iconic book tucked in its drawer, in the way that bedside tables in hotels were once equipped with Gideon bibles.

[17] My father was a Catholic emigrant to a country dominated by Protestantism, and consequently doubly-marginalised, as well as being far off-course in pursuing his dreams.

compared with the necessary materiality, stamina, time, and tools that it demands.

There is both a hope and a torture of writing, a fantasy and a reality, neither of which can be allowed to dominate the other for long without losing sight of writing altogether. Furthermore, the writer and writing can never travel far from some foundational support on which we must rely in order to produce any writing capable of supporting that writerly life. Nevertheless, *any* such fundamental reality, security, or territory *can* suddenly shift, revealing itself and everything that depends upon it to be a fantasy after-all and thus necessitating recognition of the fact that, however secular we feel ourselves to be, we nevertheless live and write, in and with, faith.

The Sieve

We have cited two authors, Freud and Machiavelli, both exiles, and spanning a period of 500 years. One of the two might be perceived as a devilish character responsible for poisoning a perceived idea of a more virtuous or pious society with a candid description of its underlying ruthless pragmatism. But which are we describing here? It sounds like the popular reception of Machiavelli, but the description might be ascribed just as easily to Freud's disturbance of the self-image of the 19th Century bourgeoisie as it could to Machiavelli's exposure of the backstage apparatus of Florentine power.

Both authors harness an innate confessional attribute of writing, blurting and breaching (or as American gangsters once said, 'singing') for all to hear, discomforting truths that were previously the esoteric privilege of a more private sect and therefore behaving in a manner unsuitable to a regime of gentlemen. To write means neither to wield a sword nor to produce a shield, rather it is akin to the construction of a sieve, a filter through which we might capture and select certain thoughts from those which run-on ahead, unrepresented, into the passage of time, neither belonging-to, nor claimed-by us.

To write thought is always to leak and to spill, to breach each defense of self, yet to thereby reveal defenses previously unknown to self or other. At best it becomes an art of peace, a 'double-agent' in the fight against war. As Albert Camus (1913 - 1960) writes: 'art is no-one's enemy' and this particular art (philosophy in writing) never precisely aims its arrows, but dips them in hope and sends them in to the world aspiring to infiltrate and influence the source of violence. (Camus, A. 1975, 192)

Printing, publishing, and fame - as they are variously constituted in Freud's and Machiavelli's lifetime - play some part as fellow forces in reducing any hesitation that might have restrained these writers from changing the world with their pens. If the printing and distribution of images and texts is one of the motivating forces of Renaissance humanism - as mass-literacy is considered to be a motivating force of democracy - then the late 19th Century mechanisation of Europe (which is now difficult not to read as a blind preparation for monstrous mechanical wars) and the appearance of fast-changing mass markets and

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conduits of mass communication provide the swift-flowing veins and arteries for Freud's rapid and significant influence.

Thus socio-technical revolutions are aligned, like portentous stars, with a humanism that ascends only to spill-over; a humanism via which men develop strong beliefs in their ability to direct their destiny but the apotheosis of which will become the unchecked narcissism and inhumanity of fascism. Thus we traverse the long road from humanism to 'man's inhumanity to man'.[18]

Freud and Machiavelli, men of their time, momentous, and now monumental, wrote thought in hypothetical and speculative ways, albeit with a degree of professional competence and confidence. Nevertheless, the peculiar mechanism of desk, paper, ink, hand and thought, appears to have led them on, immersed in the streams, flows, rocks and rapids of writing, producing knowledge by populating barren pages with communities of words hitherto unacquainted with the particular configurations which will become *The Prince, The Art of War,* or *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

The Bell?

In the photograph of Machiavelli's room, there is an object that we can't clearly identify. It might be a paperweight and it might be a bell. It might be a dead

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[18] A phrase coined in the18th century by poet 'Rabbie' Burns, but which the 20th has made all its own.

(Burns, R. [1759 - 1796] 1968)

weight to keep pages from flying in a breeze - i.e. intended to keep chaos at bay and stop some unanticipated event from occurring - or a bell to signal a change of event and set events in motion, a bell one might hesitate before ringing.

How much do words weigh? As much as the paper and ink in which they are written, the weight, perhaps, of their virtual memory on a flash drive? And how deep do they sink beneath their surface as they swim along in their neat lanes, anxious to be seen clearly, anxious to reach some conclusion, hoping to be remembered. If the object we see there on Machiavelli's table *is* a weight it maintains order but provides no other function, but if it is a bell it can provide both its dead weight and the ability to herald events. Similarly our writing pleads not to become merely a dead weight but also to maintain the purpose and possibility of the bell. If it fails to 'ring' or brings about no changes, then of what value can it be? The text has this dual character, an inescapable, 'dumb' materiality, a voice or call that aspires to make a difference. The difficulty for the writer is in honestly walking this line, the line of every perilous sentence, strung between a great potential value and a waste of time and materials.

The Event

20. Félix Nadar, *Mallarmé*, 1896

If one clings as close as possible to the scene and moment of writing, it is not in search of purity, essence or truth. It may have echoes in certain self-conscious and self-reflexive strategies of modernists like Joyce, Beckett, or Mallarmé, it might recall the typographic plays of Lawrence Sterne while haunted by a certain factualism in Wittgenstein. However, what is perhaps most valuable is that by writing of writing's own event we attempt to evade or avoid representative habits or conceits of knowledge, aiming to divorce writing *from* knowledge - even from thinking - in pursuit of a certain hesitation *between* writing and knowledge, writing and thought, seeking to occupy a *différance* that Derrida described as 'this side of meaning'.

(Derrida, J. 1988)

We thus attempt to expose a latent, imminent and indeed immanent writing which risks itself by asking to be valued not for what it claims, believes, or presumes to contribute, but for its event, form and method which require no interpretation and are yet necessary to the participation we call 'reading'.

Just as Barthes' author 'slips away' so writing never 'is'. If we can return to our own words as a kind of other and be surprised at their counsel (for better of worse) we cannot expect to pin them down in the light of others' eyes. Form, event and method significantly determine our content, albeit in a barely noticeable, subconscious or 'haunting' manner. They make our meaning available to be gathered-up in the reading act, but any direct allusion to form, event and method ruptures the text's dream of transcendence and returns us to its worldly and 'all too human' dependence.

This 'latent text' that we inadvertently produce in form, method and event, politely excuses itself from appearing in the world but proposes itself instead as a vacuum into which the readings of others might rush. A writing that attempts to sustain or maintain attention to its form, method and event tries to avoid presuming knowledge, and, by candidly relaying the legitimacy of the experience of writing, attempts to *rendezvous* more accurately with the event of reading in what might be called an 'absolute literature'.[19]

(Calasso, Robert. 2001)

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[19] Roberto Calasso uses this term to orientate one chapter of his book.

Writing relays experience of itself, if only to relay, and to relay only, that *everything* experiences itself. Beyond points-of-view, or subject/object relations lies a pervasive, latent, self-consciousness, a blind spot of unformed energy, a hesitation before being, a *durée* that is a non-extensive determinant of form, not yet a being, *never* yet, but a *to-being* (akin to Nietzsche's understanding that a 'will-to-power' subsists 'power itself' as a more necessary force in our lives and in the world). Perhaps we can also call this unrepresented temporal determinant 'immanence'.

Monad

A radical empiricism replaces the ontological habits of knowledge with a universe of knowledges rendered skeptical precisely by the self's ability to experience, act and reflect. The passage of time is always greater than representational attempts to deny it by means of ontologisation, naming and delusions of arrest. To apply a Leibnizian scenario to our Humean (*sic*) or Jamesian assertion, radical empiricists are akin to monads, aware only of their experiential limits, persisting faithfully, reliantly, contingently, *alteritously,* each illuminating a small area as they proceed, while claiming and attaining no 'knowledge' but only witnessing the relative and variable *pace* of what Walter Benjamin - surely himself a radical empiricist- referred to as 'illuminations'.

> Leibniz's most famous proposition is that every soul or subject (monad) is completely closed, windowless and doorless, and contains the whole world in its darkest depths, while also illuminating some little portion of that world, each monad a

different portion. […] The minimalist art of Tony Smith presents us with the following situation: a car speeding along a dark motorway lit only by the car's headlamps, with the same tarmac hurtling by in the windscreen. It's a modern version of the monad, with the windscreen playing the part of a small illuminated area. You wonder if we can understand this socially and politically. Certainly, and the baroque was itself linked to a political system, a new concept of politics. The move towards replacing the system of a window and a world outside with one of a computer screen in a closed room is something that's taking place in our social life: we read the world more than we see it.[20]

<p align="right">(Deleuze, G. 1995, 157 - 58)</p>

In the event of writing, any delusion of a privileged perspective has to be surrendered, relinquished to a celebration of our arbitrary relations. Writing is both produced and read in an event, and both these events are streams, journeys, passages, unsuited to the description 'thing'. There is an encounter, a participation, a rendezvous, but we cannot speak of points of view here where all is in relative motion. Nonetheless, we have an opportunity to attempt to encompass or illuminate at least some small area around us, if only ourselves and our event of writing, illuminating only our illuminations, only the tools and materials, the method, event and form of our writing, its *parerga* of desk, page, candle, lamp, illuminated screen or window.

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[20] Deleuze here makes an error, inaccurately recalling Tony Smith's often quoted epiphany, however, for our purposes, and according to our principles, this 'error' (we could say a fold or bend of memory) does not detract from the usefulness of the new thought in which it results - imaginatively combining cars, computers and monads.

The Point

We have been left unconvinced or bemused by the first page of Euclid, where points appear as primary in orienting our understanding - despite Euclid's enigmatic phrase: 'A point is that which has no part' - and therefore find ourselves ever 'on points', on tip-toes, 'dove's feet', always tipping the point of balance into pointlessness, becoming other, moving-on, respecting momentum more than logic, reason, achievement, accomplishment or closure.

Our title, *A Hesitation of Things,* promises to probe the idea of a 'thing', and to trouble 'things' with the temporal nuance of 'hesitation'. When we trouble things, we trouble their 'this', their 'then', and their 'when'. Writing, if philosophical, will never be complacent concerning what it is, what *this* 'is', but will also be compelled to ask: what is this 'this', this '*is*'? Thus we come to, and come back to, our first object of investigation, writing, *this* writing, 'returning to the surface' - as the great modernist Malevich claimed for his painting- prodding and probing our own writing for signs or qualities of hesitation.

What else, after all, could or should lay greater claim to our attentions as primary or preferred object of our investigation? Any 'choice' would be arbitrary, and so we are flung back upon that over which we have no power of choice, our now, our event, our immanence. Writing, and *this* writing become our first 'thing', a thing that hesitates and a thing of which hesitation is constitutive.

(Malevich. K. *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting* in Harrison and Wood, 1994, 174)

Hesitation is the mark of a somewhat anachronistic politeness by which ghosts of a pre-modern, aristocratic and leisurely voice take pains and time to avoid impulsively embarking upon any hasty and perilous journeys involving reader, writer, or that one we have together become. Hesitation, in this case, amounts to etiquette, and all etiquette acknowledges and negotiates a surface where one begins and another ends. Etiquette appears where encounters demand that we tread lightly and take time, when climbing walls, entering gates, touching skins, breaking ice, when intervening at the interface between one and an other, there must always be a hesitation, or, a relative impulse, no unnamed perfect pace, only one or other of these somewhat loaded terms, 'hesitation' or 'impulse'.

It is significant that certain rhetorical practices by which a preacher, a lawyer, a senator, or a philosopher might ingratiate themselves and their subject to an audience before 'coming to their point' remain as niceties in the form of introductions, prologues, prefaces, dedications, preambles i.e. *niceties* which would reach apotheosis in a writing or speech which never *did* get to the point but which hesitated before any such a Euclidean conceit as 'point', hesitating to *make* a point, score a point, land a point, hesitating before doing anything so crude and presumptuous as to be frank, blunt, or precise, or impulsively jumping to the point - perhaps that would not even be language, perhaps language itself is a hesitant etiquette.

Derrida played with this strategy in the chapters of *Limited Inc*, as did Italo Calvino (1923 -1985) in *If On A Winter's Night A Traveller*. We can also see hesitation as etiquette alluded-to in the works of Mishima and Ishiguro that

describe deferential aspects of Japanese traditional custom forever inserting hesitations into social encounters. But these authors also seem to allow such custom to inform their style so that the atmosphere or environment of their narratives results from the pace of the procession of their text, i.e. the quiet poetics, the calm musicality of their writing.

We can see hesitation as the necessary maintenance of suspense in narratives that reach their own apotheosis in crime, thriller, and ghost stories like Henry James' (1843 - 1916) *The Turn of the Screw,* or in Cinema's use of slow motion to depict dramatic moments. Every promised-yet-deferred outcome produces the tension necessary to the production of a romance, but even 'I am' is a kind of short story; a brief but important journey with a certain rhythm, expectation, outcome, and a loose end. Here we are claiming these qualities not just for cinema and literature but for the event of experience, defined or determined as a particular pace or *durée* rather than a thing. What we call 'life', 'self', 'experience', is governed by a certain temporal tension, a hesitation or *durée*.

<div align="right">
(Derrida, J. c1988)
(Calvino, I. 1995)
(James, H. 1986)
</div>

A 'Floating World'

There is a world, explicable according to a radical empiricism, which taunts Western philosophy but which might be accepted and named according to Japanese culture as 'the floating world', in that it has no orientation or purpose other than to indulge the senses. This is a world where philosophy fears it may end or disappear, where man 'becomes animal' and philosophy becomes 'anti-

philosophy'. Perhaps it is there in every philosophy, as an overlooked, under-appreciated, and yet integral aspect of every philosophical production, which can be revealed by attention, not to ideas and 'points' but to their very production, by referring honestly to their form, method, event -and their motive too perhaps.

A writing which, in working purposefully *away from* the ambition or aim that the writer or speaker has in mind (constantly hesitating, that is, to arrive at a conclusion or to confirm a hunch) reveals 'some thing else in mind' that we have and that is always our truer aim. Surely this would be philosophy, not asserting or knowing but truly *thinking*, and in writing doing our best to maintain our thoughts *as* thoughts, thinking and writing in such a way as to rescue our thought from its writing, trying to fend off the incarcerating effects of writing and of knowledge upon our lively thoughts.

I am writing, the path of this writing soon leads to writing *this*, but this is merely to be honest, to be guided by honesty, and, like Descartes, to be guided at least, and at last, by something. Self-reflexivity remains a door through which to avoid habits and presumptions of the production of knowledge and by which to seek to maintain something precious, human and poetic about the event of writing that is otherwise sacrificed to the conscious performance of scholarship, academicism and knowledge. Self-reflexivity relinquishes all this for the sake of making other than a point. Attending to all that is other than a point, we reveal our *parerga*, where we leave space before lines begin, margins, necessary pauses and breaks within words, sentences, making writing, and making the

event of writing that becomes a slipping away, a writing away, the writing of a way that is away from aspirations to achieve the production of a thing.

<div align="right">(Cioran, E.M. [1991 - 1995] 1987)</div>

This is not so much an identity as a difference, not so much a self as a walking-away from self towards a way that is no more or less than a way. It is a path we admire for its own sake not for where it may lead, a path about which we wonder only how it came to be or how came it to be thus, yet which is of our own making. It is a way about which we wonder not where it will lead but what it might become. A way, not a thing, made of impulses, events, hesitations and meanderings, cracks and jumps, moments of conviction, energy surges and doldrums, a languishing way, dismissive of power, but which is necessarily weak, purposefully fragile, a surface wounded, broken open to reveal molten, volatile contents.

The event articulates a hesitation of things, placing 'thinghood' in abeyance, in the dock, in suspense, expectation, and promise. If the event aims, it aims to differentiate, to place difference where identity reigned and to place hesitation in the place of claim, so that - as Derrida said of *Différance* - it may eschew every kingdom.

> Not only is there no kingdom of *différance*, but *différance* instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom.
>
> <div align="right">(Derrida, J. 1982, 21 - 2)</div>

About About (*sic*)

Bergson said of Leibniz that the 17th Century philosopher stated 'God is the substance which has no point of view',[21] and such relinquishments - the relinquishment of kingdom, of point-of-view, and of self - become the strange ambition of a writing which is a history only of its event and which is ultimately about about (*sic*).   (Bergson, H. 1998, 352)

We try to separate writing from its habitual relation to its meaning and purpose (its 'about') in search of critique of writing as mean-ing. Mean-ing quickly becomes conscious of itself as a verb, a description of an act and an event. We transform things into events, meaning into an act, writing into its *parerga,* philosophy into anti-philosophy, being into 'to-being', world into 'the floating world'.

Hesitation accuses knowledge of grasping, of knowing a world as things in order for them to be grasped. Hesitation primarily hesitates to grasp, hesitates to know a thing such that it can be captured. We might refer to *writing's event* but this ''s (*sic*) - as a sign of ownership - is misleading, no event is the *property* of an action, events are resonant, defined by what they encounter and what encounters them. If a writing *has* an event then that event no less *has* that writing. When we say 'its event' - referring to this writing - we speak not of an

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[21] Nietzsche can come to our aid here too when, in his essay *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* he derides all perspectives (Nietzsche, F.W. in Cazeaux C. 2000, 53 - 62).

event that the writing owns but only of the event in which the writing shares, in which you, or we, might momentarily share, or through which we pass.

Events are non-extensive and non-exclusive, they are 'one in the other'. The event is a monad in a relativist universe, *sans* God, *sans* point of view. It is for these reasons that we write of writing, of desks, of pens, inks, screens and pages. It is for these reasons that we write *about about,* i.e. write of anything but about some 'thing' or things that might self-consciously become objects of knowledge. We hesitate before things, in order to first write about about (*sic*), And if we write away from things, we perhaps write backwards.

(Deleuze, G. 2003)

We hesitate to reach for the pen, to sit *at* the desk, making everything questionable and presumptuous. Before switching on our electric writing we consider its source and its cost. Our environment, our culture is drenched in guilt, new gods have arisen to make thinkers doubt. We focus on the *parerga*, producing, in a moment of impossibility nothing more than the possibility for others to produce. We tread water, killing time, here at the surface, floating, provisional, a flashing cursor, doubtful of progress, sceptical of ends.

That which surrounds and supports, that which is not the object but is around and about ('about' in the sense of being local or approximate) that which defines the thing by being all that the thing is not. Only with reference to this elusive object do we begin to achieve a suitably respectful, polite and hesitant relationship with writing, writing which drew us in, not only with its effects but

also with its inherent responsibility. More than any 'thing' we are looking for a moment to set out, awaiting an *auspicion* (*sic*), to set out with an oblique trajectory, cultivating an 'angle' but never achieving or hoping for a point of view, and carrying responsibility wrapped in such effects. Like Proust's narrator we are writing only to reach the possibility of beginning to write.

If we write about about (*sic*) (again tussling with the *god of grammar*) it is in several senses, i.e. we write concerning about-ness, about mean-ing, about where we stand in relation to mean-ing, but we also write near (about) and around (about) hesitating before mean-ing we approximate, grace, graze, glance or haunt mean-ing while never hoping to claim or master elusive and mercurial mean-ing, always saying never, never knowing, never encompassing, never being sure of a thing or an 'it', vicariously manipulating words while words are themselves equally Machiavellian in that they ambitiously admire, approach and appease mean-ing rather than ever owning or becoming (what we hesitate to call) 'it'.   (Nietzsche F.W. 2003, 48)

We about-turn, flip, spin or reverse one or other of our 'abouts', so that, though apparently familiar and under no erasure, 'about' becomes invisibly reversed, as if in its electrical polarity, by catching up with itself, facing up to itself. Only with our 'about' thus transformed do we come to our object as a true equal. We are intentionally disempowered, self-effaced, unwilling to master, unwilling *per se*, and thereby forced into new speculations, un-known relationships, forced into *real* relationship we might say.   (Cioran, E.M. 1968)

This Writing

This writing, in citing Machiavelli, Derrida, Bergson, Deleuze and Nietzsche, places its relinquishment of self in or around a certain canon, but, despite this it wishes not to belong but to walk its way, claiming little other than a particular pace, momentum, gait.

This writing, as it becomes, becomes writing this (*sic*), achieves a content-less-ness that celebrates method, form, event, becoming sufficiently empty to be without lack, traveling purposefully in the opposite direction to any signposted accomplishments, making itself by unmaking. We arrive at the completion of our formal education by a reversal that closes a circle rather than caps off a tower, the whole thing hesitates on the brink of closure and completion, hesitating to be or to become 'thing'.

But this has perhaps been our model, our form, ever since modern trauma derailed all confidence in trajectory itself? The modern seems to have taken its thrust as a surge towards finality, towards a mythic (we now see) place and time where, presumably everything would end, stop, and/or be better. The modern always is/was a kind of death wish, a totalitarian of final solution. The culture that lives as critical of, or as surpassing modernity, also has its finality, but it is not sought-after, it is here, now, in the very 'final infinitude' of relativism, hesitation, and disorientation.[22] Every postmodernism is a grand hesitation, the

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[22] Lyotard's assertion that postmodernism is a 'war on totality' is applicable here. (Lyotard, J.F. *The Postmodern Condition* 1984, 82)

parapet of a barely defended fortress [23] that barbarians disdain, and at which appear only ghosts. Postmodernism is a morbid epoch, a wake, named and defined only by that which it closes down and covers over.

Forced to call this our moment, our event, our democracy, our globalisation, our tolerance, our irony, our pastiche, our consumerism, our eclecticism, our multiculturalism, our search, our blunted dynamism, we soon come up against 'our *our'.* 'Our our', which the tongue would rather leave to the ear of others than tackle itself, sounds more like a dog's defensive diction than any human intelligence. But this is appropriate because to speak of 'our', or of 'our our', and even to speak of 'we' is already all-too-territorial and is therefore to be somehow, somewhat, at war, i.e. it is already to defend and define in opposition to all that is *not* 'our', all that is not 'we', it is to group, to clan, and to identify, to belong, while that which we, or *one* seek(s) of necessity, is writing as an *art of peace,* by which, through which, and with which, we hope to address the world's Princes, with the aim of counseling them to relinquish principality itself, and along with principality, to relinquish self.

We believe, and here imply, that by choosing, above and before all things to write, and to write above and before all 'things' in a hesitant mode; by taking the trouble to write at all, this very writing hopes to be that art of peace. Writing goes on where violence cannot go on (and *vise versa*), written treaties and constitutions arise in the wake of battles, and yet, every writing, as a diversion

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[23] Perhaps that of Euro/American hegemony.

from direct confrontation of mouth and ear, provides an avoidance of proximity between one and other.

Territory, Text And Next

21. Giséle Freund, *Walter Benjamin at the card catalogue of the Bibliotéque Nationale in Paris*, 1937

> The Palestinian interrogates the (Israeli) soldier on his love for the land. The soldier replies […] 'All my attachment to the land is no more than a story of fiery speech! / They taught me to love it but I never felt it in my heart. / I never knew its roots and branches, or the scent of its grass'.
>
> (Rose, J. 02/ 06 /07)

The sentiment of Jacqueline Rose's spokesman here is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin, and Rose's statement link through notions of textual territory or what we might call 'the territory of the text'. Benjamin actively encouraged the act of copying when, in *One Way Street (Chinese Curios)*, he explained that reading a text is like flying over it, while copying it out is a far

more tactile and meaningful experience. Furthermore, that this is the only way to become familiar with a piece of writing's true 'terrain', its changing aspects, as if the copyist were down on the ground, walking its paths, empirically, materially, feeling its contours and textures, taking part in its event, or, as Bergson might say 'intuiting' the text rather than analyzing it.

> The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. In the same way, the power of a text is different when it is read from when it is copied out. The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands, and of how, from the very scenery that for the flier is only the unfurled plane, it calls forth distances, belvederes, clearings, prospects at each of its turns like a commander deploying soldiers at a front. Only the copied text thus commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the new aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in free flight of day-dreaming, whereas the copier submits it to command. The Chinese practice of copying books was thus an incomparable guarantee of literary culture, and the transcripts a key to China's enigmas.
>
> (Benjamin, W. 2000, 50)[24]

We can discern here the gleaner, *bricaleur, flaneur* and scrivener combining to produce the special writer that Benjamin is, but Benjamin also gives us a model of the text informed by 20th Century technologised warfare. It is not offered as a screen but as something entered and negotiated physically, slightly dangerously, but immanently. We might hover before the surface of the text,

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[24] As above, Benjamin reveals the militarist sense of 'territory' pervading his times and his project, and this sense is of course echoed in the project of W.G. Sebald while echoed in Derrida's call for a consideration of '*différance* to supplant a territorial paradigm concerning claims to both time and space. This issue is also taken up by our consideration of Euclid's attempts to define space. Finally, it is also interesting to note that in Benjamin's phrase here: '[…] road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it' there seems a clear echo of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and all the shameful territorial considerations that come with invocation of that title.

hesitant, disputing our relation with it, but Benjamin shows we can also overcome our fears and, as it were, 'parachute' in to it. When we do, we find that it is not merely a depth of material but always a journey, a road or passage, and, like the soldier in Rose's example above, realise that there are many ways to know, to be, to own, or to understand a thing.

While materially copying, and thereby unable to avoid awareness of the text's manufacture, we can no-longer fool ourselves that the text is anything *but* a material production, a manufactured truth. It has transcendent aspirations and even some similar effects, but walking through the text we walk the vertiginous line between writing's meaning and materiality, its intention and its fact. Benjamin, whose relationship with academia was less than comfortable, here gives us the closest reading of all, and one that returns us to our first days in school.

As children we began to write by copying, and so the writer is always a scrivener, re-inscribing the shared and received material of words, copying these copies of copies that we learned as children by copying, while simultaneously learning that to learn *is* to copy, that both knowledge and skill are, from the outset, simulacral and therefore perhaps unfounded.

The words on which all seems to depend are apparently without origin, and they provide only inadequate and fragmentary guidance through their terrain back to a similarly simulacral self. Despite our brief illuminations the territory of the text remains its own, our reading or copying no more than a '[…] road cut through

the interior jungle forever closing behind it'. Thus the writer forever hesitates to claim a territory, but, keeping head in the clouds, feet on the ground, remaining sedentary yet dreaming, focused and yet necessarily disoriented, also participates in an inexorable momentum, fuelled rather than felled by contradiction.

Next

To allude to an object that precedes us and eludes us is nevertheless to promise a return. In every yearning there is such promise. It is a wish for an affinity and a hope that words will make amends between the world and our selves. But our lost immanence is surely blamed on the intrusion of language between the sensory world and our selves. The word's mediating function and transcendent aspirations are a good and a right that cast us out of the innocence of immanence where such values would be transvalued.

We can seek out that innocence via certain automatisms or 'deaths of the author'. To write in a language prescribed as if dictated by unseen authority is to write not only for others but also *from* others, to recognise that our text is as simulacral as its every component, that there is no originary genius or 'author' in any of these vicarious roles. Better then to regard oneself as a *constructor,* a processor of words, 'becoming machine', a kind of machine which, far from seeking emancipation from technology, and far from fearing its punishment, is

willingly enslaved to it (like the officer at the conclusion to Kafka's *In The Penal Colony*) in order to fully explore the possibilities of our craft.

Whether or not we consider the death of the author, we always write in faith, and so writing becomes, not a record of faith but an *article* or demonstration of faith. Whether we consciously consider the author's death or not the fact that at times our words are full of fire and invention and at other times have less to say reveals the importance of a certain momentum and a certain faith. In this, writing is comparable to riding a bicycle or expertly playing a musical instrument, at a certain pace we do not have to consider whether what we are doing is right or wrong but simply proceed by unconscious faith.

The same can be said of art, music, we might also say love, and life i.e. to move from the level of apprentice to that of master requires not only more skill but always less consciousness and greater faith in our ability to produce what is required at the right moment. And this, in turn allows us to go beyond knowledge, particularly beyond knowledge of our limitations, which has blinded us to our possibilities. Momentum and faith are therefore reciprocal, we require faith to reach and sustain momentum, but as with a bicycle, we cannot attain the faith without the momentum that allows us to jettison other dependencies.

If writing is always a way, or is always that road revealed to us by Benjamin, the death of writing is always a loss of momentum and thus of belief. However, if we lose our balance when forced to become conscious of what is to be done next, and if our belief and momentum have led us to a place where we have lost

our way and our belief, that is no less the purpose of writing, i.e. the purpose of writing is to lead, not to knowledge but to gaps and obstacles which *challenge* us to go on, that make us hesitate, procrastinate, speculate, and innovate before being able to write-on, think on.

We confront, in the peculiar moment of hesitation, not our existence but our *per*sistence, which refuses to submit to form and to representation. With form and representation disturbed by temporality, our moral and ethical 'positions' become de-legitmised and arbitrary. There, then, we hesitate, on a 'bridge' between territories, exposing the truth that territories are not all that we can occupy, the truth that knowing what to do next is the knowledge we really depend upon despite the fact that we are rarely and barely conscious of this fundamental necessity.

The 'we' hesitates because our dilemma is moral and ethical. It looks for a way, and it looks to the word for its way. The hesitating 'we' is no leader, nor is it waiting for a guide but ready to shoot any messenger, buddha, messiah, or *Führer*.

Who is going to write? And what are the words the 'we' is waiting for? What kind of faith will stave off our disabling responsibilities? The answer is; only a faith great enough to take-on those responsibilities with a reciprocation that overcomes the contradiction and results in momentum.

But here we have the absurdity of a theory of bicycle riding, akin to that theory of swimming detached from any experience of water derided by Hegel. No, the 'we' doesn't hesitate to write at all today but writes more than ever before, a greater 'we' than ever before is writing, and this *alterocratic* mass, this deluge of writing, compensates for the failure of *the* word, for the death of *the* author, and for the demonisation or delegitimation of leaders who profess to know the way. There is certainly a problem of temporality troubling any attempt to ontologise the self or its relation to the world. There is no object, no thing - including the thing or object 'self'- that is not always *already* transformed (beyond form) as a result of temporality. Hesitation exposes the immanent temporality and momentum that supports life and experience - again, not as a thing or territory but as event. It is best to act when we do not have to consider how or whether we should act, better, that is to have acted than to act, and thus to keep both the present and knowledge at bay, to keep the present as much as possible out of our considerations as a kind of distraction or folly.

This persistent thought, which frames and motivates this dissertation, articulates the *thoughtless*, expresses the 'am' that I am before thinking, points to the immanent while struggling to represent itself accurately within the medium of writing and its inherent tendency to transcend. That which comes to light when our rhythm or continuum is interrupted gives an opportunity to see our selves as if from elsewhere. Similarly, Nietzsche felt that we might only know ourselves when experiencing illness, during which we leave our habitual condition and are therefore able to return to it.

> […] out of such long and dangerous exercises of self-mastery one emerges as a different person, with a few more question marks - above all with the *will* henceforth to question further, more deeply, severely, harshly, evilly, and quietly than one had questioned heretofore. The trust in life is gone: life itself has become a *problem*.
>
> Finally, lest what is most important remain unsaid: from such abysses, from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns *newborn*, having shed one's skin, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a more tender tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, joyful with a more dangerous second innocence, more childlike and at the same time a hundred times subtler than one had ever been before.
>
> (Nietzsche, F.W. 2001, 7)

Extreme neurosis, or psychosis, manifests itself in temporal pathologies. Extremes of either impulse or hesitation disable social acceptability. The modern neurotic's health crisis is not a great disabling and physically disruptive crisis but a constant but slight disturbance of the singular psyche, a regular and elusively slight removal from and return to 'self' known as neurosis. This inability to confidently choose and proceed for and by the self, (despite a political reality dominated by the promise of individualism and choice) displays as its symptom repetition, catharsis, stammering, a disorientation of identity and meaning, extreme procrastination, a sense of remaining at maddening crossroads where reason and choice pile-up in a palimpsest of indecipherable thoughts. All this exposes the elusive 'next' or 'what next' as a crucial locus of modern discomfort.

Given the degree of security, freedom and choice enjoyed by modern societies living the paradigm of epochal history, knowing what to do next becomes the

modern aim and determinant of human happiness. This necessity, like all necessities, is expropriated, commodified, and sold back to consumers, so that, despite the possibilities and promise of democracy, instead of deciding what to do next (intuitively and for the self) consumers are confronted and overwhelmed by a very particular choice which disallows the choice to choose other than that which serves the interests of consumerism; consumerism which postures, hegemonically, as an 'ism' to which there is no choice. This results in an intoxicated, oblivious momentum imposed as and by consumerism wherein we are robbed of the human satisfaction and skill of a more real choice, while profitability, at every turn, usurps necessity and robs us of our health, our true wealth, and of pride in our own wisdom.

Though we want to believe in our self and our text as a territory, we necessarily maintain a fantasy or image of spatiality or extensity in the face of an un-representable temporality shared both by self and text, reader and author, as event. The moment into which we are moving and writing is always unknown - never a territory. We cultivate an illusion of choice over where we are going, what we are doing and saying next, and this necessary prescience, this untimeliness at the blind heart of becoming, rather than enjoying ontology, is a kind of tension, hesitation or *durée*. Nietzsche seems to describe such a *durée* himself in *Will To Power:*

> Knowledge and becoming are mutually exclusive. 'Knowledge' must therefore be something else; the will to render the world knowable must pre-exist it; a kind of becoming must itself create *the illusion of being*.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1968, ss517)

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Painted Thoughts

In his conclusion to *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche bemoans the representational mechanism of writing as an inadequate translation of thoughts that had originally exploded like fireworks and even caused him to 'sneeze' but which, once laid down by the pen, became like birds that are trapped in the hand and can no longer fly.

> Oh, what are you really, all of you, my written and depicted thoughts! Not long ago, you were still so colourful, young, and malicious, so full of thorns and covert spices, that you made me sneeze and laugh--and now? You've already cast off your novelty and some of you, I fear, are ready to become truths: they already look so immortal, so heart-breakingly righteous, so boring! And was it not ever thus? What things do we really write down and depict, we mandarins with our Chinese brush, we immortalizers of things that *can* be written, what things are really left for us to paint after all? Alas, only that which is about to wither and beginning to smell rank! Alas, only exhausted, retreating storms and late yellowed feelings! Alas, only birds that have flown themselves weary, flown astray, and have let themselves be caught in someone's hand -*our* hand! We immortalize what cannot live and fly any longer, weary and crumbling things all! And it is only for your *afternoon,* my written and depicted thoughts, that I still have paint, much paint perhaps, many colourful tender words and fifty yellows and browns and greens and reds -but they will not help anyone to guess how you looked in your morning, you sudden sparks and miracles of my solitude, my old, beloved -*wicked* thoughts!
>
> (Nietzsche, F.W. 1998, 177 - 78)

Thoughts are untimely, in that their source and destination is obscure, their meaning is mercurial, and their value is never present. For Nietzsche, thoughts are intense, visceral, and far superior to their petrified manifestation.

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Today writing undergoes dematerialisation in an age of virtual technology, a 'melting of all that is solid' of which Nietzsche may have approved and which increasingly becomes the face of thought as its trace and its evidence become etiolated and provisional rather than lapidary, and as the technologies of mechanical, then digital reproduction release the world's grip upon the word. Philosophy - which aspires to write our guide and our truth - here encounters a newly provisional word, the ever-changeable, virtual text of the digital age, floating in an aqueous screen.

But can a philosophy ever be provisional? And what happens to a society, a culture whose philosophy becomes so? Does truth not demand some *indexical* or lapidary relation to the world that virtuality will not supply? Perhaps, again, Nietzsche foresaw this and anticipated it in his aphoristic style, or in the dramatic form of Zarathustra. Here, styles and forms that are apparently inappropriate to philosophy, to academicism and to scholarship, suggest a new role for philosophy after modernism (anti-philosophy perhaps) that Nietzsche seems to have preempted.

For all his wit, stylish experiment and irony, Nietzsche evades the vanity of *belles lettreisme,* putting the pen to elegantly dressed deconstructive work while circumnavigating thoughts of his own which are implied by all that he defies, and which thereby remain immanent and noumenal in their original, volatile form, without undergoing the ignominious reductions of an explicit writing.

In the conclusion of *Beyond Good and Evil*, this deconstructive approach to writing thought seems to have failed, Nietzsche becomes resigned, like the bad copyist of his own flights of genius, an inadequate and reluctant scrivener after all. Nietzsche becomes Bartleby, reluctantly, laboriously, regrettably, copying down his thus-compromised genius, betraying his better nature and his highest allegiance, which is not to writing but to thought itself.

Nietzsche's writing aims to operate by allusion rather than by indication. What Nietzsche writes 'about' he does in the sense that 'about' may mean to turn, to flip or to circle, and in Nietzsche's case, to turn, flip or circle a possibility which the reader will subsequently have to name, claim and 'pin down' for themselves. Nietzsche's aphorisms and maxims - like those of Lichtenberg (1742 - 1799) and Schlegel (1772 - 1829) - work in this way, and though we speak of Nietzsche's as a particular strategy, his lessons are applicable to all writing as they illuminate the *ludic* behaviour and infinite plasticity of words intertwined with their air of, and reputation for, authority.

Nietzsche, who once asked the question 'What is a word?' [25] seems to have delighted in the innate tendency of words to *elude* the author's aims in a way that we might compare with the pleasure taken by Uccello in the anecdote about his obsessive acquisition of the skill of rendering a perspective. Nietzsche is of course celebrating the 'loss' or relinquishment of that very

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[25] In his essay *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense.* (Nietzsche, F.W. in Cazeaux C. 2000, 53 - 62)

humanist perspective that Uccello was reputedly so excited about acquiring as a box of tricks.[26]

For our argument however, it is also worth noting that the computer seems to confront us with a similar new fascination, obsession and excitement. Here again, looking at the aqueous screen where pixels and bytes of memory are transformed into text, we might again ask Nietzsche's question 'what is a word?' Is a word a 'thing' or a hesitation? Does it talk to us or for us? And what happens to meaning and to philosophy when the words on which it depends become increasingly provisional, virtual, distant and estranged from the physical world?

Nietzsche hovers both before writing and beyond it, somewhere 'off-page' in the wings of the texts that he directs in such a way that they play before our eyes anew each time we re-visit them as events of uncertain content. The great artist will always work in the service of a process, never presuming to be its master, leaving ultimate form and value to materials and tools themselves, and to others in their event of reading. Thus, *in the spirit of music* (and emulating Shakespeare in this regard) Nietzsche's words invite constantly reinvented performance and interpretation even by his connoisseurs. Their production is a theatrical event (as, we might say, are those of Descartes and Machiavelli) and their every subsequent encounter or reading is also a theatrical event.

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[26]   And between Nietzsche and Uccello here, we can briefly glimpse several hundred years of European history within which a humanist claim is gained and lost, claimed and relinquished.

In Nietzsche, we can discern a hesitation of things in pervasive allusion and suggestion, the pregnant latency of a unique meaning which is always 'to come' and to which we are destined, fated, bound, into which we are compelled to enter by the bait of a promised possibility.

Whereas Descartes seeks certainty amid an unfolding narrative of logic, analysis and thought, Nietzsche relinquishes the vain, accumulative, quantitative project of knowledge and confesses to the inspired production of theatrical scenarios and destabilizing aphorisms which, as if afraid to trust themselves to the larger terrain of an extended text, remain hermetic islands, worlds of their own, untrusting of the vagaries and vanities of grand schemas and large-scale solutions in homogeneous forms. Meanwhile, in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche makes narrative structure explicit, over-determined in fact, so as to expose the underlying art, sophistry and subjectivity in philosophy that has heretofore denied such ingredients while proclaiming academic and scholarly objectivity.

Community

The uncertainty of words which do not know their time and place, and which, if contemplated, merely morph like passing clouds into momentarily meaningful forms, seem capable of transporting us to that transcendent realm of 'thought itself' where solipsistic reveries take *virtual* time and place in scattered and diverse events of reading among an untimely and displaced community of

thinkers. (Again, the computer's aqueous screen, the virtuality and infinite telecommunic-ability of its words, provide us with a model for such encounters). Without registering its threshold, we join that community of reverie where lone souls, distracted, 'miles away' in a thought uninterrupted by life's clamor, briefly share a sense of speculative purpose.

Our material is not special, nor are our tools, nor are our forms unusual, and yet it remains possible to carve-out significance and value from the commonplace elements of language. We confess that we can never call writing a 'science', nor objective, but we *can* insist that it is a network of recognitions, recognised by those who look vigilantly for the returns of a wisdom that is other to knowledge. Wisdom is that which brings knowledge into discomfort. This reverie, this immanent, velvet revolution, keeps worlds of possibility turning when they would-be suffocated or drowned by logic, pragmatism and common sense. Words, serving as guardians of hope and demonstrations of faith, conspire to insist upon the preservation of possibility through darkest times - *and particularly* through these. We rely upon words and their long-sighted ability to speculate, precisely because we do not have the facility for blundering, short-sighted violence enjoyed by our opponents. We cultivated our passion and expertise with words precisely because of this confrontation. Isn't this what Heaney / Bachelard mean when they refer to: 'the source of our first suffering (is) that we hesitated to speak [...] the moment when we accumulated silent things within us'. But that 'source', those 'silent things' are of course words which will still insist upon being heard.

(Heaney, S. 1992, 367)

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For the writer there is no friend, only via solipsism is there the kind of reverie necessary for an encounter with the untimely. And yet the writer is always the writer of a milieu, never of a self. Only an apparent misanthropy, which avoids allegiances and loyalties, permits a writing without restraint, an 'absolute literature'. Writing abhors restraint and ultimately seeks the limits of limits. It is from writing that freedoms have come and from writing that the freedom-to-come will also come, even if they are won at the cost of writers' personal liberty.

(Calasso, Robert. 2001)

The writer, like any experienced artist, comes to trust process, tools, forms and media more than self and far more than others. And yet, in recognizing *this*, joins a 'community of lovers' or 'community of those who have no community'.

(Blanchot, M. c1988, 27 - 60)

Using common language, seeking clarity, writing reveals its special, perilously attractive responsibility which speculates and gambles on achieving or contributing understanding, while risking penalties, ostracism and exile which may be necessary tests of a writing's worth,[27] which might be confirmation that an otherwise deskbound pursuit can prove its value in the very discomfort that it causes to all that is self-assured, defensive, knowing and complacent.

The writer well knows exile, we might say that the writer is a friend of exile, or that exile is the writer's friend. We might say that the writer actively cultivates exile, or even that writing might - with a will-to-power of its very own - lead the

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[27] Consider the many 'great' books that were originally banned on publication.

writer, by imperceptible but inexorable degrees, into increasing exile. Becoming anti-social, retreating to a cave or island in search of some necessary externality, marginality and solitude, the event of writing also exiles the writer from the self. Writing becomes a handle by which to hold at a distance a life that is too sharp and a world that is too keen. But it is not a haven, rather it is a place where the most difficult of questions can be given due consideration, where the medium of words breaks into and reforms those *questionable* questions.

The event of writing is both untimely and unworldly, writing with a common language we write as if to all, as if *with* all, and yet also with and to the self as part of 'all'. We write to the self who has become other in the very act of writing. We write to the self in search of comprehension and in search of a companion. In search of 'writing itself' in an 'infinite conversation' with 'absolute literature' we write to writing, and its response is *this*, this very precipice, this crumbling and uneven ridge, this thin line expediently arched and folded into meaningful signs along which we step in search of possibility. Like the composer, the writer's responsibility is to stimulate recognitions. Writing seeks that which is unheard-of and yet which cannot progress without believing it will find a welcome in the ears and eyes of unimaginable others for whom (and *by* whom) it is written. Every writing thus embodies, expresses and promotes faith, faith in the other, faith in return. The returns, echoes, recognitions, and simulacra of words are that which enables their communication.

Failure to represent one's own thought accurately might nevertheless find an echo in the thought of others; others who, in turn, will fail to represent their own thoughts, and so on. Where representation fails, intuitive, visceral, affective recognitions - akin to those of music - may succeed. In this way, writing is a finer art, an esoteric art of *finesse* whose uncertain aims and shifting horizons may be glimpsed by those who persevere, honestly and self-reflexively deconstructing their own conceits and the habits of whichever canon is their particular chimera.

Writing is neither scientific nor objective but an arrow fired or a fishhook cast. *In the spirit of music* it is abstract in its unspecified hope to charm and attract infinite and diverse readings. There will always be some motivation for every writing, something writing moves towards, something it kicks against, but because these too will always remain unclear, writing deserves to be crafted and considered in such a way that it avoids falling into crude polemics, habitual forms, dialectics, territorial traps, and petty claims.

WRITING II

By the Pen, and what they inscribe,
Thou art not, by the blessing of thy lord,
A man possessed.
Surely thou shalt have a wage unfailing;
Surely thou art upon a high morality.
So thou shalt see, and they will see,
Which of you is the demented...

The unbelievers wellnigh strike thee down
With their glances, when they hear the
Reminder, and they say, 'surely he is
A man possessed!'
And it is nothing but a reminder
Unto all beings.

(The Koran, 1982, 599)

Music And Recognition

Given the *carte blanche* of a silence that precedes a musical composition, how *does* a composer or songwriter choose one note over another, one phrase and not another? Is it not chosen because it rings out of that silence as recognition? It might be a 'discovery' but it is also an echo and enervation, familiar even in the moment of its birth, something which, when it appears, appears to have been hesitating on the threshold of recognition. It can only be valued as recognition - and it follows that all values too are no more than recognitions.

The event that we manifest by our acknowledgement, that we value - mysteriously, intuitively - as having some value and value-to-come, appears to have conspired in contriving our encounter, seems to have hesitated or rushed, in order to be sure of meeting us. It crosses our path, matches pace, sometimes as unexpected sunlight, sometimes as a robber's shadow, but always as a rendezvous. It appears as if simultaneously out of future and past to momentarily share our present. This is its *untimeliness*, this is the eternal's return, return's eternity. This is the re-cognition that haunts the *cogito* like a doppelganger calling for the *cogito's* retirement.

'I think', but of course, 'I think I think …' in an endless representational relay. Warned off the presumptuous and narcissistic delusion of Cartesian singularity, never can I say 'I think' without simultaneously re-thinking, returning, thinking again and twice, another 'I' thinking of the 'I' that thinks, an I who is not the man I used to be (a second ago when I first made that claim about myself).

Never can I say 'therefore' without being simultaneously aware that I am scurrying across a grammatical bridge into a certainty that is rendered doubtful by its very convenience. Never can I say 'I am' without the god of grammar laughing in my face.

We can give the name 'writing' to all that attempts to communicate further than our voice will reach. We can give the name 'music' to all that finds recognition within us. It may threaten us or fill us with awe, but in order to qualify as music it must resonate, treating us in the way that it treats the ambience against which it is discernible and from within which it arises. Nevertheless, we welcome the sense in which music promises to overcome or overwhelm us, to fill and transform us. This pleasure is quasi-erotic, we wish for it to take us away from self, free the mind, lose us in enervation and affect. To dance is to enter with others into an invisible sea of rhythm, to sing is to grimace and to thereby become other.[28]

Writing today is challenged to uphold or rescue its musical 'spirit' while negotiating the influence of digital telecommunications amid a milieu influenced by consumerism and pragmatism - both raised to the level of an unwritten and unchallenged philosophy. It becomes necessary (as it surely has many times before) to evaluate writing's transcendent and redemptive capability and formulate appropriate strategies, styles, modes, that are capable of translating

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[28] Marcel Mauss points out that the etymology of the word *person* or *persona* comes from the Greek or Latin word for a mask through which (*per*) the sound (*son*) comes. (Mauss, M. 1985, 1 - 25)

and communicating writing's status and value while maintaining its social function.

Today we are daily reminded of the Buddhist adage whereby a man is advised against the fatal error of showing his poems to a man who is not a poet.[29] In the ears and eyes of those who are oblivious, our best is all too quickly turned to our worst; the 'truth' of market forces, the neoliberal proliferation of commodified services, writing technologised and newly available to all, publishing 'booms' and sales strategies that produce as many pulped books as books sold, postmodern cultural relativism, all this means that writing loses any hieratic position it may have managed to artfully sustain through industrial modernity, and consequently enters a crisis of confidence. Is there any longer a special function for the word, for philosophy *as* writing? Or is it inevitably reduced to just another material, just another pragmatism, just another commodity?

We suspect that writing as philosophy is *not* a commodity, that it somehow exists outside the market and able to critique the market, just as art needs a value and a market and economy of its own.[30] But writing as philosophy cannot remain hidden or unread, Nietzsche's playful and extravagant experiments with form (emulated to some extent by Derrida) might provide us with a guide. Philosophy can aspire to Nietzsche's ambition to purge dry, academic, logical thought from our work and even from our calling, supplanting or infusing it with

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[29] 'If you meet a swordsman on the road, show him your sword. Do not offer your poem to a man who is not a poet'. Attributed to Master Rinzai.

[30] Italo Calvino's book *If On A Winter's Night A Traveler* perhaps best illustrates the postmodern, post-industrial condition of the would-be novel. Meanwhile, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* could also be read as a parable of the abject novel, that would like to be real but finds it is only a clone after all.

deconstructions that will return us to the enigmatic questions and honest portrayal of immanent experience.

Modern composers have tested the limits and boundaries of music and 'noise' so that, when Camus - defining art at the conclusion to *The Myth of Sisyphus* - says 'art is no-one's enemy' we are able to concur and insist that art has today so expanded its once specialised remit that it is now better described as one form of image-making within a more egalitarian and multi-cultural range of 'visual cultures'. However, in breaking down these barriers and producing this admirably democratic vision it is also important to consider the hieratic position and function of art. This is not to conserve it as elite but rather to consider a more potent and revolutionary 'visual culture' within which everything thus brought into the field and vision of art's specialism should be scrutinized for its own hieratic roots or disruptive potential.

(Camus, A. 1975, 192)

We can take the same approach to writing (as) philosophy, which, as we have said above, also loses its footing, its position, its role and identity amid a deluge of other writings and readings. Deleuze and Guattari's admiration for the possibilities of 'minor literature' becomes crucial here, as again, rather than conserve writing as philosophy in an elite and disconnected role, it is more valuable to engage (as Kafka did, but more significantly as Nietzsche seemed to attempt in the pantomime of his *Zarathustra*) in and with this proliferation, attempting to *turn* literatures minor, *détourné* them, or 'turn them on', drawing out the philosophy that might lie behind and within them, so that, rather than

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accept that writing's hieratic function has been lost and sacrificed to a victorious market we instead thank the market for proliferating so many writers, writings and readings, while re-tuning writing, turning its 'about' about *(sic)*, playing with writing at a formal level and by formal means in such a way that *all* writing, and all the proliferating writing we experience today, is subtly transformed by our actions.

In this way we might demonstrate that, just as neoliberal forces enjoy hi-jacking liberal institutions, networks and drives, what we might call 'true' liberals can, in turn, mirror that procedure. In an age of telecommunications, communication increasingly becomes correspondence. Meanwhile, the same device is used to produce and send words, images and music, and of every kind and quality from porn to philosophy. The common material is digital memory. By combining the sonic technology of the telephone with the visual technology of the photographic screen - all compiled of and according to the numerological paradigm of digital computing - information is carried as an image yet also like a sound, a sound loud enough to travel enormous distances and great speed announces the inauguration of a synaesthetic age which surpasses both the age of aesthetics and that of anti-aesthetics.

To recognize is to value (and *vise versa*), every 'thing' today returns to us, everything made of digital memory, made of memory, so that we drown in an ocean of simulacra and come to recognise value as recognition itself. Pixels are turned and returned, from poetry into 'spam' and back again, all becomes a kind of music, different tunes played with similar bows, the haunting familiarities

of a culture made of memory. Does this culture any longer call upon the word, upon writing as philosophy, to inform it? Or is it so self-sufficient, self-satisfied and self-reflexive that the one thing it must exclude from its cornucopia is the interfering voice of a wisdom that perhaps misguidedly believes it has something to contribute?

Isn't this also Nietzsche's problem, and indeed, also the situation of Socrates? I.e. that the philosopher is necessarily marginal, unwelcome, or always 'appears' to be unnecessary, and so makes an invisible or enigmatic contribution to an everyday that is unhappily resigned to its limited and habitual thought? At all times writing as philosophy faces the task of not only having something to say but of finding a way and a place to say it which is appropriate to the forums of the day.

While all is memory and correspondence, the word, fearing its own devaluation, recalls its own invention and its original intention to aid memory. Jacques Derrida has pointed out that this was never a straightforward or singular contribution but inherently contradictory, as any aid to memory is also always a threat to destroy memory, just as any prostheses threatens to surpass, replace and make redundant that which it initially supports.[31] In highlighting this *différance* that writing inescapably occupies, Derrida seems to celebrate its threat, its potential, its enduring vitality, in its very capriciousness and treachery, its tendency to turn and play, to support and to destroy - or at least unnerve -

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[31] An allusion to the debate addressed by Derrida in his *Plato's Pharmacy* - a chapter of *Truth in Painting*. (Derrida, J. 1987)

that very memory of which our culture, our environment, is being increasingly and complacently made.

Memory, correspondence, music, even some feint tingle or ache, all return to us, and, more than mere communication, illustrate the principle of return, an aesthetic of recognition and re-enervation. The pixel's memory is overwritten, the nerve re-stimulated, we too are assembled of echoes. What we call 'moving' (in the sense of emotionally inspiring) leads us into the 'infinite conversation' of *all* that vibrates, resonates, pulses, repeats and oscillates, all that differentiates in order to be.

We too speak this language, this binary code of contradiction, minus and plus, zero and one, difference allied with repetition.[32] Language itself is not daunted by its current digital computation as it has *always* been computational (consider cuneiform's play of light and shadow), encompassing not only binary codes but infinitely plastic nuances of codes and plays, swerves and nuances of meaning, echoes, traces, and infinitely malleable relations between its constituents. Writing too can make pictures and songs, 'spam' porn, philosophy and poetry, it always could, and we need faith in writing's infinite plasticity to show us 'ways' that we didn't know we could go, ways we didn't know we could think, perhaps because we had associated words too much with logic, reason and authority, and not considered them sufficiently as light, pictures, plastic, indeterminate and playful.

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[32] The premise of Gilles Deleuze's work *Difference and Repetition*.

Proust was addicted to the sensual possibilities of writing and saw memory as the medium in which writing could be steeped in order to achieve its apotheosis. We could see Basho (1644 - 1694), Santoka (1882 - 1940), and other passionately committed Haiku poets as equally addicted to the sensual possibilities of their own writing so that it determines their vision, their life and their lifestyle. But we are all chasing some recognition, some 'buzz', 'high' or satori which is an enervative vibration or oscillation, a to-ing and fro-ing on a grand or micro-scale, a tensioning and slackening of nerves, an aesthetic, *in the spirit of music*.

(Basho. M. 1985), (Santoka, T. 1991)

The music of literature, or of any literary philosophy, is continuously playing, it is an 'infinite conversation' merely muffled by the closing of a book. Repetitions, oscillations, undulations, all give form, all produce meaning from the relation of difference to repetition, while the value of a work increases by multiplication of its visibility, notoriety, fame.

Art that is lazily described as 'extra-ordinary' is nevertheless that which is thought to communicate recognitions and returns, albeit rare or esoteric returns, perhaps communicated in a surprising or oblique manner. Nevertheless, our writing in some way remains our own, branded by our particular rhythms, and writing remains, despite the convincing 'death of the author', a property, a territorial voice, necessary and unique to its producer. It is only 'our' writing when others recognise it, move aside for it, re-position themselves in relation to it.

Again, we emulate music (which can never apologise for its presence, though it might perform an ingratiating prelude) because music *must* be an intrusion, intervention, ever aware of itself as event. Nevertheless, while occupying a degree of autonomy, writing is nothing if not a welcome, a desire to share, an appeal for company, a magnet for others, bait, hook, and line.

'Friends, there is no friend' (Aristotle / Derrida), and yet, 'art is no-one's enemy' (Camus), we return to the realm of paradox, contradiction, tautology and oxymoron, hesitating just this side of meaning, temporalised before the spatialising, positional effects of an undecidable decision, hesitating intensively before the extensities of language. These too are signposts to return, to the relationship between return and eternity where paradox, contradiction, tautology and oxymoron appear, and where language loses its grip (just as laughter attests to the momentary release of reason's grip on our rationally repressed nerves).

Beginning As Thing

Just as we are aware of passing, of all passing, and of passage as a concept whose importance is raised to a level whereby it might contest the institutionalisation of 'Being', so an aesthetic of recognition prioritises passage rather than ontology. An aesthetic of recognition prioritises passage but it is a passage of communications, the communication of obscure familiarities, that are truly extra-ordinary. Only thus does such an aesthetic guarantee our

interest, operating *in the spirit of music*, echoing music's own extra-ordinariness, its own obscure familiarities. The ontological principle of Being and its attendant objectivity are dismissed and dissipated, etiolated by a philosophy of becoming, of *durée, différance* and deterritorialisation.

Writing swims or sinks, meaning less and less the more it is piled-up as sedentary things in mutually obscurant palimpsests and only achieving its *raison d'être* by rolling itself out in extensive relations of uniform lines leading to stops which determine meaning. The final sentence of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* appears - to any reader sensitive to a text's concrete presence - to conflate; the end of a sentence, the end of a minute, and the conclusion of a complex tale, all with death itself as the word 'stopped' illustrates; the stopping of a heart, the end of a child's life, and that of both sentence and story, followed only by a full stop:

> I caught him, yes, I held him - it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped.

<div align="right">(James, H. 1986)</div>

Having hesitated to begin, we will hesitate to continue, fearing ends and interruptions, dreading loss of momentum. At every step threatening to 'peter out' like a nervous stutterer whose valid intervention perishes in a stream of more self-assured voices.

What is writing but an audacious intrusion, presumptuous of its value and necessity? Yet writing, to which we entrust ourselves, carries us forward, as if with a momentum all its own. It manifests itself visibly, physically, as marked pages, and yet it also has a rhythm and a trajectory which is felt but unseen. This noumenal temporality is no less influential on its value.

It is difficult to deny the pleasure and pain that we take in the production of thought-in-words, the very tools - desk, lamp, ink, computer, pen, paper - the flow of mental energies, skills and concentration required, all play an unquantifiable part in qualifying a thought which would perhaps *prefer* to deny this worldly paraphernalia as it aspires to its own transcendent or ideal status.

It becomes quickly apparent to the writer that our product, wrought from shared material, shoulders an undeniable burden of responsibility, not only to clarity; not only to meaning, but also ethically, a responsibility to underpin and shift understanding. This can make writing an art of peace or of war. Where we manipulate words, we bend the universe to some small degree, changing the world a little for every other user of words and for every other object of words.[33]

We have begun, but, just as *to* begin is not always easy for the will, it is also difficult for the forensic senses to determine or pinpoint the beginnings of things. Is beginning a thing? What is a thing? Heidegger was occupied by this question, and once, in attempting to answer, he explored the very chalk in his

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[33] 'Words without thoughts never to heaven go' runs the line in Hamlet (Act 3 Scene 3) a line that today suggests the immanence of language even within an image of its innate aspiration to transcendence.

hand as he spoke to a class. The stick of chalk is a thing that, if snapped, becomes two things, and at the exposed face where it is broken, an inside becomes an outside. Thus, from the outset, we are dealing with things that do not know their place, things with shifting and unstable categories.

<div align="right">(Heidegger, M. 1985)</div>

The new 'outside' of a broken stick of chalk presents us with a new boundary by which to identify the thing and its limits. However, in breaking the chalk, numerous fragments break off and fall away, and these too may be 'things'. Furthermore, in the explosive moment of breakage a small puff of chalk-dust escapes into the surrounding air, are these particles of dust simply too small to be included in our definition of 'things'? Is a thing then, only of a certain size, a size related to the size of man and to the abilities of his naked eyes or the grasp of his hands?

A novel, or a movie which has evolved from a novel, may begin at an apparently arbitrary, random drop in the ocean of time, and use this as a point from which to progress forwards or to reach back, unraveling a procession of events. However, the 'point' is itself a representation and a spatialisation of experience that we know to be a necessary falsehood, an 'original sin' from which every grasp for truth emerges illegitimately.

Proust believed that any moment is capable of swelling exponentially to reveal that it is capable of containing the whole world and all of time, a formless and qualitative time without increments or territories and in which we can believe far

more convincingly than in that quantitative, utilitarian time hemmed-in by representative and incremental schema. Such habits of containment, quantitative measures, orders, forms, ideas of singularity and totality, repress and deny a more convincing chaos of events and experience. We are convinced, but by all that is not represented, all that is not tamed, all that we nevertheless experience as event.

It may seem obvious to describe a hill as a thing, but not so a river. A novel may be a thing, but is the act of translating that novel, or a movie made from that novel also a 'thing'? Temporal modern technologies began to blur the edge between thing and event, and, in digital reproduction, what we once distinguished as a movie, a song, a text etc. may have surpassed any such crude and ancient distinctions. However, given a scenario denuded of modern technological referents, we might doubt whether a cry, a song, a river, could or should be called a 'thing'.

The breach or tear that beginning inevitably is, imposes some unnatural or too-human will upon the uninterrupted ongoing of things, the immanence and *dureé*, the *plenum* from and in which 'things' emerge. Meanwhile, that which we are given to understand as event rather than object, lacks any clear form and wears the name 'thing' uncomfortably. The desk, pen, paper and ink bottle may wear the name of 'thing' well but our task and its beginning that we here make with the aid of things, does not. If we replace 'the order of things' with an order of events, we see that, rather than negotiating extensive and exclusive

boundaries, the limits of events are, rather, contingent thresholds that negotiate the relative duration of coinciding or convening events.

To momentarily focus on one important gramme, the 'ing' of 'beginning', like that in 'meaning', can attest to a dynamic, active, status. But the 'ing' that appears in 'thing' is other to this. Etymologically, 'thing', though applicable to act, deed, event, material object, body or being, is in fact rooted in Scandinavian and Germanic words for *a meeting, assembly or appointed time*.[34] The 'thing' it seems, is, after all, a description of *an event* - possibly a ritual, coven, or convention.

For our purposes, it is wise and convenient to stay loyal to this tradition and consider things as produced by that dynamic 'ing' common to verbs, and thus to consider things, not as ontological and existent, but as event-ual and *per*sistent. Immediately the 'ing' in thing begins to *ring*, vibrate, oscillate, and act. Machiavelli's bell ceases to be a dead paperweight controlling the chaotic effects of a sudden gust of wind, and becomes, on the contrary, the harbinger of events.

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[34] Origin: bef. 900; ME; OE: orig., meeting; see thing2 thing2 (thing, ting) […] - *noun* (in Scandinavian countries) a public meeting or assembly, esp. a legislative assembly or a court of law. Also, ting. Compare thingstead. (Origin: 1830 - 40; […] assembly; c. thing1, D *ding*, G *Ding* thing, orig., meeting; akin to Goth *theihs* time) thing O.E. *þing* 'meeting, assembly," later "entity, being, matter" (subject of deliberation in an assembly), also "act, deed, event, material object, body, being," from P.Gmc. **thengan* "appointed time" (cf. O.Fris. *thing* "assembly, council, suit, matter, thing," M.Du. *dinc* "court-day, suit, plea, concern, affair, thing," Du. *ding* "thing," O.H.G. *ding* "public assembly for judgment and business, lawsuit," Ger. *ding* "affair, matter, thing," O.N. *þing* "public assembly"). Some suggest an ultimate connection to PIE root **ten-* "stretch," perhaps on notion of "stretch of time for a meeting or assembly." For sense evolution, cf. Fr. *chose*, Sp. *cosa* "thing," from L. *causa* "judicial process, lawsuit, case;" L. *res* "affair, thing," also "case at law, cause." Old sense is preserved in second element of hustings and in Icelandic *Althing,* the nation's general assembly. Southern U.S. pronunciation *thang* attested from 1937. *The thing* "what's stylish or fashionable" is recorded from 1762. Phrase *do your thing* "follow your particular predilection," though associated with hippie-speak of 1960s is attested from 1841. Used colloquially since 1602 to indicate things the speaker can't name at the moment, often with various meaningless suffixes, e.g. *thingumbob* (1751), *thingamajig* (1824).   (Harper, Douglas. 2001[Internet])

Beginnings

> […] the wise purpose of the schoolman to learn to swim
> before venturing into the water.
>
> (Hegel, W.F. 1970 [SS] 10)

Babies are said to be capable of learning to swim if cast into a pool where they will intuitively and immediately respond with innate aquatic abilities.[35] Such an image, in which the breach is breathtakingly violent and full of risk, invokes faith in a natural and innate, vital momentum - faith itself perhaps - or a life force underlying and capable of rescuing individuated events. Thus it becomes a tempting invitation, and a model, for the artist and writer to follow and hold dear as we map the empirical bubble in which we proceed, always as and in a moment whose value we wish to acknowledge and celebrate, and never deny.

Yet, given the human 'thing' that we are, afflicted by competing layers of influential images and a babble of metaphors intent on mixing, mingling and networking, the image of the baby who swims its way out of crisis inspired by underlying or innate survival skills can easily be haunted by another, that of the discarded child.

> Sula picked him up by his hands and swung him outward then around and around. His knickers ballooned and his shrieks of frightened joy startled the birds and the fat grasshoppers. When he slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water they could still hear his bubbly laughter.

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[35] There is scientific evidence at least to support the mammalian 'diving reflex' which automatically closes the epiglottis when a baby is immersed in water, up to the age of 18 months.

> The water darkened and closed quickly over the place where Chicken Little sank. The pressure of his hard and tight little fingers was still in Sula's palms as she stood looking at the closed place in the water. They expected him to come back up, laughing. Both girls stared at the water.
>
> (Morrison, T. [b. 1931] 1998, 60 - 61)

In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, a woman throws an effervescent child into a river where it simply sinks, dying apparently without struggle, becoming a lifeless object, a thing, a thing that is found later, washed-up downstream. In such a bleak image[36] the writer's fear might also be discerned, i.e. the fear that writing's linear venture may itself come to nothing, or nothing much; that the task may 'slip out of our hands', become unmanageable, or at worst, discarded. The breach of our beginning must therefore lead to some means of staying afloat and alive, and this will require both skill and faith.

We hesitate before beginning, needing to accumulate sufficient justification for a journey, needing to sufficiently increase our determination to preserve the vitality of our aim. But we also wait in anticipation of an auspicious moment, as might astrologers choosing the date of a marriage or advising a construction company on the start date of an important project.

Though a heart may stop like a literary sentence hitting buffers, providing a suitable end to a dramatic fiction, neither endings nor beginnings are always so clear and so crisp. The event's extremities are invariably blurred. Teleologies

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[36] Given the context of Afro-American literature, this image is perhaps also evocative of the devaluation of lives discarded on the transatlantic slave trade's 'middle passage'.

and eschatologies are ripened for deconstruction by the paradigm of eventuality. And, because we invest much in beginnings, inaugurations, historical moments of initiation, anniversaries, origins and foundations - upon all of which we build reasoned and historical edifices - any blurring of this form and formality, caused by hesitation, has the potential to trouble something crucial or central to our ways and means of life and society.

To launch a ship we not only need to make a performative utterance but also smash a bottle, as if to shatter the unbearable tension between a before and an after, between one thing and another, between land, ship and sea, releasing the truth of a formless, chaotic substance. We thereby confess to our inability to clearly 'pin-point' a moment, to clearly identify the beginning or end of any event, and instead demonstrate our uncertainty with a blurring, violent act of seeming frustration. The smashing of the bottle marks a ship's origin but also marks that this point of origin is obfuscated, barely marked at all, illustrating our inability to locate precise points in time.

(Austin, J. L. 1976)

Euclid, to whom we might think we could turn for orientation here, unfortunately fails to reassure us regarding the reliability of a 'point' in time:

A point is that which has no part.

A line is breadthless length.

The extremities of a line are points.

A straight line is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself.

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A surface is that which has length and breadth only.

The extremities of a surface are lines.

A plane surface is a surface which lies evenly with the straight lines on itself.[37]

Beginning is a mythic form imposed on chaotic and formless events. To begin is to begin a beginning and thus to begin a myth from which we will add and pin together the drama of a narrative, giving form to events which we would hesitate to refer to as a thing, even after their assembly into a singular tale.

A ship's event begins in uncertainty, and whether sinking or being broken up for parts, its precise end will also be unclear. Nevertheless, its passage, its narrative, its event, will persist, given form to this 'thing' only as a kind of literature, event, or passage. We shape that tale, not with extensive boundaries and limits but *in the spirit of music* with regard to tensions, anticipations, culminations, rhythms, twists, folds, pauses and asides, by relating parts to parts and parts to whole, by relating interior to exterior, content to form, and by relating implications to conditions. What we continue to do throughout is to relate, to make connections, and thus strengthen the textile of our narrative, the form of our event, by multiplying its co-ordinates and thereby its conviction.

We can say that an event, far from being singular, separate or autonomous, is the sum of its relations. In music, and in any poetics, the relations may not be

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37 (Euclid's *Elements* Book 1 [Internet])

clear, extensive nor even contiguous, but echoes, assonances, rhymes and alliterations. Thinking in terms of events we grace the world with *these* relations and, dispensing with extensive, territorial and contiguous relations, relating constituent events beyond the borders of any 'thing'. Non-contiguous, *aterritorial* relations mean that every event (*in the spirit of music*, of poetics) can be related, but we must forge, imaginatively, the qualities of the relations that we make.

We have begun, we are launched, we have dived in, and yet, by the end we cannot promise to have made a ripple, and we hope, more than anything, to return the surface we have disturbed, back to itself, aiming, that is, ultimately to achieve a surface which invites no further correction. Along our way we will discover and impart, in as much detail, and as honestly as possible, our motives and methods, our journey itself, and an idea that we have not set up as a target but which we have taken pains to describe only and precisely in the event of its emergence, an idea that was here before we began and will remain when we have finished.

When, in Wong Kar Wai's *2046*, the screen is filled with the image of a pen's nib hovering and hesitating before writing on the page, silent-movie-like captions appear beneath the image, saying '1 hour later', then '10 hours later', perhaps even '100 hours later', while the image of the same, slightly trembling nib remains, waiting a centimeter above the surface of the page. This melodramatic display of hesitation before writing alludes to a proto-philosophy, a writing to-come, and yet, more than these, it alludes to the *aporiae* that

challenge the flow of audacious claims we call philosophy or 'writing thought'. *In the spirit of music* - wherein pauses and silences are readily affirmed and valued as material - we note that thought and its writing never stops, but persists through every apparent pause or aporia i.e. it persists even in the ambiance of hesitation before writing.

But there is an even more crucial concern to be drawn out of this image of the waiting pen. In every representative schema prior to Nietzsche's theocidal alert, God can be invoked to answer a riddle wherever mind, words, and pens cannot venture. And if God waits there at the limits of thought, then why not here within the writer's block, within the increments between increments, within the difference between beginning and not yet having begun? Where God cannot fill gaps in knowledge, the noumenal (or 'in itself') serves the purpose of standing-in where representation should more honestly 'give up the ghost'. This 'in itself' was, for Nietzsche, merely an imaginative Kantian gesture aimed at a hunch that defies representation. But we will call it 'immanence'.

(e.g. Nietzsche, F.W. 2003, 47 - 49)

For a writing of History that leans towards a creative writing for its form and its context, words will become the universe, the material and the god of which any thought is made. A self-reflexive, formal approach must inevitably inhabit a 'live' field in which words write of their own writing. And yet, this immanent-seeming process is constantly attempting to achieve and transmit a transcendent possibility and insisting on the production of ways, by writing thought, as a model for life that we might call 'philosophy'.

The waiting pen, like a conductor's baton, invokes the value of that which precedes, borders, or underlies the event of writing, and that which is necessary to call it into action, the preceding immanence which wills, calls forth, or demands the event. We hesitate before the audacious impulse to assert, claim or hypothesise, and yet, if we do none of these things, or do them without confidence, we concede, 'bowing to superior knowledge', collapsing under towers upon which we would climb. Then we pursue an oblique trajectory, hesitating to attend consciously to content, and, rather, attending not to our writing but to its parergon or frame, i.e. to all that makes our writing possible, so as to ensure that the fruits of our labours are neither familiar nor self-conscious; so as to ensure that they are a gift for others with whom, in faith, we share the realm of thought.   (Derrida, J. 1987)

Proust (Before Writing)

> Proust himself, despite the apparently psychological character of what are called his analyses, was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilisation, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is going to write (the young man in the novel - but, in fact, how old is he and who is he? - wants to write but cannot; the novel ends when writing at last becomes possible).

                                        (Barthes, R. 1977, 144)

In Proust, time's loss is sublime and beguiling and witnessed against a backdrop of a society moving from Enlightenment into modernity, from faith in

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knowledge to an uncertainty regarding technology, which leads to a faith in modernity alone - a self reflexive condition.   Proust's narrator witnesses the delivery of warmly printed, mass-produced newspapers in which his own contribution miraculously appears.   He also describes the experience of an early telephone call and witnesses his first Aeroplane flight.

([Telephones] Proust, M. 1996, 146 - 49)
([Newsprint] Proust, M. 1983 Vol 3, 579 - 84)
([Motor Cars] Proust, M. 1983 Vol 3, 418 - 19)
([Aeroplanes] Proust, M. 1983 Vol 3, 414)

Meanwhile, he is fascinated by repetitions, whether those of involuntary memory or those found and presumed within music, e.g. the 'little phrase' of the Vinteuil sonata.   The narrator is - as Barthes says - *not* the writer but the one who is *going to write* the very novel we are presently reading.   Thus we end 'Remembrance' at the possibility of its beginning and all the time that we have been reading - which is of course substantial - this long work is non-existent, it persists but has not taken place, it is yet to come, inevitable but latent, folded like the Chinese flower toy that Proust uses as a metaphor, into a memory which occupies no space and whose moment of recall is always deferred, uncertain, and possibly involuntary.[38]

([Vinteuil] Proust, M. 1983 Vol 1, 227 - 39)
(Barthes, R. 1977, 144)

Every book steals from us our time of reading, but the benign Proust has taken pains to regain it by means of his formal experiment, exploring the poignant, Bergsonian value of a temporal passing that cannot be incrementalised,

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[38] 'And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment […]' (Proust, M. 1981, 51 Vol. 1)

quantified or 'wasted', because it expands and contracts like an accordion and can only be represented in the strange shifts and chimeras of memory. All this is shared in a state of fascination as Proust transmits his intoxication with writing's relation to sensual experience along with the intrigues of a hierarchically stratified society changing its relationship to history. The form here, and the content, are not unrelated of course, as this social change is one from a transcendent Hegelian living '*for* history' to a more modern, more immanent Marxist / Freudian living '*as* history', a new way of life, a new mind, for which Proust feels compelled to derive a new form of writing. Modernity experiences 'life' catching-up with History, proudly matching pace with it, seeking not to lead, follow or fulfill History but to *be* it, before, of course, tripping over the resultant modern pride to fall awkwardly into an un-heroic postmodernity.

The modern relation to history - for which Proust might also be said to help make the way - is a life whose surface has become inescapably, palpably temporal, and thus already becoming *a*historical - as illustrated by Virginia Woolf's (1882 - 1941) *Mrs Dalloway*, or Joyce's *Ulysses*. The subject's own immanent problems concerning time allow it to flee History and revel in the crisis, to suffer Munch's *The Scream* (1893) with the tortured exclamation of a subject arriving, not at a Hegelian apotheosis, but at the modern surface.

Self-reflection certainly plays its part in all these writers' products, and today, bereft of modernism's secular parameters of confidence in its dynamic paradigm, we inherit their legacy, beginning each sentence while knowing that

our faith resides only in *that very* sentence and not couched or secured in a transcendent knowledge, religion *or* History. The modern has done-for representation and delivered us into a field of immanence within which we flutter around like trapped birds, searching for updrafts of transcendence.

History has lost its aims, as well as the past's grand mystique which has become a part of our consumerist surface, an immanent 'archive', a researcher's resource, something external to us which we can utilise - no-longer a dynamic force in which we are swept-up. Nevertheless, in the absence of a future History has become our locus of hope and imagination, despite its terrors and horrors. It is in fact, more apt to replace the paradigm of History with that of memory i.e. more egalitarian, global (in the best sense) multi-cultural (in the best sense).

Just as Proust recognised that experience steeped in memory becomes heightened in sensuality and of greater value to us and to our writing, so we can supplant History with memory, satisfied that we thus turn burdens into opportunities - opportunities to regain and reclaim, revise and rewrite - in faith that we thereby construct an informed vision of the present, if not the future.

Given the impossibility of representing the present other than as thus steeped in the past, the present - this actuality, this writing, this event - necessarily becomes our only subject matter, our content, our 'about'. Meanwhile our form is not something given into which we can pour this content, but something we

will only find in the ear or eye of the other, and in *their* present, *their* event of reading.

Before writing, as before the law, we test our faith, or relinquish the very idea of faith by evolving methods and forms that steer us away from certainty. We concoct uncertainty wherever a Cartesian or Enlightenment thinker might have been keen to discover its antidote. Before writing, there is a hesitation, which aims, via a certain aimlessness, to avoid the folly of rushing impulsively into a territory for which we are too-well prepared or well equipped. And yet, there is also a moment, either of resolve or foolhardiness, at which, to hesitate further seems more dangerous than to begin.

> What is the source of our first suffering? […] It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak. It began in the moment when we accumulated silent things within us.
> (Heaney, S. 1992, 367)

'To write or not to write?' There is a suffering in writing, that is certain; we have seen it illustrated in Kafka's drawing, in Stephen King's *Misery*, but there are also times when only writing will alleviate suffering and when, to take up the pen is a necessary 'taking up of arms' against our suffering.

As the page is no recognisable territory or terrain, so at every event writing is unprepared, ill-equipped, unqualified, it is a 'leap in the dark' of ink on to a white page. Proust's genius, according to Barthes, is to have written while waiting to write, to have thus maneuvered so as to transcend the impossible conditions of

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modernity by writing as if never having written at all; to have produced a massive 'thing', a book, which can be seen as most successful in artfully retaining its eventuality, maintaining its projected ideal status, despite being completed, duplicated, manufactured, according to modern, secular valuation and valorization, through mass production and popularization. We could say then that Proust's achievement is the solution that Nietzsche bewailed *not* finding for himself in his regretful conclusion to *Beyond Good and Evil.*

This is Proust's way of escape, his answer to Nietzsche's fear that writing would institutionalise and deaden explosive and Romantic thoughts and thus betray them. In Proust, the event of writing and its reading are cherished, treasured in accordance with those intoxicated details of experience that he lovingly described as intense, qualitative, untimely phenomena that justify the world as sensual memory.

In *The Captive,* Proust describes the actual death of an author, Bergotte, while making much of the transcendent value of art, offering it up against more organized religions. And he concludes the passage with a most modern image, that of a shop window where even the commodities and overworked shopkeepers aspire to give form to the inexplicable event of death and thus repeat the intention of the writer himself in this very passage by insisting upon some transcendent value of life and art; some non-dogmatic, disorganised religion which persists despite modern secularism and cynicism. While Proust's experiment seeks to overcome the fact that the 'thing' of the book threatens to overcome the transcendent value of the thought it contains, here the very form

and material structure of the modularly manufactured (commodities) books

becomes useful in assembling symbols of ascension to an afterlife in and as art.

> He was dead. Dead for ever? Who can say? Certainly, experiments in spiritualism offer us no more proof than the dogmas of religion that the soul survives death. All that we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying a burden of obligations contracted in a former life; there is no reason inherent in the conditions of life on this earth that can make us consider ourselves obliged to do good, to be kind and thoughtful, even to be polite, nor for an atheist artist to consider himself obliged to begin over again a score of times a piece of work the admiration aroused by which will matter little to his worm-eaten body, like the patch of yellow wall painted with so much skill and refinement by the artist destined to be for ever unknown and barely identified under the name Vermeer. All these obligations, which have no sanction in our present life, seem to belong to a different world, a world based on kindness, scrupulousness, self-sacrifice, a world entirely different from this one and which we leave in order to be born on this earth, before perhaps returning there to live once again beneath the sway of those unknown laws which we obeyed because we bore their precepts in our hearts, not knowing whose hand had traced them there - those laws to which every profound work of the intellect brings us nearer and which are invisible only - if then! - to fools. So that the idea that Bergotte was not dead forever is by no means improbable.

> They buried him, but all through that night of mourning, in the lighted shop-windows, his books, arranged three by three, kept vigil like angels with outspread wings and seemed, for him who was no more, the symbol of his resurrection.
>
> Proust, M. Penguin, Vol 3, 180 - 86)

The Hand

Barthes rightly said 'the author slips away' in the moment of writing. The author

departs just as writing arrives, just as soon as it appears. But, as we have seen

above, writing 'slips away' too, as does each of its words, giving themselves over to the writer's custody and manipulations, losing themselves to their own etymological traces, to the writer's intentions, and to the reader's interpretation.

The pen that, in our most confident moments whistles along without hesitation in tune with our thought, knows a certainty which neither thinks ahead nor looks back but which radiates faith, charmed by its own spell, laying down the lubricant path for its own progress while leaving a trail for others to follow. In this way, writing provides a model of our selves when acting automatically, intuitively, semi-consciously, and empirically, like children who move fearlessly within a limited horizon of time, space, memory and causality.

Only a faith that casts aside 'adult' fears and doubts enables the child-like semi-consciousness of the inspired hand to lead our life (a practical philosophy) in the manner of a writing (a *grammatology*), progressing even though its next step is never certain. The hand we believe in is not that of god, nor that of the parent, but our own hand (and can we call it our own?), going before us, the hand of the writer, lover, musician, carer, craftsman, that acts without need of authority but with a special autonomy (life as art) confident, intuitive and without hesitation.

We might hesitate before writing but never *during* writing. Writing *is,* after all, nothing if not a momentum that rewards us with the balance necessary to enable motion. An occasional pause for doubt is nevertheless caught-up in the same momentum of the piece or of the sentence, and so, such pauses -like

those in music - play an intrinsic part in any coherent and recognisable meaning that we produce. An event of writing, including its pauses, comes to an end without experiencing hesitation. Writing, with its inscriptions, pauses, hops and jumps, approximates or aspires to musicality. The untimeliness of the moment of plunging - or dipping - into writing; of being carried away and along by its mechanism, surrenders our defense and invites ghosts and traces to haunt words which, though used and reused by others, we claim for ourselves by the particular form or configuration we give to them.

Children who, when initiated into writing, laboriously construct each letter, are gradually introduced (according to certain pedagogical traditions) into then writing increasingly quickly, productively, efficiently connecting-up letters to allow this slippery efficiency and less-conscious writing to develop. A certain speed, an 'escape velocity' is required before we and our writing 'slip away' into semi-conscious productions which allow us to become again the child that we were before writing. The pen slips across a surface, leaving trails whose meaning is never dry, nor fully fixed, but is returned to liquid by the solvent eye of every reader.

Writers find themselves following their writing's progress as a certain 'way', while wondering how many more times this river of words will bend, and thus deliver us to new aspects of itself and of ourselves. The writer might secretly hope that writing's blackness will 'come clean' as might a faucet's dirty discharge left to run. Part of us hopes that, in an ecstatic moment when our ink runs clear, we might truly, finally, 'slip away', disappearing into the clarity of the

unused page; into a cloud of white on white that conjures away the sin of our will-to-impose ourselves upon a world; a world which we suspect (whenever our audacity temporarily fails) might be better off without our contribution.

We impose ourselves on the page, and in so doing, on the world. When ink runs dry we replenish it because we have not completed what we set out to achieve, even though we could not say with certainty what that completion is, or how it will be, only the writing will tell us that. We are given over to the writing, surrendered to it, entranced by its process we look down and witness a hand writing, it is our own, something is coming out, it must be ink, a hand is writing a thought, *our* hand, *our* thought, and yet some dream, some ideal by which we would relinquish our imposition (a kind of ascetic ideal) tempts us, like the opposite of a sin, towards an outcome whose value seems clearer, less equivocal than that of the knowledge we promise to impart or contribute, and which becomes, by comparison with this ideal, a compromise, a mere hesitation on the brink of a more reliable and fulfilling surrender.

Such a hesitation resides on the brink of relinquishing all the pride and action amassed in the labyrinthine edifice of the archive of knowledge, and hesitates on the brink of relinquishing it all in favor of a profound and more truly knowing silence, even one minute's silence, an atonement, a small piece of peace offered as a sacrifice to the vociferous arguments of men, a foil to the noise of the 'animal who promises'.   (Nietzsche, F.W. 1996, 39)

The Promise

The animal promises, but does so as a lack of faith so that he is constantly moved to pronounce, announce, assert, defend, express and hide within thickets of promising words. When the promise - the 'to' of Hamlet's 'to-being' - becomes conscious of itself as a problem the question of the soliloquy becomes a stuttering '*to* to be or not *to* to be?'(*sic*). Should we then go on stuttering, uncertain as to whether we are making a new sense or no sense at all? Or explore our new enunciation as an idiosyncratic gift? Or perhaps, take an oath of silence, locking our jaws, returning our pen to its velvet-lined coffin-like draw and becoming acclimatized to the sweetness of a world denied our intrusion? Which will the 'animal that promises' choose, given that this animal's promise lies undeniably broken, exposed as a lie, or, at best, a myth?

The passing of modernity will, like any passing, also pass away, nevertheless it continues to haunt and guide us in our present hesitant mode, and so we yet attempt to proceed, while losing faith in faith. At the moment of hesitation the 'river' of momentum is dammed, and a force, whose ways into the future are straitened, bursts its banks and floods to become a reservoir of unused and undirected potential. We ponder how to move or move-on without the aid of the 'river' of modern momentum that seemed to sweep us along in a torrent so significant that we are now able to blame it with a resentment once reserved for the gods.

We attempt to proceed, yet only with an ironicised, faithless procedure, with fading visions of faith in our ability to wrest a better world from the fast closing grip of short sighted, crude and violent pragmatists. And yet, reluctant to organize our peculiar religiosity, faith and writing are all we have to pit against these hostile and often omnipotent-seeming forces; faith in that which is within us, faith in all that is within us that makes these others appear hostile, threatening, and wrong, faith in faith itself, a peculiar, materialist, immanent-ist fundamentalism which rails against its organisation and representation; faith that, even if our alternative is unarticulated, unformed, unwelcome or untimely, this only makes it more justified and therefore more formidable. It is a power, but one which, going without form, forming itself only in its event, is thus unable to argue for its own value, unable to protect itself against accusations of valueless-ness.   It is what Blanchot called a 'powerless power', or what Benjamin called a 'weak power'.

The great modern 'we' is something that it is now embarrassing to announce to a culture that has sacrificed conviction and identity and compromised its human values for an ironic and cowardly complicity with 'market forces'; where market rights supplant human rights, and which worships neither god nor man but only the forces which enchain and oppress both; forces of over-production and mass-exploitation.

Today 'there is no friend' as all collectivity fragments into an often abused and abusive form of monadism wherein nodes of networks are formed of people purposefully parted and severely individuated so that they can then pay and

wonder at technology's ability to re-connect them. Everything must be kept apart, at the distance of an unfulfilled desire, a sheet of glass, a shop window, a locked door, a high wall (further forms of hesitation) in order for property and services to triumph. The invention of sheet and plate glass, shop and cabinet windows made this possible for modernity, today it is the thin plastic monitor screen through which we perceive the technologically communicated image of what we would like to have or to be, through which the self, the home, the workplace, the factory, the office, the shop and the community become one.

While we might strive to maintain hope by the production of documents of faith, writing and reading are also signs of the *absence* of faith. When we speak, it is because we are afraid of silence to the extent that we are strangely embarrassed by it in the company of other souls. When we write, it is because we lack faith in posterity's valuation of, and ability to register our event, and thus attempt to represent, legitimate, express and justify ourselves. And when we read, we look also there for confirmation, authority, and support for the reality we have already constructed.

I think therefore I doubt, and in doubt I grasp for a 'therefore' but then question this 'therefore', hesitate, falter and think twice. When I have faith, I act without thought and without fear. When I have faith, I need neither expression nor representation - both of which arise from anxiety, fuelled by the energy of a certain panic. The pleasure of translating our panic into expression is something to which we can become addicted, something that might even turn us into writers.

Meanwhile, haunting every expression and profession is a hesitation. In full faith we hesitate to relinquish the ghost of an imperturbable, restless silence, a blank page on which we refuse to write for fear of diminishing and betraying the world and our thoughts by carelessly deploying the word. Nevertheless we 'go-on' and, having breached the page's surface and thereby corrupted its autonomy, continue transforming its 'thing' into process, into event, returning its crisply pressed pulp to a liquid state like that of the ink. And then, there, our task becomes to return it to its prior condition of wholeness, and to restore its surface to one that is again pristine, by producing a text so convincing and valued that nothing can be added nor taken away from it without constituting some form of destruction.

WRITING III

Bartleby

There *may* be a thought that knows or seeks totality, but it is not this one - it is not ours. We are ink, a flow of memory contingent upon a certain technology. Unbridled from any grandiose aim, we are less Ahab, more Bartleby. As we write we look into an aqueous screen as at almost nothing, half a meter away and mere microns deep. And yet we look into everywhere and everything, scouring a 'web' of nodal points, making virtual 'words of light' that shine and sign back to us, illuminating this narcissistic scene.

<div align="right">(Cadava, E. [b.1955] c1997)</div>

In Herman Melville's (1819 - 1891) enduring short story, Bartleby's window looks out only onto a wall which, due to an idiosyncrasy of the city's towering and crowded, modern, arch-capitalist architecture, barely betrays changes of time or weather and gives him only bricks and mortar or his work itself (the texts he is to copy) with which to form any perspective.

<div align="right">(Melville, H. 1948)</div>

Bartleby hesitates before being trapped in commonplace expectations of reasonable duty and his resulting incongruity (his alterity) sinks like mercury through and out of the pragmatic, logical milieu that expects to utilise him. He is one of our anti-heroes, the anti-hero of 'a hesitation of things' and we can only dream, with a mischievous grin, of a world power one day represented by a politician whose role model might be more Bartleby, less Ahab. The site of Bartleby's un-sighted desk by this window without a view, echoes his un-

American refusal of any shared will, loyalty, dream or vision, symbolizing his un-'jock'-ular rejection of teamwork or dutiful, pragmatic objectivity. A strangely innocent, near holy aura grows around Bartleby as his exception (his *différance*) inadvertently exposes and increases the intolerance of others by confronting them with their own entrapment within a hegemonic, naturalised norm. Bartleby reminds us of the statement (attributed to Leibniz by Bergson) 'God is the substance that has no point of view', Bartleby is a son of *that* God, come to take away our misguided perspectival and pragmatist sins. Bartleby is a scrivener by a blind window who always 'prefers not to' but never explicitly refuses. He is a 19th Century Christ, a proto-Ghandiesque figure sent to warn the pragmatic capitalist metropolis of the vacuity of its commercial heart and of its misdirected, myopic dream.   (Bergson, H. 1998, 352)

Bartleby causes a hesitant blockage in the thrusting, dynamic, commercial heart of the city. He is a scapegoat whose difference and ultimate expulsion he offers up while silently broadcasting a warning to the 19th and 20th Centuries that they might lead to disaster if alterity - as an immanent, unrepresented, underlying, and awkward question on which modern wealth is founded - is not brought to the foreground of its thought.

Bartleby reminds those who all-too confidently wield knowledge, that there remain in the world behaviours and responses which are not predictable and cannot be encompassed, measured or repeated.

Bartleby's oblique message endorses Aristotle's (B.C. 384 - 322) convoluted warning, used by Derrida to begin discussion of *The Politics of Friendship*: 'my friends there is no friend'. His terrible awkwardness is an infuriating dereliction of the social contract and a waving of the imperative to behave as others do by 'pulling one's weight' as part of society. That society however, despite our intuitive, sovereign sense of self-worth, uses such dutiful principles to reduce us to its merest cog while it nevertheless gushes with a rhetoric of equality, liberty and brotherhood, wrapped in a beautiful promise of freedom and happiness.

(Derrida, J. 1997)

Though a kind of writer, Bartleby is merely a copyist, a 'scrivener' of the kind that pepper 19th Century literature. They appear in Poe's (1809 - 1849) *Man of the Crowd* with ears bent over from resting their pens, in Gogol's (1809 - 1852) *The Overcoat* the anti-hero is also a scrivener, Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870) features them as an essential tool for burgeoning Capitalism's burgeoning legal apparatus eager for an age of mechanical reproduction.

(Gogol, N. 1979)
(Allen-Poe, E. 1986, 479 - 87)

Despite their apparent flights of fancy, none of Kafka's artworks fully escape the banal atmosphere of the offices of the worker's claims and insurance company in which he was dutifully ensconced. Kafka too, could also be thought of as 'scrivening' his inky worlds and thoughts rather than writing them with any flourish of aristocratic vanity or leisurely detachment. His workplace reports and drawings for *The Workman's Accident Insurance Institute,* his diaries and

letters, become blurred with the unfinished novels and short stories of a would-be writer; one who attempts (in vain as he sees it) first of all to copy the role of writer.   (Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1986)

Informed by Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Kafka, we can see that Bartleby, rather than please power or ambitiously seek to 'become major', pulls his surroundings in the direction of minority with a mysterious gravity that is all his own. Bartleby's unpromising window, looking onto a wall on a low floor of a high building, is an empirical reality that undermines the commercial city's ideal image as a Mecca of growth, achievement, and the realisation of dreams. Bartleby brings into doubt the very 'spirit' of Capitalism and embodies its alternative, its darker underbelly, its misfits, failures, and those who are an exception to the crowd, who, despite being buffeted by its pervasive and relentless reasoning are always looking in other directions and thinking in other ways.   (Weber, M. [1864 - 1920] 1988)

Bartleby's window without a view, aided by his paradoxically outrageous, yet perfectly understandable preference, challenges and undermines the much heralded freedom promised in return for dutiful labour by capitalist democracy, and reminds us of the most dark and sinister manifestations of this promise wrought by totalitarian thought and displayed above the entrance to Dachau concentration camp as *Arbeit Macht Frie* (*Freedom Through Work*), or alluded to by Eichmann's defense in Israel that he was 'only doing his duty'.

(Arendt, Hannah [1906 - 1975] 1977)

As Ahab scours the surface for a 'Great White' desire which must lead him to destruction, writers, as scriveners (Melville among them), search across white pages within simulacral language, and over the oceans of mind for synaptic sparks among black marks, for wisdom in and with which to believe, gleaned from dim realms where sight is useless and 'vision' necessarily takes over.

Aporeal blackness becomes all we have to lead us through an unbearably, blinding and sublime white which presumes, naturalises and hegemonises its status as ground, fundament, known; as something pure, essential and given.

There will always be scriveners, would-be authors, simulacra, who copy the role of 'writer' and recycle the familiar resource of vocabulary. There will always be writers who 'slip away' into an exile that ensures that every writer is also Machiavellian, at least in that a certain modesty and distance intrinsic to the task insists we can only hope to influence the world's Princes obliquely while eschewing any desire to become ourselves powerful or princely for fear of losing the necessary humility required in any encounter with the daunting task and responsibility of thinking and writing, i.e. for fear of losing the necessarily 'minoritarian' justification to think and to write; and for fear of ceasing to be artists by slipping into such predictability and conservatism. The writer's innate responsibility, the writer's 'ethics as first philosophy', means that the writer eschews profane and familiar notions of power as corrupt and corrupting, and folds away from them in a baroque movement that shyly 'strives to fail'.

(Cioran, E.M. 1968)

The writer necessarily maintains distance, the pen becomes a mighty shield, the writer 'becomes minor', hoping, by writing, to also make that which is major become minor while surreptitiously assigning or ceding power, offering words as bait delicately pierced by the fishhooks[39] of ideas.

<p style="text-align: right;">(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 112)</p>

Thus writers are vicarious poisoners of others' ears, and yet imagine that they keep worlds turning by turning out words, keeping both words and worlds spinning and guessing, in-doubt and to-come, by maintaining, like Scheherazade, a process of incompletion and hesitation, a narrative promise, suspending the possibilities of narrative while extending our narrative of possibilities. By being 'out-of-this-world', exiled by our writing into the role of vicarious commentators, we necessarily have 'no friend' because our duty is to maintain only the promise inherent in the journey taken by each word and sentence from before its beginning to after its end, and on to the next, traveling in hope, while remaining firmly seated.

<p style="text-align: right;">(Mahdi, M. ed. [Arabian Nights], 1990)</p>

Scriveners, from Bartleby to Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), from Machiavelli to Melville to Mohammed, an esoteric, inky-fingered few, attempt to write the law (our law), the word (our word), like kings who foolishly rule only our own moment, our event of writing, offering our head to some moment to-come, attempting at each event to return the world to rights,

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[39] 'From now on all my writings are fish-hooks: perhaps understand fishing as well as anyone? [...] If nothing got *caught* I am not to blame. *There were no fish …*' (Nietzsche, F.W. 1979,112)

staying forensically vigilant and open-eared according to our present responsibility, tending and attending the flock of words as a common resource of cultural material and yet invariably allowing our attention-to-detail to flex into honest self-consciousness and self-reflexivity, so that, though we are dutifully scrivening, we are still preening and performing at the screen of a 'floating world', taking narcissistic pleasure in the event of writing, thinking and claiming, but ultimately avoiding the delusion of initiating, imposing or perpetuating any original, redemptive or other Platonic / Christian virtue which might be ingrained un-deconstructed in our habits.

The Screen

The absurd gamble, of picking up the pen, to feel again a certain immediacy, a pressure, of eternity bearing down upon the barrel of ink and squeezing into the nib's gutter to make marked flows of meaning. If this does sound grandiose or 'pretentious', then, we ask, if this is not what we are involved in then what are we doing? What, for better or worse, *is* writing? What is thought? And what is philosophy? A de-legitimisation or deconstruction of the contents and forms of a history of ideas has been so successful (if deconstruction should ever be called 'successful') as to leave us inhabiting *method* divorced from the convictions of any particular content. We write method, method and form, and only produce 'content' within inverted commas as a kind of delusion - incidentally or obliquely.

Today we write a writing so informed by deconstruction as to aim, above all things, for the avoidance of the possibility of deconstruction. The modern or Romantic author-function concedes to that of a post-industrial engineer, a 'producer' (in Benjamin's term) or 'constructor' (in El Lissitzky's) who makes a text that operates, works, supports the readings of others and of events subsequent to the initial intent of the text. If this is not our role, then we risk only contributing to a mannered self-reflexivity.

(Benjamin, W. 1986, 220 - 38)

Only scrutiny can ensure that we also contribute a critical resistance. A self-reflexive, postmodern (in the sense of being propelled by modernism into greater self-reflection and increased criticality) abstraction of writing, develops simultaneously as a realism, as a materialism, and as an empiricism occurring in response to empirical, socio-technological conditions that we call 'culture' and 'history'. The writing of thought is always displaced to where it seeks new justifications, new identities, new renewals, making us wonder, how can writing ever be a 'thing'? If thought ill-fits such a description, why should thought's writing ever wear that title comfortably? Is it a question of materiality and virtuality? Recently the novelist J.G. Ballard (b.1930) claimed… 'I don't think a great book has yet been written on computer', implying perhaps that a technological difference - perhaps one of relative virtuality and indexicality - determined this 'greatness'.

(J.G. Ballard 10 / 03 / 2007)

Meanwhile, in Robert Calasso's *Literature And The Gods* we find:

> In the delirium of their love affair with the microchip, people insist on asking tedious questions about the survival of the printed word. While the truly extraordinary phenomenon that is everywhere before us is never even mentioned: the vertiginous and unprecedented concentration of power that has gathered and is gathering in the pure act of reading. That we may be gazing at a screen rather than a page, that the numbers, formulas, and words appear on liquid crystal rather than paper, changes nothing at all: it is still reading. The theatre of the mind seems to have expanded to include rank upon teeming rank of patient signs, all incorporated in this prosthesis which is the computer. Meanwhile, with superstitious confidence, all the sorcery and powers at play are attributed to what appears on the screen, not to the mind that elaborates it - and above all *reads.*

<p style="text-align:right; color:red">(Calasso, Roberto. 2001, 22)</p>

And, in Simon Schama's coverage of the 2008 U.S presidential election:

> The Republican bet is that […] self-evidently, we live in the age of images, and words are just the add-ons to the beguilement of the eye; that all we have are soundbites. Obama's is the more stunning gamble; that so far from the digital age killing off the reign of the word, it has actually given logos a whole new lease of life.

<p style="text-align:right; color:red">(Schama, S. 2008, 34)</p>

The question of the word's value in relation to computing is an all too common one (to the point of becoming banal, as Calasso says) today but is nevertheless a central and pressing question that currently concerns every writer and haunts every writing. The screen offers infinite possibilities and all kinds of assistance, and yet may be no more helpful than a pencil and paper in leading us to the important thoughts and words needed by our day.

Despite this haunting, this doubt, we maintain the presumption that every day, every time, needs its writing and its words. We necessarily stoke the hubris that an other is waiting to encounter our writing. The computer's screen is not only a page of possibilities passively drawing out our sense of pride and adventure, it is simultaneously an entrance to a stage where we might write - dressed and named appropriately - to a live audience as a live writing.

J.G Ballard is right, a new kind of book is required to master the 'floating world' of the computer screen with all its tempting pleasures and self-satisfying appearances. A truly honest, self-reflexive, and current writing, of and for this technology will be a 'far cry' from the modernist's milieu of typewriter, bedsit, and wastebasket and the kind of classics that those particular props produced. How does writing make an impact armed only with virtual tools? Does freedom from the violence and noise of the typewriter wrest us from the necessity of making 'impact' at all? The industrial age produced an industrial writing machine which, in turn, produced industrious writers, but what of today when we work with software on increasingly thin and silent keyboards, without dialectical History breathing down our necks, and without modernism taken for granted as our secular belief system; the very road that we and the other, writer and reader, walk together?

Have writing's commitments and passions become virtual along with its words? Has writing grown closer to the thought that lies behind writing, those thoughts that writing sometimes inspires and sometimes betrays? Do we require a certain *indexicality* from words in order for them to truly impact upon our world?

Is this not similar to the crisis that the invention of photography (as a forerunner to the computer screen) instigated by suddenly proliferating a visual truth that was more virtual and more vicarious, and which, having troubled and diverted painting for so long has recently also caught up with words and the logos suspended within them, to trouble and divert words in a way similar to the impact it once had upon painting?

If the computer uses a material (digital memory) that is increasingly common to all, and utilises a potential shared by both writer and reader, does writing lose its place and its voice, or does it learn to speak with others and as one, including all *but* the superceded author? We sense that we can maintain faith in the power of words themselves if not in any power of our own. Words - that most plastic of media - might carry writers and writing through current questions and possibilities posed by new technology.

Half Writing

Perhaps Wittgenstein, Mallarmé, e.e. cummings and Lawrence Sterne are necessary models here. Such modernists, factualists and self-reflexivists appear agnostic and materialist, and yet effectively maintain a sense of the infinite precisely via the modernist concretions of their writing and thought. By insisting that the representational device (computer, page, typewriter, pen, mass production, etc.) draws attention to itself, we also see the sign *as* a sign. The sign is forced out of its habitual passive utilization and also sees us. As

writing becomes art for us, we are forced out of our perspective. As philosophy is recognised as creative and performed the writer gravitates to the reciprocity of a practice, conceding to the plasticity of the medium and process with which the writer's very hands are in dialogue. The vitality or destiny of writing lies in an *a*perspectival, semi-conscious reciprocity (we might say a 'half writing').

We are always writing to writing, after all, perhaps no-one else is listening, maybe no-one else is reading. And writing is always writing back to us (it has no choice other than to *address*). The resulting disorientation provides a sense of the infinite more convincing than mere representations of distance or rhetorical allusions to the absolute.

The Passenger

> The passenger is not enthroned high up; he looks out on the same level as everyone else and brushes the passers-by with his sleeve. Even this is an incomparable experience for the sense of touch. Where Europeans, on their rapid journeys, enjoy superiority, dominance over the masses, the Muscovite in the little sleigh is closely mingled with people and things. If he has a box, a child, or a basket to take with him - for all this the sleigh is the cheapest means of transport - he is truly wedged into the street bustle. No condescending gaze: a tender, swift brushing along stones, people and horses. You feel like a child gliding through the house on its little chair.

(Benjamin, W. 2000, 191)

There is no outside to our text, the revered rectangle of the autonomous page has given way to a continuum of memory. The sacred space of representation bleeds into the everyday, immersing both ourselves, and our writing, in immanence.

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There is no baroque cloud on which to pause, pose, or position whatever remains of our perspective, no point of view from which to begin or complete a panoptical, alphabetic or encyclopedic knowledge. Rather, when writing, we inhabit that 'child's chair' described imaginatively by Walter Benjamin in his memoir of Moscow as it glides about the house; a chair on which we sit and yet are never still. Even that rather robust chair of Machiavelli's is in fact a vehicle for speculative journeys .[40] [41]

Instead of staging an outside, we do not deny our own immersion and disorientation. Relinquishing the project of knowledge we take up the pen with something else in mind, something that is not 'thing', some thing without. Without things, hesitating before knowledge, hesitating to make a 'thing' hesitating without and before, yet seeking to locate, maintain and impart a state of mind, without sides, points, without outsides - *aterritorial*. Derrida's deconstructions are an elegant struggle (as are Nietzsche's) to allude to and impart 'some thing else in mind' which cannot be explicitly revealed or represented. For Derrida, the assumed objective interface of writing is in fact a conspiracy, a coded and esoteric communication, necessarily deferred and denied-to both writer and reader, a latent image of understanding which waits to appear in the midst of a rendezvous.

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[40]A similar allusion is made in a film by the artist Roman Signer who shows a table standing solidly in a river. On the tabletop is fixed a video camera. Small explosions near the tops of the table's legs separate them from the tabletop which drops onto the surface of the river like a raft and is now carried away with the current. From this moment, the film is from the point of view of the camera, mounted on the raft and carrying its gaze in eddies and swirls, rushes, pauses and reverses, wherever the river determines. (Signer, R. Hauser & Wirth Gallery, London)

[41] In Dennis Potter's *Cold Lazarus* the playwright seemed to satirise the chairbound condition of the non-creative executives and workers who exert control over an artist's product. He represented them - apparently vengefully - as future creatures who are half human and half (wheeled) chair. (Potter, D. 1996)

This 'some thing else in mind', that we have in mind here, or that 'some thing else that has *us* in mind'; that something that you the reader may now have in mind; the 'some thing else in mind' that is always haunting actions, lives, events, and texts, is in fact the 'to' of 'to-being', and of 'will to', of 'ten to twelve', and also of *To The Lighthouse* or 'To the Bastille!' It is the 'to' that we sense as the immanent trajectory underlying experience (*durée*), which is neither commanding nor obeying, neither willing nor being. *Durée* carries us like passengers, part active, part prone. Writing is an attempt to match *durée*'s changing pace and thus 'hit the spot' of an appropriate representation of that passing-into-past that we are; that nothing but memory that all is; that being swept back while yearning to be forward, to be next, to be then.

As we see in Barthes, in Nietzsche, in Derrida, but also in those that Derrida is deconstructing, writers who allow art to inform their method and their form invariably have 'some thing else in mind' despite the apparent aim and focus of their texts. This some thing *else* is not outside but available only *through* the text. It is not a meaning that the author knowingly holds secret from the reader to be translated or decoded - there are too many variables for this to be the case - it is rather the oblique allusion to the inexorable, temporal journey that we wish and will-to direct but to which we are ultimately forced to concede. Pushed back into our chairs like hijacked tourists whose protests are inadequate we resign ourselves to the status of passenger in our own experience and servant of our own writing.

This is not a subconscious of writers or of their texts, Freud too is a creative writer, and his neologisms also have their 'some thing else in mind'. Indeed the 'some thing else' would not be subordinate, not 'sub-' nor secondary or marginal, but attends, as equal and present, even if asked to wait. The some thing else in mind is, furthermore, not insubstantial and spiritualised but it is the un-experienced, the 'yet to be', the block that enables writing to go on without a knowledge of itself that would make it worthless to pursue. It is the benignly *aporeal* aspect of every consciousness and the *noumena* of our text.

This lesson, gleaned from writing, informs us that there is an aporeal and noumenal counter to our conscious and corporeal experience which tells us nothing, refuses us, is never for us, which escapes us, which doesn't even make it to the rendezvous. It is that of us which is lost, which 'goes over our heads'; our lost time, our misunderstanding, where nothing can be seen, and where all is opaque. While we appear to progress in the direction that we can see, all that refuses and evades us nevertheless also influences our direction, like the complex relations of winds and tides, sails and keel which bear upon the ultimate course of a sailboat.

To seek we must find a way, no block stops us but merely diverts us. The obstacle is never external but an essential part, giving our way its form. We can award our mind - via a kind of superhumanism - respect for the infinite methods by which it is imaginatively able to proceed, using certain pacts and passwords between itself and the greater mechanisms of language. Metaphor, allusion, invocation, allegory, contingency, continuity, all serve the function of an oblique

trajectory, a journey in which we participate hand-in-hand with a language which appears to have its own destination, its own will and 'to-being'. Lost becomes found, labyrinth becomes burrow, plain becomes field, every time that ways through, over, around, under, between or behind arise in response to each particular occasion on which they are necessary.

Unable to be ourselves a 'thing', we remain molten, protean, ready to adapt to each obstacle, each new possibility, making way, making away. On one occasion we need to be Hercules, another Hannibal, sometimes a spider or a leader trapped in a cave, we cast around for appropriate models, dressing appropriately to negotiate each stage and maintaining at all costs the momentum necessary to the flow of an ink which, left passively to the entropy of time and the elements, would dry into a useless blot, a dead spot, but which, used as a tool with which to garner thought, can lead us to a deadline which becomes our only lifeline, the only formative factor appropriate to an event-ual paradigm.

Writing As 'The Floating World'

    Old pond

    Leap-splash -

    a frog

(Basho, M. 1985, 58 [No. 153])

What is it to write? To announce? To publish? All this is transformed today by a certain conflation of tele-visual, tele-communicative, and typographic media, and by co-incidence of the global and the local via the digital. The authority of writing, *as* act, remains dependent upon mediations availed via unprecedented technological innovations. Just as Nietzsche regretted the written representation of his 'beloved' eruptive and immaterial thought, so Ono - in Ishiguro's novel - negotiates the relative values of a 'floating world' of fleeting sensual experience and a Realism of political exigency, involving war, poverty and commitment.

> Mori-san paused again […] Then he went on: 'The finest, most fragile beauty an artist can hope to capture drifts within those pleasure houses after dark. And on nights like these, Ono, some of that beauty drifts into our own quarters here. But as for those pictures up there, they don't even hint at these transitory, illusory qualities. They're deeply flawed, Ono,'
>
> (Ishiguro, K. 2001, 150)

> Sensei, it is my belief that in such troubled times as these, artists must learn to value something more tangible than those pleasurable things that disappear with the morning light. It is not necessary that artists always occupy a decadent and enclosed world. My conscience, Sensei, tells me I cannot remain forever an artist of the floating world.
>
> (Ishiguro, K. 2001, 180)

We could concur with Ono's master Mori-san's advocation of the 'floating world' as the true domain of a painter, if only because painting's technology is itself a 'floating world' of fluid and provisional marks without any necessary responsibility to truth and reality.

But writing, despite its innate assumption of responsibility, comes, in the virtuality of an aqueous computer screen, to share material of digital memory with many other kinds of image, increasing the sense in which writing is itself a kind of painting, itself a product of, and participation in, a 'floating world'.

Extending Walter Benjamin's conclusions in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* and also in *The Author as Producer*, we can state that digital or virtual writing's potential for rapid dissemination approximates the un-mediated and immediate 'publication' of thought (which Nietzsche would surely have relished) thus making writing newly 'politicised' and volatile as a lava of relatively uncontrolled writing erupts continuously out of intimate spaces and subjectivities into a global public forum.

Today we are increasingly compelled by a spirit of competition and by the aims of advertising, to act without hesitation, to participate with deference and complicity in spectacular consumerism driven by digital reproduction. A colourful and rapid technology of microns and microseconds has become the site and the medium through which any philosophy or critique of our own 'floating world' will necessarily be forged.

Thus, questions are raised concerning how a technological impact on writing in turn impacts the political, legal and religious commitments enshrined and organized by the written word and traditionally responsible for coordinating society. Might our constitutions, bills of rights, etc. be made *more* provisional

and less credible because today they are less material. How, then, how now, should writers and writing act, and how can we act by writing? [42]

> For I speak of each of my states as if it formed a block and were a separate whole. I say indeed that I change, but the change seems to me to reside in the passage from one state to the next: of each state, taken separately, I am apt to think that it remains the same during all the time that it prevails. Nevertheless, a slight effort of attention would reveal to me that there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow.[43]
>
> (Bergson, H. 1998, 1)

Is it possible to locate the point at which an act or action begins? Is that 'to', of to-being really any act at all once we doubt or discredit Euclidean 'points' and obtain a preference for Bergsonism by dis-incrementalising any singular moment, any singular time, and thereby coming to understand ourselves as participants in events - as events within events?

Is there not, rather, an ambient momentum which here rushes and there dawdles, which goes before and after the self, and goes where the self seems to have ceased or is yet to begin? Are we not, as well as being in part this

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[42] Regular losses, appearing in news, of enormous databases stored on tiny disks and flashdrives containing restricted information such as details of criminals, social security claimants, etc. is a related current phenomenon. Here we would be concerned less with the production and accumulation of virtual information than its secrecy, disappearance, erasure or loss, and threat of reappearance in inappropriate domains, but as we have seen in our discussion of aporia above, that which is lost or omitted must remain worthy of consideration as an equal factor in determining our way. Meanwhile (and to become slightly Baudrillardian) such lost virtual information, which may yet reappear, seems to become, as it were, 'doubly virtual'.

[43] Proust says something similar: 'And so it was from the Guermantes way that I learned to distinguish between these states which reign alternatively within me, during certain periods, going so far as to divide each day between them, the one returning to dispossess the other with the regularity of a fever: contiguous, and yet so foreign to one another, so devoid of means of communication, that I can no longer understand, or even picture myself, in one state what I have desired or dreaded or accomplished in the other.' (Proust, M. 1983, Vol. 1, 201)

momentum, also a saved and retained momentum which is not expended as a 'self' in a 'present' but is that which *will be* released, as impulse, or will remain gathered into the tension of a hesitation, a hesitation which no less determines and defines us? To hesitate is not simply to stop or to end, hesitation is no endgame, but it is to conserve and to detain, to recognise all that *distils* momentum. And can this not be said of all that we call 'things', that, as fellow events and not discrete singular objects for our subject they have eased themselves out of one being and into their current manifestation on their way *to* being elsewhere and elsewhen, on their way 'to' … ?

This 'to' constitutes their way as much as their being, supplanting what we think of as their identity or form. Every 'thing' is a 'way', *on* a way, and manifest only by means of a certain hesitation that harnesses its temporary appearance, restraining it from its innate disposition to dissipate or to become.

Shakespearean *vanitas*, and the *vanitas* tradition popular in Shakespeare's time, perhaps had a clearer grip on our brief inhabitation of our present form and of the rapid passing of all things. Enlightenment, technology, society, increased life expectancy, all these have conspired to remove such profound considerations from sight and from thought, displacing death to the sleepy suburbs of a more vibrant life that sees itself as one 'thing' and death as another, always in denial of the fact that the other is the product of that one to which it is other.

Things exclude each other extensively while events exist one-in-the-other. If we consider life and death as events rather than as separate and separable 'things' we see how they do not exclude but include each other and how they *per*sist (standing for) rather than *ex*ist (standing out), determined, not by their opposition or parameters but by their qualities and behaviours. In denying this inclusivity and blindly clinging to one side of an inevitable upset, the thing's claim to existence becomes a mere wish, a delusion or fetish appealed-to when confronting a profound absence (or, more accurately, when confronting the profundity of absence).

We award value to resilience - bronze, marble, oil paint - only to be moved, affected, by falling petals and trembling stems which remind us of the inevitability of all passing and the folly of anthropocentrically limited temporal perspectives. The 'hesitation of things' is both their moment and their momentum, amounting, we might say, to their momentousness. Wherever 'things' attempt to crudely monopolise our perceptions and experiences hesitation may usurp that ontological claim, relinquishing territory, increment and point.

Derrida is helpful in defining his term *différance,* as here he evokes a quasi-Bergsonian and event-ual paradigm without kingdoms or territories. Nevertheless, we habitually extend the use of the minimum Euclidean extensity - 'point' - from one of spatial positionality to describe a justification or measure of reason and meaning, i.e. we 'make a point', 'get to the point', claiming to arrive at or deliver a meaning or reason or conclusion, or arrive at some site of

significance in otherwise formless (pointless) thought. These too are bad habits of convenient, extensive and existential closure, in denial of the true disruption made to such conceits by the question of their own formless dynamism - what we are calling their 'to'.

Deconstructing Nietzsche's apparently irreducible term *Will to Power* - in a way that Nietzsche himself might have enjoyed - we can remove its malign connotations by dispensing with both its 'will' and its 'power' along with its grammar, while retaining and enjoying only its 'to', as a more justifiable, more irreducible term for our own thought. This 'to' contains, implicitly, all the 'will' and 'power' intended by the whole of Nietzsche's term. Whatever is 'to', or has 'to', has both the *power* that 'to' pursues and the will that *pursues* it.

'Knowledge tames life like an animal in its cage' - implies Nietzsche in a colourful illustration of the thin line we tread between aspiration and delusion, an illustration that warns us of the mistake of attempting to obtain or attain, only to find that we thereby incarcerate. The texts in which knowledge attempts to inscribe itself for posterity are - as Nietzsche suggested by his broad experiments with form - more song-like than any canon of sedentary thought and logic would like to think. They grow and change with every 'rendition', becoming, and becoming more and less familiar, even to themselves while succumbing to the empiricism of worldly experience -succumbing to the time, eyes and ears of others.

When and if we are called upon to contribute to this canon or archive, how will we respond? How can we approach the writing of thought to ensure that it honestly perpetuates and prepares for this musical condition in which it will be received? This is a key question for this writing, one that is approached via an appraisal of various media of writing and representation as well as by way of an attempt at an understanding of what 'writing' and its relationship to temporality might be, given the examples of the various media in which it is rendered.

In Nietzsche we see the overlap of poetry, literature, philosophy and song; in Eduardo Cadava photography becomes 'words of light'; and here we also extend a welcome to a history of painting, suspecting that all these are expressions of some *ur* writing or 'absolute literature' which underlines and informs them equally at some profound level where temporality, meaning and inscription are inseparable.

Poetic Responsibility

Writing - like a mirror that is unfamiliar, distorting, or perhaps more true - shows our thoughts back to our selves as thoughts we did not expect to have. We speak words faster than we think that which we are saying, sometimes tripping, stumbling, pausing, repeating or making slips of the kind now associated with Freud's name. Contrarily, we might also experience our words 'taking wing' at those moments when, like a great musician, singer or inspired preacher, we entrust our selves to our medium and momentum and let go of conscious

control over any known relation between reason and its event, to place our faith in the innate properties of our materials, allowing ourselves to truly 'play', whether writing with pen, keyboard, or waxing lyrical with a charming tongue. Authority, schema, system, all these are relinquished to truly and fully honour the event of writing, which - like the moment rain begins, or a sudden gust of wind - is impossible to accurately map and is untainted by worldly, timely purpose. Where we touch this apotheosis we brush the conviction and divinity of *philos,* the 'love' of what is otherwise merely convincing wisdom - *sophia*.

Whenever thoughts *fall* onto pages as naturally as rain onto leaves; whether the pen seems diverted by gusts of innovation or prevailed-upon by the gently persistent breeze of an invisible yet ineluctable theme, there writing loses perspective, becomes event, going beyond point of view, representative distance and claims to knowledge; it relinquishes form and identity, relaxing into event-uality, sharing its event with the events of others, enabling affinities, confidently pre-empting worthwhile meetings with others as the fulfillment of its only ambition.

This writing is not distinct from a song, a doctoral thesis is *not necessarily* the antithesis of a sonnet, there are many ways in which to rhyme, and the innate poetics of our subject aspire to bring words and ideas together by revealing a common origin that is also their destination. It is this assembly and assimilation of disparate elements that *is* poetics, a composition of possibility into form. Rhymes generously aspire to accommodate difference *in the spirit of music*, a *Prose of the World* is their common root, an *ur* writing or 'absolute literature'

which is a gentle reminder, advocating calm, modesty, hesitation, wherever belligerent individualism, separate ex-istence, and thing-hood reign.

The writer of thought is an immoralist in that writing never knows the context in which it will appear or how it will be received. In this way, the writer is always a gambler. Nietzsche reached a level of relationship with his own productions whereby he became convinced that he had no ultimate control or responsibility over them, hence his affirmative immorality or *a*morality. To presume such a control would only be a false piety, and so Nietzsche gave his words futures and discovered something profound in this irresponsibility. As 'fish-hooks' every one of Nietzsche's words would become the responsibility of others and a magnet for all-too hasty assertions of morality and prejudice. Every word is in fact as much an invitation to hesitate as it is an invitation to 'bite'.

Nietzsche saw writing as a betrayal of his volatile thoughts and saw knowledge as a cage taming life. Nietzsche relinquished any attempt to further control and determine the becoming and potential of his words. He accepted that his words were not bound to or by the event of their writing, and as such could lead others to hell if others chose to be so led - to hell with words! He also anticipated the possibility of a 'great politics' in which the word became a dictator before attaining the 'spirit of music' of which Nietzsche dreamed; and an era in which noble rhyme and rhythm would depose the modern reign of reason and scholarship over words to thereby liberate man's repressed Dyonisian soul.

I move the pen; my movement, my action is crucial (unless -as in the case of some *Ouija* writing - the relationship is inverted and the table instead has a right to move beneath the pen). Ink then flows and words appear. Like musicians animated by a conductor's baton who, in turn, inspire the conductor. The lives, histories, promises; the innate momentum of words themselves (each is a journey and a rhythm) transform the values and responsibilities placed upon them by those who use them. The event of writing is a *powwow,* a coven, or concert, to which ideas and words 'fly-in' from distant and sometimes mysterious sources to confer before our eyes. We are dealing, not with a Derridean '*grammatology*' after all, but with a kind of music in which every 'gramme' is also, or alternatively, a beat, pause, note, glissando, a restrain or emphasis implicating punctuation as much as the white space of the page - in ways that Derrida would surely welcome and approve - while also acknowledging the uncontrollable 'acoustics' of the time, place and other nuances of relation occurring whenever and wherever the other encounters our writing.   (Derrida, J. 1976)

Writing The Self

Just as children feel that their writing matures once it begins to link letters in a 'joined-up' writing, so to 'join', to link, to associate comes to mean 'to make sense'. To compare is to reason, to differentiate our only orientation. To grow-up is to 'join-up' (noting the militarist connotations), the uncertainty of space is a kind of innocence we come to reject, jumping or swinging over it, drawing a line or building a bridge across it, colonising and filling it, growing up and out of 'aim'-less, 'point'-less speculations of pre-subjective childhood solipsism.

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But the physical linkage of writing is only the most crude of connections, reminiscent of chains and ropes. The intensified subjectivity felt in adolescence is the encounter with, and the challenge from, all that is the world we are expected to join, all that we are expected to lose ourselves within, all that to which we are to give ourselves up as a self-sacrifice that will become our 'maturity' and 'objectivity'.

To hesitate before this advance, to shy, doubting its benefits, its advantage, to thus appear immature, deviant, not readily 'joining-up' or 'joining-in' to society, remaining vulnerable yet sovereign is a means of accepting, nurturing and preparing a childlike difference while avoiding carelessly setting that same difference adrift in a potentially destructive environment where homogeneity and objectivity will always threaten, promise, command, mislead, and yet never fully convince the innate - and, in its way omnipotent - conviction of that space of possibility that is youth.

The writer's need for distance and exile are thus perverse and anti-social. Where we hesitate to 'join-up' we heroically protect and conserve our sovereignty in a milieu of 'loyal' cowards and maintain futural options or speculations about what we are or might become. We remain sovereign and retain a potential whenever we hesitate thus, intuitively keeping some necessary child alive lest it is needed again elsewhere during the course of a lifetime. In adolescence we feel the squeezing social pressures upon the child that we have known and have defended as a precious island of unique experience. Just as distance and separation begin to appear naive to the child

who learns to write 'properly', to join, to link, to connect or to 'network' becomes a sign of sophistication, consensus, efficiency and of course, acceptance.

We continue to progress the social bond through the mediation of writing, connecting to others by greetings, letters, notes, or essays. Distance and proximity, intimacy and objectivity, privacy and publicity all erupt and relate through writing as a cipher for self, writing as a means of installing mediations, vicarious hesitations, between self, world, and others.

From these legitimating and authoritative connections we progress towards deconstructive and transgressive *dis*connections that question every authority, using subcultural strategies, re-inventing speech and writing as protests against the shortcomings and dissatisfactions of the present world while insisting upon its transformation. In a necessary search for possibility we seek-out the weaknesses in the structures that surround us, making *dis*connections precisely where we were initiated into the virtue of connecting. From a resilient, linking structure we proceed towards more subtle connections in relations of distance, nuance and rhyme, admiring all that is frail and which barely sustains itself; all that knows life and itself with a certain clarified urgency born of self-reflexive doubt, humility and threatened annihilation. We come to affirm all that eludes a merely materialist view, affirming all that is mysteriously forceful, all that is mysterious in that its force derives from no mass nor might but rather from a 'weak power'. We begin to appreciate faith and 'spirit' as a form of communication and as a model for all that is resilient and enduring of the self.

(Mishima, Y. 2001)

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Knowledge, having hesitated in a short-lived wish for transcendent or exceptional status, surrenders itself and - admitting its follies and conceits - 'hands itself in' to the ultimate arbiter, experience.   Knowledge lives in anticipation of its own passage and death. However resilient they might appear, things - including the 'thing' of the text that would embody inscribed knowledge for posterity - dividuate only momentarily, event-ually, before dissipating, blurring their margins and bleeding into other texts.   The event-world is a 'floating world', sensuous, 'melted in air', and yet nonetheless responsible. Libraries burn while birds sing, and in hesitations we are able to glimpse, as if from outside, a momentum of 'things' so pervasive as to be rendered invisible, rendered immanent by its very ubiquity.

The stutterer taunts all reason borne in speech by grammar, interrupts and confronts it with its underlying momentum and innate musicality without which it is a meaningless cacophony, a scrapyard of jumbled grammes. Modernist type loses its serifs; tendrils, flicks, flares and gothic points which once dripped from European letters like traces of a cold mediaeval climate are banished from the modern world along with superstitious beliefs and 'darker' ages.   As the gargoyles are scrubbed from modern West walls along with every other decorative superfluity, modern type is reborn with a more childlike simplicity that aspires to a greater universality in various *sans serif* fonts.

Meanwhile, the modern writer noisily operates a writing machine that makes words appear instantly official and commodified and thus sanctioned by the rule of the machine, immediately linked-to participation in the machinations of

institutionalised, industrialized society. The type of the typewriter mediates the writer's production, setting us at one machinic remove and augmenting the hand with a more complex prosthesis than mere pens and quills. It returns us to a well-spaced innocence while making it difficult for us to intervene with our idiosyncrasies, inconsistencies, or incompetence, making it hard even to make links between letters. The typewriter passes into our hands some of the privilege of the type-setter who provides each letter and punctuation mark with space to stand alone as a thing as it is mechanised into isolation.

Something similar happens today to each of us as we are increasingly singled-out as consumers of tele-communications which necessarily require us to be alone and apart, each a monadic 'one-man show' illuminated by a single screen which makes us distant even when close, providing the 'service' of connecting us to others. The contemporary writer composes, a soloist at a kind of piano, *in the spirit of music* padding and arpeggiating, at a keyboard from which words fly-up to the virtual space (a kind of 'sky' or 'pool') of a screen, in bursts of speculation, only to then be laid flat, printed out, more traditionally safe and orderly, their ink drying into 'matters of fact' which belie the volatile activity involved in their production.

22. Jack Kerouac, the first page of the manuscript for *On the Road*, 1951

Modernist authors once represented and celebrated the typewriters and

typesetters of their era and their trade in the very form and tone of their writing.

J.G Ballard has lain down a gauntlet to the writers of today, requiring us to write

the writing of our time as writing-of and *for* the computer. His challenge implies

that the computer's very 'soft'-ness and silence, its provisional, aqueous

surface, its mobility, its numerous facilities for design and enhancement and for immediate telecommunication all implicate as-yet unexploited (soft?) forms which might reflect and self-reflect this pervasive tool's particular qualities and possibilities.

If there are hops and jumps between letters and words they are only quantitatively different from any pause between or before writing, only constitutive, micro-hesitations, necessary to writing, and only quantitatively different from the so-called writer's 'block' - the great miserable *aporia* which is so antithetical to the joyful flow of hand, ink, and thought. We are always waiting for news, for letters, for the imperative to write, and yet writing itself is a momentum laced with waiting, faltering between steps, falling down and rising again, a bumpy ride from word to word and from letter to letter and line to line which nonetheless means and convinces by these very rhythms, which reassure us, as a relentless tide, arriving at the horizon from which we perceive in an inversion of humanist perspective.[44]

Necessary pauses, repeated breaks, to earn, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to light the candle or close the shutter or ring the summoning bell, result in a form of 'exquisite corpse' whereby writing and our life add congruity to congruity, hoping

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[44] 'So how to define being on the left, he continues? In two ways: first, it's a matter of perception, which means this: what would "not" being on the left mean? It's a little like an address, extending outward from a person: the street where you are, the city, the country, other countries farther and farther away (Deleuze gestures outward). It starts from the self, and to the extent that one is privileged, living in a rich country, one might ask, what can we do to make this situation last? One senses that dangers exist, that it might not last, it's all so crazy, so what might be done so that Europe lasts? Being on the left is the opposite: it's perceiving... And people say the Japanese perceive like that, not like us [...] they perceive first the periphery (Deleuze gestures outward inward), they would say the world, the continent - let's say Europe - France, etc. etc., rue de Bizerte, me: it's a phenomenon of perception, perceiving the horizon, perceiving on the horizon'. (Boutang, P.A. 2004 [Internet])

that the outcome, once unfolded by some other, in an unknowable future moment of retrospective scrutiny, will not appear too grotesque; always hoping that there will appear a homogeneity and continuity which will convince the ears and eyes of that elusive other whom we can never know, and yet for whom and to whom we are always writing, like a longed-for companion.

If a form should arise for the event of writing it will inevitably appear as a deadline. And yet form also wells-up from within us, perhaps as an echo of some innate, internal form materialising from the ghostly hunch or gambler's intuition that allows it to appear. The writer is exiled, in a world where friendship seems a wish and a memory and where the writer inhabits a 'desert island' setting the occasional message adrift in pure speculation that it may have some value and land at some shore, there to bask in the rays of another's comprehension or remain invisibly rocked into new forms by the gently uncaring actions of time.

We might call writing a responsibility but never a habit. To speculate on its mechanism requires further writing. There are habits of writing, but writing itself is not a habit. We should do all we can to hesitate or innovate before succumbing to mere habit. Inverted commas are a sign of such. To invert a comma is to lift it from its role as narrative pause, up above a word, turning the temporal pause into a paused conviction. It is a 'body language' of writing, like raised eyebrows or a hand brought up to scratch the head with a meta-conscious gesture while we continue talking. A word enhanced by inverted commas becomes paused, not in its momentum but in its conviction, a condition

brought about by self-awareness or over confidence and a suspicious awareness of our own habits. The word in inverted commas hesitates, neither quite in nor quite out of the text, uncertain whether even to attend the event of writing.

To resist is central to our project, to resist knowing where we might be going, to resist knowing what we are, what we are doing, and what we have done; to resist knowing *why* we are doing and whom we do for. Yet it is also crucial that we nevertheless know *that*, and thus know what we are doing at least in that we can always be confident that we *are* doing, while we can never be equally confident that we are *being* or that we know.

The audacity of claiming legitimacy for our writing shows that an impulse to empowerment (will-to-power) must be tempered by hesitation and respect for both our process and the enormity of our task in attempting to give form to History. Will-to-power and hesitation, yoked together as a dualism, become extremities of some other factor or force in which they share. That factor or force is the eventuality out of which both writing and History necessarily appears.

HESITATION

The genius of the heart who teaches the stupid and hasty
hand to hesitate and grasp more delicately.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 77)

It is the stillest words which bring the storm. Thoughts that
come on doves' feet guide the world.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1969, 168)

From Ophelia To To-Being

> Is Hamlet understood? It is not doubt, it is *certainty* which makes mad […] but to feel in this way one must be profound, abyss, philosopher.

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(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 59)

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Given the possibility of acting in order to end his being, Hamlet debates being as if it *were* an act, and rehearses human sovereignty over his choice. Ophelia's death is, however, a critique of Hamlet's play of choices. While Hamlet thinks that whether or not *to be* is a dualistic question, Ophelia's death (questionable as to its intentionality) makes no clear decision but instead arises from a tempted fate. It uses the river, flowers, music and risk, to veil and blur death's otherwise un-representable inexorability. But this veiling allows us to see what we would otherwise find inadmissible. Here, the woman allows us to glimpse death as removed from choice, death as the other to choice, the antithesis of choice, where being and not being are denied Hamlet's 'or'. Ophelia's death is a surrender; a surrender to the immanence which attends and subtends life but which haunts it like an entropic shadow or *doppleganger* against which we suspect we must construct and maintain a barrier of representation lest it should overwhelm us.

Ophelia surrenders with and to all that passes, wilts, and fades, allowing her earthbound weight to inevitably overcome the pale strength of a risky, slanted branch. Her worldly clothes buoy-up and dress-up her life just long enough to

obfuscate and ease any clash between life and death. It is a limpid death, and

one at which we are not present but merely hear about as an uncertain rumour.

> There is a willow grows askant the brook,
> That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
> Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
> There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds
> Clambering to hang, an envious silver broke,
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide
> And mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up,
> Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and endued
> Unto that element. But long it could not be
> Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
> Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
> To muddy death

(Shakespeare, W. 2006, 406 - 08 [Hamlet 4.7 164 - 81])

There are no clear choices or acts here, rather a series of mediations and

hesitations which hand life gradually over to death in such an ingratiating way

that it becomes difficult to discern the line, the point, or the difference between

them. Any such clear point of transition is blurred, veiled, as might a prelude

subtly introduce a more demonstrative work; as might a custom of etiquette

ease tensions of an otherwise abrasive social encounter. Nor is there fear,

cries, or anxiety for Ophelia 'incapable of her own distress', but there is a

strange acceptance as the personal voice becomes first anonymous (occupied

by 'chants' and 'snatches of old tunes') then silent.   Ophelia shows us non-

incremental relays, slurs, and blurs, between significant events and otherwise

polarised states.   She shows us 'insignificances' which we might find

decorative, absurd or incongruous. As the 'askant' branch reaches over the 'glassy' stream adjectives ease the tension between nouns and help to slide the act of life into the inaction of death with as little friction or difference as possible. Human, nature, earth, air, and water all ease their one into the other here, so that life, death and every event are seen to reach into others.

Meanwhile, the 'to' of Hamlet's 'to be' is easily mistaken for a sign of an upright will embodying a robustly masculine ability and choice to act. Read thus, 'to' assumes a delusory authority.   In fact this 'to' only provides a relay, a way out, a way on or across, just as Descartes' 'therefore' should never be considered decisive but as the delusory self-assurance of a doubt-fearing man. Descartes' 'therefore' is a bridge that should never have been built, thrown impulsively between two uncertainties with encouragement from the god of grammar.[45]   It is the bridge of certainty, and, as such, a folly.

Given words as passages, and given language as a 'river' in which we are immersed, the current pushes us on and we swim or we sink. Writing means less and less the more it piles-up as sedentary things in mutually obscurant palimpsests, and achieves its own *raison d'être* only by rolling out relations in uniform lines, leading to stops which determine meaning - as death awards meaning and form to an otherwise potentially meaningless and formless life.

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[45] Note here that we are inhabiting that *Grammatology* espoused by Derrida and therefore taking up Nietzsche's challenge to be willing to also contest the 'god of grammar'. (Nietzsche, F.W. 2003, 48)

If being has its 'to', then 'to' also has its 'being', words have inherent momentum, there is no sedentary word; every word, if allowed to do so, can take us elsewhere, but we must first make ourselves the *passenger* of language, no longer its driver, in order to write *with* and *in* experience rather than masterfully 'of' and 'about'. The artist of any profession may attain a stage when it is apparent that the medium and the 'tools of the trade' may be allowed to speak themselves and speak *for* themselves. The hand is a facilitator, but a heavy hand will suffocate the possibilities of any art just as knowledge will blind us to what we do not yet know.[46]   This is a key example of hesitation, promoting a hesitation to claim, to know, to *do,* which thereby allows a greater, reciprocal eventuality to assert itself as the creative interface of living.

Once we concentrate on 'to' rather than 'be' in Hamlet's question, we can no-longer take 'to' for granted or rush past it on the way to being, rather we must set it before ourselves and before Hamlet for consideration. Our own question is no-longer one of 'Being' - the grand question that Heidegger effectively 'revived' in the early years of a century devoted to unprecedented destruction. Rather it becomes a question of 'to-being', or merely the more hesitant question of this 'to'.[47]

(Heidegger, M. 2001, 24)

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[46] The eye too can be 'heavy' in this way, all-too-prejudicial and perspectival. The tongue facilitates language at such a pace that it seems unwitting - but as we know to our cost, it too can be 'heavy' (in the sense of 'heavy-handedness'). It is the ear that is most light (Nietzsche, an admirer of ears, would agree); the ear that is most subtle in both facilitating the world and using it in return.

[47] 'Revived' - '[…] we have made plain not only that the question of Being lacks an answer […] but that the question itself is obscure and without direction. So, if it is to be revived, this means that we must first work out an adequate way of *formulating* it'. (Heidegger, M. 2001, 24)

Perhaps Heidegger was wrong to believe that we can, in any way, inhabit single words, nouns, concepts, which become increasingly grand the more the spotlight of import is thrown upon them. It seems more appropriate that, if we inhabit language we live in and as only grammars, combinations, passages and relations, breaking up and breaking into every word and phrase to explore its rhythms and tones, its grammatology but also its musicality.[48]

A revision of Hamlet might today, not only dress him in contemporary clothes but also have him appropriately say 'To *to be* or not to *to be* ...' (*sic*). Having passed through frames of consideration of the concept of Being, and having rendered it neither assuredly God-like nor unnervingly arbitrary, we are delivered to a meta question which asks if what we know or need to know is what it is to *'to be',* or what might this 'to-ing' be?

Where language becomes vertiginously self-conscious of its own noumenal temporality it becomes distracted by the very pauses that make it possible and there begins to stutter. As for being, it never arrives, is never realised, never unfolds, but is maintained in question and in abeyance by a paradigm dominated, not by ontology, but by possibility and question and served by anti-philosophers, contributing, not to knowledge but to the *unworking* of knowledge, clearing away knowledge to allow ways and possibilities.

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[48] Denise Riley's *The Words of Selves* discusses the works of Jean-Pierre Brisset who proposed a re-consideration of the importance of sound-associations which link words to an originary sonic or aural source and bring together words whose 'meanings' previously kept them apart. (Riley, D. 2000, 71 - 2)

'To' never arrives at 'being', while the 'therefore' of Descartes arrives all-too-soon at 'I am'. What Hamlet represents as a dramatic conundrum Ophelia performs as inevitable and immanent. Her passage from life to death is itself river-like. While *he* seeks the (representative) 'be', *she* lives and dies the (immanent) 'to'. There is always more to this hesitant 'to', whereas 'being' is haunted by its own wish to be - its wish to be a 'thing'. 'To' is evidence, not only of possibility but of yearning, 'to-be' becomes a wish that leaves us just this side of being, differentiating and deferring, deconstructing and philosophising with a diminutive, explorative hammer, feeling a way forward according to resonance and response, holding the question of question in abeyance, as we hesitate before labyrinthine metaphysics, maintaining an infinitive mode which is both pragmatic and sensual.

Hamlet

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, death, being near and yet incomplete and unresolved, outwits the representational rites that are intended to give it form and comprehension. The Queen's brief mourning seems an unacceptable expedience. Mourning should be protracted, time must heal wounds, *corteges* must crawl, respect must be shown for the departed, and the normal pace of life must hesitate in the presence of death. To Hamlet's estimation of what constitutes nobility, all-too worldly, expedient forms for comprehending and responding to death appear inadequate.

Hamlet's bewilderment is an honest, direct and empirical encounter with death, expressing an unmediated, disoriented grief as a more appropriate formlessness and uncertainty. Confronted with grief, the mechanism of rite, strategy and structure may succeed, but only in such a way as to bring the very value of 'success' into doubt. Meanwhile, true mourning - a period of excusable delirium - tumbles (because it is left isolated, marginalised by the logic of others, unsupported, and even derided as wrong or mad) helplessly into compound tragedy, dragging - as if vindictively - all concerned into the grave and thus perpetuating and multiplying the morbid questions which motivate the drama. By the end of the play one ghost has spawned many more, and the ghosts, we might say, are victorious.

Hamlet's complaint is the suspicious haste, the *speed* of the Queen's re-orientation. Meanwhile, Hamlet's own hesitation opens on to an abyss of most profound and disturbing question - which 20th Century interpreters might compare with a Freudian neurosis that lets nothing rest. However, Hamlet leaves us the enduring model of a true thinker for whom question is revealed by hesitating before all objectivity and expedience and by taking time (out) to think idiosyncratically and speculatively. Hamlet experiences thoughts empirically, as unique events encountered and considered, as if to experience one's own thoughts as exotic. Meanwhile he is convinced that acts are never sufficiently considered or justified. Hamlet's thought (as also Shakespeare's) is a kind of wonder. He wonders in the face of ridicule, death, doubt and madness, and in so doing wanders beyond the limits of acceptable behaviour to discover a realm between art, imagination and paranoia that is perilous and unbounded. As

Nietzsche suggests in the citation that introduces this chapter, while hesitation and doubt reigns, Hamlet maintains a 'floating world' of art and imagination, but as certainty grows within him it only pulls him into the corrupt and fatal violence of others, of the commonplace but unacceptable workings of the world.

'Death' is an insufficient word to lay across a corpse, and thus bound to cause sleepless nights for the living. For Shakespeare, death must be explored personally, comprehensively, both obliquely and as directly as possible, from tracery ghosts to muddy graves, from impulsive dispatch (the death of Polonius) to hesitant departure (the death of Ophelia). While others live linear and teleological narratives of usurpation and achievement, Hamlet remains remote from such pragmatism, prey instead to hesitation and impulse - neither of which are necessarily expedient or strategic but arise as psychologically uncertain enervations and intuitions. Traumatised by the loss of both father and truth he becomes a marginal modern figure, newly capable of critical observation. He becomes artist, gaining a unique perspective, acting acts and staging plays within a play. Loss of trust becomes loss of truth, but art steps-in to occupy these voids where the incomprehensibility of death exposes the unanswerable riddle of existence.[49]

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(Bataille, G. [1897 - 1962] 1987, 40 - 48)
(Blanchot, M. 1993)

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Killing provides no solutions, but merely exposes a *per*sistence beyond existence, persistence manifest in and as memory; guilt; shame; grief etc.

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[49] 'Freud more or less says that all of the questions randomly posed by children turn in and serve as relays for the one they do not pose, which is the question of the origin'. (Blanchot, M. 1993, 11)

Hamlet is himself 'out of joint', with both society and the contemporary modes of representation. He lives a meta-consciousness in soliloquies and quips that imaginatively command all those who sought to deceive, disarm and disinherit him via crude and forceful deceptions. Through speech and behaviour that disrupts the social surface (by being too candid, to quick, too honest or too melancholy) Hamlet maintains a privileged perspective, singling himself out from a widely-felt acceptance which amounts to complicity with a crime. Hamlet inhabits this exile, this idiosyncratic bubble, in order to think and to question in dangerous ways, while using barbed wit to trouble the everyday: Hamlet is a writer.

Rather than carrying-on expediently, or running from the implications of death, Hamlet remains, awkwardly hesitant, becoming outsider, and thus sees all, all-too-much, sees 'in the round', becoming the playwright himself and therefore losing even his parameters as 'actor'. While the other characters are clearly written, Hamlet appears to write himself, and that is his magnetism, his stardom, his scintillating modernity, his autonomous liberation from god, death and man via art.[50]

A cipher of this hierarchy appears in the difference between the main characters and those who stage the mime show or 'play within a play'. Those characters have no words and depend only upon outmoded, 'dumb' gestures, and are thus even further removed than the main cast from Hamlet's example of a new or

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[50] Note here an echo of J.M. Synge's (1871 - 1909) play *The Playboy of the Western World* in which the central male character is attractive to women while he is understood to have murdered his father, but loses this 'sex appeal' once it is discovered that his father is in fact still living. (Synge, J.M. 1980, 101 -64)

modern figure. A man who refuses fate and fights against the grain of a given narrative is perhaps nothing new in drama, but Hamlet is made as if in contradiction of author and authority, somehow independent of the playwright who forged him, abandoned by the bard, somehow *robbed* of identity rather than burdened with one.

Meanwhile, in the *mise-en-scène* of the play-within-a-play Shakespeare suggests an infinite relay, where art cannot be separated from life, making an audience of what have heretofore been actors, and therefore, by implication, making of the real audience players who might also, in their turn, be watched. The structured stage does not contain or fix, it has no solid walls, only shifting 'flats' and curtains from which art generously erupts into the populace, spreading its questions. In the play-within-a-play, Shakespeare shows that there is no increment or distinction between art and life, pit and stage, writer and role, role and actor, all are porous layers through which writing travels and between which words play, temporarily giving form, while conceding to a temporality which makes or breaks all forms of word and world. Hence Hamlet rings-out an age when ghosts 'co-meddled' with life and gods remained among us, but only to ring-in an age when doubt will mortar every brick in the castle of knowledge.

Hamlet's perspective is not visually and spatially different, it is achieved by a change of pace, tempo, meter. He hangs back and 'hangs about', a slouching, *louche* figure, disreputable and shabby, like the Goethian romantic, the dawdling *flaneur.* Like the intractable Bartleby, he remains a double-agent and

a *différance* exposing the grand court as a corrupt and unimaginative power maintained by legitimising ritual and intrigue.

For Hamlet, death is not a word, or, it is a word without end. For Hamlet, words have lost their ends, their directions, they no longer make sense or close the matter, they do not satisfy or explain, but taunt and jibe their users, as art, in wit, proclaiming only their unreliability. As such they are virtual. In the hands of an artist and in the mind of a wit, words have always been virtual, soft, undecided, non-committal, plastic, latent, or - as Nietzsche claimed - 'fishooks'.

More Death

Death lies in the folds of every paradox and tautology, wherever a face faces itself, in self-reflexivity and oxymoron, in the heart of modernity where Freud found 'The Uncanny' and where Benjamin found labyrinths, where Mallarmé's writing found the page on which it was written, where Malevich 'returned to the surface', and where Einstein found the fatal 'squared' of $E=mc^2$ - thus enabling power to arise exponentially from the multiplication of self by self.

(Malevich. K. *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting* in Harrison and Wood, 1994, 174)

Can we call death an act? It is ever a fathomless 'neither' which leaves us disabled. Death is 'no more', and no more than a dark relinquishment, the mocking response to the audacious presumption of question itself - question that is life. What Hamlet needs to decide is whether to question and go on

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questioning - wherever that might lead him - or to complacently accept the inadequate scenario he has been offered as reality - as life.

Death waits, head bowed, expressionless, beyond all point and reason, beyond the hopeless form of any dialectical question, taunting the very language in which it is inserted like a joker in a pack of cards. The rhythm of 'to be or not to be' rings like the gloomy bell of a tradesman's cart, asking only for customers but never for answers. Death is a monstrous 'neither', the neither of *différance* dressed in its darkest robes.[51]

Hamlet is a Renaissance *vanitas,* and one of surprising and enduring richness. Contemplating the formlessness of death might reveal the folly of a life glossed-over with rites and wills-to-power; exposing the short sightedness of our fears and the inadequacy of our schemes in comparison with death's inexorable calling which outwits *all* human conspiracies. Despite our most imaginative efforts to encompass death, it delivers us into the arms of its own unacceptable conclusion around which we spin imagery or rationale while never approximating adequacy. The best that we can do perhaps is call it 'tragic' yet thereby merely calling-upon a long tradition of collective catharsis, which still leaves us bewildered, bereaved and betrayed. Catharsis, *mise-en-scène*, self-reflexivity, tragedy, and a 'live' writing via online technology, are all historical facets of a consistent argument with death, a perpetual wailing, mourning, and a hopeless appeal.

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[51] Influence here derives from Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. (Defoe, D. [1661? - 1731] 1969)

We could here venture into the rich history of the 'tragic' along with Aristotle, Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin, but let us briefly say that when we use the word 'tragic' to evaluate death we might assume that we are merely comparing death to a form of art ('epic' would then be an equivalent adjective with which to encompass life perhaps). And if that is *not* the case, then we might imagine that this particular adjective, 'tragic', applied to death, points to the fact that art itself has its roots (as Bataille proposed) in attempting a comprehension and representation of death. I.e. not that death is 'tragic' but that tragedy, as representative of art in general, is always the sign of the presence and persistence of death's unanswerable question.

<div align="right">(Bataille, G. 1987, 40 - 48)</div>

The Question

The question 'to be or not to be?' is asked, not of the audience, not of the subject, nor of god, but of question itself, as Hamlet seeks to answer, not only his apparent question but to answer the question 'what is *the* question?' Inevitably Shakespeare has inspired and pre-empted modern and postmodern thoughts on the complexities of being and death, and from within his spectacular Renaissance mind poised at the intersection of so many worlds and beliefs, Hamlet's soliloquy rings out a deep, rich tone that carries a more rewarding and enduring possibility than either Heidegger's acquisitive conceit or Kafka's confusion. Hamlet's hesitation is a prime example, a supreme moment of hesitation, lauded by all those who confront mortal plight and who thus

empathise with the very 'hesitation of things'. For those that can neither breathe nor go-on without question Shakespeare has identified 'it' for us. *The* question, he says, *is* 'to be or not to be', as if without this question *all* question would be unnecessary. For this question all other questions are relays, avoidances, precursors. And yet we can deconstruct further, producing further questions from *the* question, just as we are impelled to deconstruct the claim here - and every similar claim - to be '*the*'.

We do not ask of being what it 'is' as we ask 'what is a thing?' rather, we state that 'to be' is *the* question, never hoping for any reply less adequate than *the* answer - the answer of answers to the question of questions. '*The*' question reveals that it is the ultimate or *ur* question, and is so because no other question can ever be answered as can this question, making every other question and every other answer pale by comparison. In light of this, should we seek answers, knowledge, power, truth? Or rather inhabit the margins of all that does, along with ghosts and madmen?

Every 'thing', every event, is trembling, hesitating, poised at and within a medium of question, *the* question, question itself. It is *never* a 'black and white', either/or proposition but an eternal and infinite dilemma woven around a monstrous 'neither', a notorious *nada*. The very phrasing of Hamlet's question invokes a return and eternity of which Nietzsche would approve, it delivers a poetic echo which gains enduring resonance. If there is a spring in the step of life itself, an *élan vital* or *esprit*, it emanates from a hesitant tension of 'things' which become events only when released from possessive ontology and from

the horns of ugly dilemmas into a state of irredeemable apprehension and skepticism, released into the 'hesitation of things' which is also the question of things.

Only by releasing events from a phenomenal / noumenal, dualistic disagreement, into the liberty of a hesitation (a sprung event-ual state) do we discern the wealth in the curl of Gradiva's step, in the foot of the Egyptian Kouroi, in the past recalled in reverie by Proust, in the *différance* between a dead father, a live son and a ghost. We need only add a further stammer to Hamlet's words - as well we might, in view of their import - to thereby re-present or re-frame them.

'To to be or not *to* to be?'(*sic*) becomes 'the' modified question that we pass on to subsequent thinkers once we recognise that Shakespeare's Renaissance sensed, not a grand 'Being' surrounded and informed by 'beings' (an extensive, Euclidean, atomic, or proto-totalitarian vision) but an omni (om*nigh*) -present 'to-being', a kind of wish, dream, spell, hope and hesitancy, troubling, charming and undermining 'things', refusing knowledge, identity and ontology, keeping all 'at arm's length', beyond the clutches of both the Scholasticism which preceded Shakespeare's epoch and the Enlightenment which ensued.

> For lo, his sword
> Which was declining on the milky head
> Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air to stick.
> So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood
> Like a neutral to his will and matter,
> Did nothing.

> But as we often see against some storm
> A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
> The bold winds speechless and the orb below
> As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
> Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
> A roused vengeance sets him new a-work
> And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
> On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
> With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
> Now falls on Priam.

(Shakespeare, W. 2006, 269 - 70 [Hamlet 2.2, 415 - 30])

In Hamlet's drama and dilemma everything is tensioned. Like the sword of Pyrrhus, like: '…a silence in the heavens, the rack stand still, the bold winds speechless and the orb below as hush as death', the very tension that we call life, the signs of vitality *are* a pulse, a vibration, an indecisive oscillation pulled between pro and con, God and Man, to-ing and being, knowing and acting, at the heart of which, a hesitation, a moment yet to be fulfilled, a direction yet to be determined.

Considering ourselves superior to the physics of which we are made we are unsatisfied with eithers (*sic*), satisfied with nothing that presents us with choice or decision, and instead resort to the default of a clumsy choice, or the regrettable ineffectuality of hesitation via which a man allows passage itself to proceed, to pass on without his interference.

Concerning Shakespeare's words, we have perhaps focused on the 'be' at the expense of the 'to', the 'to' which, on closer inspection, yields other profundities for us, revealing itself as the sign of a certain yearning, an unanswered ache in

the heart of life, and not the *fait-accompli* vainly sought after in 'being'. Applied or observed elsewhere, removed from its proximity to 'being', removed perhaps even from its own being, the 'to' reveals that 'to take up arms' is a drama, a wish, the fancy of a truly defenseless man. Having observed this, 'to be' or 'to being', becomes a new question, a question that Heidegger overlooked in his ontological discourse, the question of and in the 'to' that is inherent in Being (not presuming or prioritsing the being inherent in 'to'), the 'to' which inherently pursues and precedes Being coming before it and chasing its tail, even if invisibly, like a ghost, always threatening to catch-up with and supplant Being. 'To' is the wishful becoming that is the hesitation in those 'things' presumed objects of knowledge and language.

If we are never 'being' but always 'to being' then we confess to the fact that we hesitate just this side of meaning, just this side of signification and representation, just this side of significance, just this side of existence. Not *ex*isting but rather *pers*isting. The dream of being, of being at all, of being any 'thing', is a necessary mirage that never hardens into reality. It is a being to-come without which we would not feel the dynamic of life in the will-to live. Conversely, without the will to-live, without its 'to-', without the dynamic of life, being loses promise, becomes barren, becomes its deathly antithesis. It becomes the kind of being that it is no crime *to* gas, *to* shoot, *to* burn, *to* bomb, to enslave, *to* starve or *to* bury. Being becomes '*ding*', thing, an empty sign with which man can do as he pleases as long as he overlooks, by acting too quickly,

all those tos (*sic*) which are both the sign of action and of the wish to act.[52]

Only by hesitating can we choose between acting and exploring the wish to act.[53]

Hamlet's Writing Of Immanence

Within Renaissance Humanism, the gods of *Fortuna* and *Virtu* (virtue as informed prudence) suffice to guide the newly emergent, proto-bourgeois of their day. Boccaccio (1313 - 1375) and Dante (1265 - 1321) provide examples of this belief.   (Patch, H.R. 1927)

That fortune plays with our lives is undeniable, even to Nietzsche the arch-deconstructor, who seems to have regarded chance as one of a few irreducibles in his otherwise unruly thought.[54] Chance is the metaphysics rolling about within the disciplined perspectives of Humanism and it continues to play an almost theological role within modernist strategies like those of Nietzsche, then Mallarmé, Dada, Duchamp, Surrealism, Jazz etc. Like passage, fortune remains sublime and relentless, similarly beyond our powers to contain or represent. The gambler is one who behaves towards fortune in the way that the photographer, or any other maker of hesitations behaves towards passage i.e. momentarily displacing any habitual relation to the sublime force of passage

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[52] 'tos' here represents a plural of the word 'to'.

[53] The reference to a passive, anonymous, worthless, abject human is implicitly made to Giorgio Agmben's concept 'Bare Life' in *Homo Sacer*. (Agamben, G. 1998)

[54] For example, the very first disruptive words of 'Beyond Good and Evil's' comprehensive deconstructions are: 'Assuming that truth is a woman - what then'. (Nietzsche, F. W. 1998, 3)

and passing as if to outwit, escape, or even place it momentarily at our service. In this way, the gambler, photographer, hesitator, is not unlike a philosopher who presumes to craft formless fortune according to a design, via *virtu*.

We need to exert some degree of forethought and apply some degree of 'hindthought' - utilising experience, wisdom and consideration (*virtu*) to defend ourselves against fortune's inhuman vicissitudes.   But such proto-protestant pragmatism is perhaps insufficiently reassuring to be capable of warding-off the evil vertigo afflicting the recently freed mind of a humanist.[55]   For Hamlet, fortune has become 'outrageous' (perhaps even *this* is modern) and we might also surmise that the Queen and the new King's expedient maneuvers are a kind of *virtu* by which they try to avail themselves of good fortune and hope to avoid retribution.   The arms that Hamlet wants to 'take-up' against fortune's 'slings and arrows' are his own interpretation of *virtu,* i.e. a kind of noble and expedient Humanist self-preservation, evading fate to load fortune's dice in our favour.[56] But Hamlet's vertigo is induced by the treachery of this divine dualism as '*outrageous* fortune' and a corrupt and deceitful *virtu* leave him to fall back on inventive devices.   The ghost in Hamlet represents an outmoded animism or spirituality that must be superseded by more pragmatic and modern reason. Hamlet, living out the question of his time, is compelled to occupy the uncomfortable, disheveled and maddening position between two ages as 'to be

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[55] For *Virtu* see again Patch. (Patch H.R. 1927)

[56] Here we must also consider the cosmic debate with fortune played out in Mallarmé's *Dice Thrown Never Will Annul Chance*, in which the captain of a sinking ship continues to play dice as if to emulate as closely as possible the powers that confront him in the vicissitudes of fate and nature, with which Hamlet, Machiavelli, Nietzsche and Duchamp have all tussled. (Mallarmé, Stéphane 1965)

or not to be' becomes *the* question, *that* question, the question of modernity as a life with chance and choice, but without ghosts and gods.

Shakespeare, as an artist more interested in sustaining questions than achieving answers, invites doubt and question to proliferate between each word and its meaning. In this way he allows art to question and hesitate before any impulsive complicity with timely knowledge, and insists instead on promoting the proximity of the untimely. The ghost stands for apprehension and uncertainty, for all the 'play' that inhabits, transgresses, deconstructs and dematerializes any certainty. This same ghost continues to appear among us today via the ancient telecommunication of writing thought.

Giving Forms To Faith

The legacy of a life governed by gods of fortune and virtue is, in Renaissance culture, *syncretically* fused with Christianity. With Renaissance perspective, man's relationship with life and the world has *itself* become divine. An empowering human organisation of infinity supplants the immanent mediaeval image, extending gothic's allusion to unreachability from a vertical to a lateral plane. Dante's influential inferno is topographic, clearly organized into a procession of strata, and akin to perspectival renditions of the proudly humanist city-scape. In Renaissance thought, humanism merges with and renovates Christian faith, giving it a perspectival architecture, a belated armature. In return, Christian faith adds its promise to the pragmatic technological view,

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producing a synthesis that will become modern, as the meeting of man and spirit allows for the tentative emergence of a secular belief.

In Shakespeare's Hamlet these Renaissance themes play themselves out as apotheosis. The Christian cross barely appears, and then only rather pathetically. The dead King's brother prays and confesses to an image of Christ, but ineffectively, while the cross also appears in the hands of Ophelia, the play's most pathetic character, as a sign of a wholly insufficient or inadequate faith, a paltry representative symbol of a paltry, symbolic faith, a cross which is only as effective (given the play's milieu of tumultuous coups profanities and profound questions) as crossed fingers, or crossed legs.

Ophelia's all-too-brief tale might lead us to believe that the crucifix itself is really a flimsy branch, a mere limb of hope, out on which we climb, gingerly avoiding - yet fixated by - our reflection in the relentless river of time unto death. This limb is always precarious and only grows thinner the longer we climb, until it no longer bears that material weight that we are and we find ourselves borne-off to the grave by the force of entropy acting on our fallible form, condemned along with every other matter, whatever the beauty or complexity of our faith, our perceptions, or reflections.

The formless and vertiginous 'actual' is ever-present in the play's theme of death and in death's played manifestations - be they ghosts, torments, memories, skulls, mud or shovels. The *vanitas* is not a *fear* of our passing, it is always more stoic, assured, more virtuous than that. Rather it is a faith in the

certainty of passing.   Thus passing becomes an orientation at least, when Christian faith begins to mingle uneasily with human question. The v*anitas* is a reassurance of artist to audience, a philosophy of event in Renaissance dress, meanwhile, philosophies of event - in Foucault, Badiou (b.1937), Whitehead (1861 - 1947), Derrida and Deleuze - are a continuation of this search for some response to, some faith in, the actuality of our passing. Both *vanitas* and the philosophy of event are anti-philosophies, representations without necessary redemption which intend to affirm our death-in-life and thereby shape life's value.

To a capitalist, consumerist, and post-holocaust world which counts its dead without seeming to account for complex valuations of human life, the Shakespearean *vanitas* or tragedy shows the injustice of death as the terribly inevitable silencing of our beautifully complex verbosity. Shakespeare's worlds are whipped-up out of words as he confronts us with every human being's priceless value as a subject of language, question, and fate.[57]   Words that fail us in the face of death have nevertheless been vital to life. We are events but also *written* events, each of us an event of life's own 'writing'.

That 'everyone dies in the end' is a banal but necessarily veiled fact - *the* fact, allied with *the* question 'to be'. Our searches for a truth and a way necessitate the deferral of this ever-present certainty.   But this hard fact remains the *denouement* of dramas and tragedies that thereby serve the purpose of *vanitas.*

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[57] Here we can invoke Denise Riley's use of the poet W.S. Graham and the question in the title and substance of his poem *What Is The Language Using Us Fo*r? (Riley D. 2000, 68 - 69)

Tragedy is a bloodthirsty genre but this only points to the fact that *it is tragic that we live as if it were not the case that we die*, that we live as if we would *not* 'all die in the end'. Shakespeare is required by the constraints of his medium and the demands of his audience to mop-up loose-ends in a blood-bath finale, but though some of his *denouements* may draw too crude, contrived and clear a line Shakespeare never shies from the complexity of the experience of living. He explores the paradox of our appearance between sacredness and profanity, the tomfoolery and delights of the language on which we resignedly depend as our guide, and the fact that it will always remain a question to live at all - not always a choice, but always a question.

Shakespeare reminds us that writing is the most plastic of arts, and words, in his hands, sparkle at the crossroads of so many worlds and ways, medieval and modern, East and West, as they call-upon art, science, religion and astrology in equal measure. Though notoriously slippery, words become gloriously-so under the influence of a writer's writer like Shakespeare, and keep pace with life's complexity rather than presuming to sit back and represent life - which would be the conceit of knowledge. The artful wordsmith is a surfer riding the breaking wave of un-representable, immanent actuality, and this is the writer's real responsibility, to find a crest and hold it for as long as possible, while passing messages from the experience of one side into that of the other.

Hamlet's *vanitas* shows us that 'there are no friends' in Humanist life, life itself is no friend, and there is no 'thing' nor any body that can be relied upon. Even concepts desert the thinker as words perform their own plays. The thinker

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thinks his concepts away, the joker makes merry with them, death robs us of what treasury of wisdom we defend amid the violence of life, leaving us empty and open mouthed.

The writer at least has a chance to form those words that otherwise have their way with us, and the historian enjoys the sense of shaping a somewhat porous stepping stone placed behind us and which yet leads on, like a domino, from the previous historian's gambit. But it is memory, not History or its writing, that is the ocean into which all forms eventually discharge. Memory is not death, for things persist there, memory *is a* 'there', while death is not. In memory's persistence things share in the persistence we call life. Memory can and does return to experience. The 'persistence of memory' is shared by our persistence as life, and here *per*sistence crosses that which, to *ex*istence, would be a frontier or obstacle.

We do not exist, but *per*sist, and our persistence shares a world of experience with all else that persists, including memory, despite the fact that memory is virtual. We might therefore hesitate to describe memory, or *a* memory, as a 'thing', and in so doing award ourselves the same dignity. We are not 'things' but events, and we too *per*sist, rather than *ex*ist, as and in memory.

The Grave

Fortune is outrageous, to 'be' is a protest and a virtue, it is 'to take up arms'. And yet all of this is spoken suspended in a medium of doubt, not as rhetoric but as soliloquy and in self-reflexivity with no intent to convince others nor to convince the speaker himself. The soliloquy is spoken without aspiration to a conviction, it asks questions that it suspects can only be answered by the questioner if willing to *counter* the narrative and fate that is unfolding. Such is Renaissance man, proud of his *virtu,* in awe of *fortuna.*

Actual passing (the actuality of our passing) subsists the soliloquy and persists despite the soliloquy's profound considerations. These considerations, quietly, yet passionately pursued, lead Hamlet to a grave where his face is rubbed in the cheating dirt of death. Here he comes *face-to-face* with the actual as a mirror that denies representation and deferral. Death *is* the abyss where thought cannot travel, but it appears in life and to reason wherever we find this face-to-face-ness.

If Hamlet is the apotheosis of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare the apotheosis of the possibilities of writing, here he shows us that writing is an event by which materiality can shape reason and triumph over it. Writing is the material process that extends, determines and directs reason, wresting a way from the encounter, a way which always delivers us to another event. While materiality represents dumb death-in-life it is the source of our hope, when, through an honest, self-reflexive mode of writing, we come to 'face the face'. There, reason concedes to materiality in such a way that we are delivered into an immanence

beyond reason and where there is nevertheless writing, writing as writing, 'absolute literature', a writing *in the spirit of music* which makes no appeal to authority nor apologises for its persistence but which is confidently seen and heard.

We do not therefore transcend, but nevertheless go beyond, in going through, to inhabit immanence. We seek and find 'ways' but never escapes, *ways* to answer *the* question but never *the* answer. Writing offers thought this model, appealing to thought to consider more carefully and considerately the linear and material event of a writing that offers thought a rescue and a form; explaining, repeatedly, that all thought really seeks and needs is a way i.e. not knowledge, nor conclusions.

S/He Who Hesitates

23. Johannes Vermeer, *A Lady Writing*, 1665 - 66

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Unlike the momentum of the *avant-garde*, hesitation leans back in order to scrutinize. Hesitation isn't the futural and transgressive 'seeing' of the collectively assured *avant-garde,* it is rather the disjointed and perverse element in the clumsy, personal method of a Benjamin or a Kafka, the kind of extra-ordinary seeing that one might perform at a desk by a window like that of Bartleby, beyond which there is no view other than an impassable wall.

It is perhaps then also the kind of 'seeing' we must perform at our computer screen, while looking - with a special new gaze - into that strangely close distance, into a 'floating world', seeing no 'thing', only a virtual space or place, a 'desktop' in inverted commas. With the computer we can see no 'thing' and yet everything, as we peer into and contribute our small part to a global community of monadic illuminations. But perhaps it is the kind of 'seeing' we do when far from sight of our way. In a more humanist time we might have seen a *Family of Man* through the eyes of photography, but now we are spying on the trivia of each other's worlds, connected but individuated, and narcissistically empowered by our lens and the ability of our fingers to click the world into better shape. (Steichen E. [1879 - 1973] c1955)

Martial artists know well how to lead opponents into committing themselves, and footballers know how to 'hold up the game', thereby knocking an opponent's style and momentum 'out of joint'. Hesitation is always such a 'weak force', a graceful, 'powerless power' that interests us precisely because it is ubiquitous and yet perverse; a marginal value that might also be the default of a temporal paradigm. It is disruptive, but never violently so, always playful,

taunting and teasing, appearing anathema to a certain central or majoritarian, masculine privileging of decisive, active, romantically impulsive, self-assured force, which, despite the pride it takes in itself, repeatedly leads to short-sighted folly and the miserable sight of an 'animal' divested of a promise that it might otherwise have maintained.

Is there something feminine about hesitation? S/he who hesitates masters time and makes of it times. S/he who hesitates allows the 'horns of a dilemma' to dissolve into a speculative relativism. S/he who hesitates sees the crossroads flooded, the way returned to wilderness. S/he who hesitates wields patience and wisdom as weapons to diminish all that confronts him, while yet perpetuating himself. S/he who hesitates turns a perceived weakness into a strength. And if s/he who hesitates does thereby 'become woman', then gender is, in part, a way of occupying time.

<div align="right">(Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1988, 232 - 309)</div>

Identity is a simplification and a denial of difference, it gives-in to the temptation of opportunities, promising that we can be some 'thing' or some 'one'. Every opportunity offers (not least etymologically) the promise of a fair wind to a safe harbour, a certain satisfaction. But ultimately we hesitate before every identity, as one might justifiably hesitate before the law, or before anything apparently fatal.

The subconscious, if it serves us in no other way, alerts us to an affirmation of the potency of our sleeping and of our death, which, in their turn, address our all

too easily unnoticed, yet perhaps more real, passage in life. We assume an identity in order to be a 'thing', to be some 'one', and yet we are out of this world, wantonly spending the opportunity of time itself, 'sleeping through the movie', taking up space, and, remaining something like a spirit, even when wide awake, whisked by time through a play that we wish we were better placed and equipped to direct - i.e. the story of our own life.

We might well hesitate on the threshold of every possible home or destination, even on the threshold of the welcoming home that is 'being', and we might remain instead in a more tense and coiled state of 'to-being', eschewing the vain wish that we could enter that convenient, linguistic diagram shaped as 'be', by shedding or denying the burden of our true complexity.

We have learned to turn away when identity beckons, privileging the production of difference, the cultivation of possibility, and the revelation of the not previously seen, while turning closer to the wind of question that draws us on while simultaneously driving in our face. Too close and we lose headway, too far-off and we lose both course and momentum. This is the mysterious 'way', the 'crooked path' by which Nietzsche had traveled, a zigzag trajectory of temptations and hesitations influenced by hidden tides that nevertheless deliver us to all we embrace as actuality.

The pen breaks into the page's waiting light with its dark beam, guiltily it covers (or un-dis-covers) those prairies of white, exposing latent forms with signs of its trespass. When Wong Kar Wai's nib fills the cinema screen, the writer, upon

whom the film we are watching depends (just as we depend on Proust's hero to reach the point when he is capable of writing the very book we are reading) stages a gold-plated hesitation, a highly visible 'block' or *aporia*, and yet makes of it *virtu*, the *virtu* of the moment before writing, a catatonic bliss at the threshold of language, keeping everything possible, 'in infinitve mode' (as Sarat Maharaj might say), keeping not only grammar but also *fortuna* at bay, remaining 'just this side of meaning' while keeping gods waiting, putting them in their place. There, in that *inaction* it seems, *there* we are powerful, and not, after all, in our *hylomorphic* conceits, our impulses and actions upon matter that make us feel like god in Genesis.   (Maharaj. S, 2002)

The human is the animal who hesitates. This *virtu* is the *virtu* of maintaining possibilities, possibilities that precede the shame of an ineradicable act, an act that is otherwise hostage to *fortuna*. The virtuous possibility of redemption is ready to-hand in the moment before, before an act that might bring pride or shame, pride in the conceit of an achieved representation, shame at the folly of the same. There may be a hesitation in place of an action, yet there is not nothing, hesitation is not nothing, on the contrary, hesitation allows everything *but* the predicted action to appear as possibility, it makes manifest a speculative relativism which allows us to proceed or 'flow' - as Nietzsche advocated - like a great river[58] i.e. broadly, laterally, with a grandiose, unfathomable complexity and a discreet, noble assurance, but also with due reticence rather than impulsively pushing-on like an impetuous stream with a naive brand of confidence that inevitably attracts irony's retribution.

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[58] *gangasotrogati* - like the Ganges (Nietzsche, F.W. 1998)

Hesitation arrests and diverts any image of thought as a 'river' of processional and teleological continuity, expanding this model laterally. Thoughtless progress, the progress of thoughtlessness, is damned, blocked. Hesitation promises an ultimate horizontalism, and with it, an ultimate relativism, a transvaluation of values, as a lateral affinity supplants a hierarchical and teleological trajectory.[59]

For Nietzsche, a ring of return produces the wedding of all things in a speculative relativism that transvalues values and leaves us with vertiginous responsibilities that cannot be shifted onto givens or representative institutions but to which we must constantly re-forge our response with all the honesty, faith and risk of visceral intuition. Only that which we can expect to encounter repeatedly and forever, is, paradoxically that which we must encounter anew, without preconception or habit, is that which we must encounter as the most radical of empiricists (and surely *this* is the untimely).

Thus we proceed as child-like, as orphans of tradition, forced into the most radical, de-institutionalised empiricism wherein nothing is presumed and where knowledge no longer tames life like an animal in its cage. Here it is always January, where the year and the day are always breaking on our spinning, orbiting world, and where we hesitate, tempering the temptation to know and to go, bringing these habits 'to heel' and even into disrepute, placing doubt above

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[59] The ear and the other are again invoked as we note that a teleological infinity has in common the frontality of the eyes and face, while any horizontalism is associated with our unclosing ears.

every confidence, and doubting all of this too, while the resulting vertigo induces release.

When the trumpet maestro Miles Davis (1926 - 1991) proclaimed 'do not fear mistakes, there are none' he made a transvaluation of values. Here he referred, not only to expressive rushes of inspiration, impulse, or chance - of the kind that occur in a rapid, dazzling solo - but also to those extremely long, ponderous notes that we have also heard him play, achieved by circular breath control and sustained as if in the absence of the very concept of 'direction', as if the trumpet, luxuriating in the freedoms of Jazz, sought a music without time for an untimely, unruly modernity, born of the revolutionary rolling of drums and dice.

That modernity now delivers us to a postmodernity and possible post-postmodernities, within which, if we hesitate, it is not in Romantic awe of storms, forsaken by god, but in affirmation of hesitation as a possible paradigm, a paradigm which brings what was previously a margin or nuance - hesitation itself - to the foreground of our considerations and which thereby enables the unprecedented and unconsidered to emerge from Enlightenment constraints where they may have lain, obscured by knowledge, buried under words, and overlooked in the careless rush to progress into futurity.

Hesitation, Representation And Power

Governed by certain pages, lines, a certain desk and window, by certain times-in-the-world, and guided by a certain pen and a certain measure of ink, a certain

computer and its aqueous screen, we have overcome our uncertain hesitation to begin, we have begun, albeit late and closer to the end, we have begun *in* and *as* hesitation. Thankfully, writing itself, which we have never neglected in our thoughts, continues to accompany us, not as a tool but as a rare friend capable of knowing and caring better for us, perhaps, than we presume to know and care for ourselves. We remain ever-vigilant, ages-wise, and prepared for the follies and fancies into which proud and audacious thought might lead us.

Thus we can begin to steer away from fear and towards faith, proceeding with one hand on our heart while the other is gripped by writing itself as our own, immanent Virgil. We take solace and have faith in that grammar which supercedes god, while celebrating an age of mass literacy where writing, reading, and publishing proliferate exponentially.

Representation would carry the world for us, but we are nevertheless driven, and ultimately discarded, by something both inhuman and not-of-this-world, and which cannot be represented. Representation wills-to represent, wields forms and words like wax under the pressure of a will-to-power, in the vain hope of illustrating, not only time, but the *passing* of time, while nevertheless aspiring to illustrate all as familiar - as 're', as present, homogenous, and therefore meaningful. Writing too, in this way, will always be a rewriting, and simultaneously 're. writing' (*sic*), i.e. *concerning* writing, *to do with* writing, never merely, simply or only 'writing' (unless of course we can achieve or have achieved an 'absolute literature' of immanent writing that is not representational

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but somehow an accurate record only of our passing). And whatever we write about, will always also be 'about about' (*sic)*

Those mocking pages of Sterne's come back to mind, on which lines passing from left to right, *write*, perform pirouettes, but impart little meaning. Consider here also the margins of the text in Derrida's Parergon and the surface of Mallarmé's paper to which his words seem to refer and simultaneously defer, as mystery outweighs and outstrips knowledge, as knowledge falls like snow into its ocean, and we sense that mystery is definitive of our identity.

The very lack of mystery inherent in such terms as 'identity', or 'existence', makes them suspect. To persist in this conundrum between omniscience and ignorance is a predicament to which Nietzsche alluded in his introduction to *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense.* Our passing actuality, our actual passing, remains a secretive tragedy that we share, a *noumena* to which we adhere, a spirit in whom we conspire, a *disorganised religion*, subsisting all others, and in which we cannot help but believe.

(Nietzsche, F.W in Cazeaux C. 2000, 53 - 62)

This force, this power, is an inexorability before which other powers wither, and with regard to which other powers are stooges, stand-ins or pale imitations. In the harsh light of inexorable passing other powers are returned to their construction, their history, their arbitrariness, we see through them, imagining worlds without them, worlds before and beyond them.

Thus in Kafka, the labyrinth of the law is undermined by K's arrest as it inaugurates a burrowing investigation by a most radical empiricist (K himself) and announces a hesitation at the entrance to the law. Kafka's hesitation before the great institution of law is a hesitation before *all* institution, all 'castles', but it is also a hesitation before all entrance, all 'to' and all way, which is why the doorkeeper is so confident in his assertion that this door was only open for this particular waiting and for this particular waiter, it is only *our* waiting that produces *our* door, our way, our 'to'. When we are *not* waiting we cannot represent our way or even its beginning, because we are already immersed in our way, and beyond our beginning. Here passage has become immanent, no longer represented or representable, until, that is, the next occasion on which we wait.

Power is given form by the respect that we maintain for it, both castle and trial look ominous from a distance but become increasingly formless and ludicrous the closer we get and the more we are implicated within them. No power, it seems, can withstand the hollows that give its structure form, the space that allows us, along with air and time, to pass through and to occupy, to reside and abide, physically or imaginatively.

As Georges Bataille suggests, the representative power of Capital roots itself in abstracting, expropriating, and representing an originally more 'general' or immanent economy, thereby exploiting lives innocently swept-up into an alien and alienating drive for excessive profitability, far beyond necessity or utility, way beyond reason. Consumerism, dependent upon impulse, leads to an

avaricious acquisitiveness, which, in turn, ultimately produces economic and environmental instability. The representative power of democratic government is nevertheless an extension of royalty, the public face of the armed forces, and the official front of business. It speaks 'our' language, shakes 'our' hand, and smiles as 'one of us', while barely disguising powers waiting in its wings ready to serve or to suppress those it 'represents', as and if government policy and national security so commands.

Given an eventual paradigm, none of these representative powers can 'be', but only will-to, wish-to, yearn-to, be. None of these can writers, thinkers, artists and teachers, bow-down to, precisely because their legitimacy is no greater than the writer's own and their constitutional authority is founded upon the very same, shared, grammatology, the same eventual writing that we here produce. The inexorability of actual passing - which all the representative powers above might justifiably envy and fear - is the power within which we, as a 'community of those who have no community', truly and ultimately commune. The justice, economy and government that we 'entertain', with which we 'get into bed' is not representative but immanent - it is a governmental *karma* we might say.

Those banned books which eventually become cornerstones of official canons, are a sign that the writer, as artist, in and with writing as event, is not, in that event, constrained by 'the order of the day', but rather has a duty to untimely thoughts arising in dialogue with the medium and tools of writing. All else is too perspectival, too self-serving, schematic and 'all-too-human' for the writer who, one day is called upon to write a thesis, another day a letter, a script, a poem,

or to contribute to the wording of a constitution, all with same materials, applying the same skills. Rather than occupy a false 'seat' in a delusory representative schema, we rather appoint ourselves the official recorders - the very record - of noumenal, actual, inexorable passing - in as much as it can be recorded.

The above-mentioned representative powers might deal with quantities, but with regard to the actuality of passing we are forced beyond quantity and extensity to consider only *qualities* - qualities of time, passage, health, justice, hope etc. sensually set down in convenient lines of meaningfully assembled shapes. Writing enshrines and embodies our laws, constitutions, stories, poems, and religions, and yet writing is only the uncertain shadow of our thought, its trail and its trace, inaccurately and hastily drawn *around* thought, as thought escapes, evaporating as its *raison d'etre,* like perfume. We can extend writing's definition in this way to include photography, drawing, painting, cinema, all of which might fall under Cadava's terminology 'words of light'. Between 'words of light', and under the shadow of thought, we might conclude that we can only know, suffer from, or benefit from, some meaningful illumination, some ominous shade, which has created, and continues to justify, our representative institutions. Difference, no matter how crepuscular, no matter how nuanced, offers meaning and invites interpretation as significance. Meanwhile, the writer continues to manipulate this plastic *lux*, always searching for new plays, new

tricks of the light that might produce unprecedented possibilities - the very antithesis of the law.[60]

Passing Beyond

When Nietzsche despaired (however performatively or ironically) at the inadequacy of writing and its wholesale failure to 'capture' his 'beloved' thoughts, he accused it of falsely translating thoughts into a crude and limited medium, leaving for posterity something *other than* those precious thoughts which, however we admire their record, their written manifestation, we will never truly know. Knowledge is a fleeting experience, and writing is its betrayal.   In his regretful[61] conclusion to *Beyond Good and Evil* we sense the strange duty that we have to describe - if only by outlining in its absence - the very evaporation of experience, the evaporation of which all experience and all that we experience consists.

We rush to transcribe our thought lest it evaporate, and yet, in doing so we betray it, selling it into the hands of a mis-representation.   Nevertheless we bequeath a compromised thought to memory, where it provokes further thought. And so a wheel is set in motion, a wheel of returns, with uncertain origin and no fixed or clear axis; a ball on which *fortuna* is barely balanced and which all our *virtu* barely manages to contest.

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[60] Noting Barthes here again: '[…] literature […] liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases - reason, science, law.' (Barthes, R. 1977, 147)

[61] 'Regretful' though Nietzsche's 'emotions' always appear suspiciously strategic, artful, crafted.

'I think … therefore … I am' … and then … I write *that* 'I think therefore I am', and what I write (necessarily other) gazes back at 'I', questioning, trying to recall, failing to recapture the thought that it truly wills-to represent, or the who that 'I' was before being so foolish as to have such a thought or to have written it. 'I' slips away, immanent, in ink, as the great conceit of thought's thought of itself, its quantitative desire to encompass knowledge and conquer doubt as a singularity, as 'one', serves a process and procedure that neither conquers nor contains, nor arrests, but merely relinquishes, allows to evaporate, and feeds the turning of a wheel.

But if there is an innate evaporation of things it is not an absence, not a nihilistic negation or denial, but an effervescent ephemerality upon which only some quality and degree of hesitation can assert itself in order to give form - albeit fleeting - to all that 'melts into air'. Bergson referred to this as *durée.* That is to say, we interpret *durée* to be the quality of a 'thing', arising, not from its ontology, extensity or representation but as a result of its temporality, its pace, endurance, contingency, its elasticity in response to the demands of temporal passage. *Durée* is the hesitation of 'things', the particular hesitant quality which makes 'a thing a thing' (*sic*) and which is also the 'weak power' of differentiation, determining one 'thing' from another in terms of relative qualities of *durée* or hesitation. The dualism of phenomena/noumena gives way to 'a hesitation of things' in our critique of ontology.

We cannot say with conviction that there is time, but we can de-scribe, in-scribe and attempt to in-de-scribe experience. We could say that this is the goal of

Nietzsche and his most careful and inspired followers such as Jacques Derrida, i.e. to attempt an in-de-scription of experience, a writing *in the spirit of music* which, while *of* the world does not claim nor aspire to re-present it.

Where there is evaporation there may be absence, but there is also hesitation. Things pass, but in passing, they abide, in and as experience - as event. We fail to describe all that we miss in the folly of representation, and yet, we may in-de-scribe, by aiming obliquely, causing an accident, 'canning chance'[62] (as Duchamp said) and writing distractedly, about about (*sic*) and away from the point. Perhaps this is our only hope, the only way to produce the hope that we always hope to produce in every event of writing.

Without hesitation, there could be no be-*ing.* The *ing* of being is not so much action as abidance, persistence, that which gives the spring to the step of every verb. Things hesitate to be and hesitate not to be, but it is in this hesitation that we encounter and experience both the world and ourselves. In this regard, values are transvalued, *all* is precious, and all forms and formations of power, all organisations of this truly *dis*organised religion, are exposed as 'wannabes' and 'wills-tos', edifices and architectures whose foundations only go so-far, so-deep,[63] built against or in response-to the inexplicable and inherent beauty and

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[62] *3 Standard Stops = Canned Chance* (Duchamp's *Box of 1914*). Note the relevance here to Nietzsche and the 'truth' that is 'a woman', as variations of *Fortuna* and *virtu* continue to play hide and seek throughout our History of ideas.

[63] See Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil - What is Noble?* Aphorism 289 '[…] doubt whether a philosopher is even capable of 'final and true' opinions, whether at the back of his every cave a deeper cave is lying, is bound to lie - a wider, stranger, richer world over every surface, an abyss behind his every ground, beneath his every 'grounding' […] There is something arbitrary about the fact that he stopped just here, looked back, looked around, that he did not dig deeper just here, but set down his spade - and there is also something suspicious about it. Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hiding place, ever word is also a mask'. (Nietzsche, F.W. 1998, 173)

injustice of passing. The responses to inexorable passing, that we call 'a' life or 'a' self; these too are such constructions, such invaluable follies; icons no less.

24. Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1995 -1997

The icon is defense against passing, it cuts into space and attempts to stop time with a hard-edged will-to-be 'a', to-be 'thing'. The icon is the apotheosis of the sign as the sign of the limit, the height of representation. Meanwhile, the ritual, like the icon, also attempts to demarcate our event. But the ritual invites us in, to an immanent and eventual participation, where passage is marked rather than denied or ossified.

If man is purposefully dwarfed by the constructed infinity, the 'cathedral' of his self-built belief, beyond which may lie a greater and truer infinity; and if man needs also the representation of his own folly and vanity played out in a tragic construction like Hamlet, it is because his very passing so frustratingly eludes all attempts at representation. Passing is the enigma from which grows every construct of man. Deconstruction can only return us to that same enigma - albeit re-sensitised. This writing can only return us to its origin, to its surface, and to writing and thinking which precede and pursue it, apparently achieving

nothing, yet exploring a certain journey, making a way, turning over ground, and re-turning, carefully, self-consciously, vigilantly, thereby adding one more ripple, one more path, one more excavation.

Infinitely malleable language, words, writing, writing *this*, this writing, all 'slip away', melting into air in their very event, the persistence of which, in memory, we take pains to archive and preserve. Systems of value, privilege and prestige are rendered arbitrary by appeal to the withering, inhuman actuality of passing, this unjust necessity that oversees and inspires every justice. The actual is necessity, and necessity can be terrible, but only as terrible as the inexorability of passing.

Are we ourselves an event? If we think of ourselves as event rather than 'thing' does that increase our value in our own eyes? Are we merely passive recipients, or the objects *of* events and forces that irreverently heave and mould us? William Shakespeare, Toni Morrison, Machiavelli and Descartes, Mallarmé and Uccello, Sterne, and Derrida, all ask, in various ways here, the question, not only of what and where, but of *when* we are. Once we explore the space between our impulse and our hesitation, and thereby gain an understanding, an image, or at least some kind of reconciliation regarding *when* we are, this may provide us with a basis from which to decide how to act, or not act.

Painting, Waiting, And Remembering

25. Giorgio de Chirico, *Ariadne*, 1913

One has to learn to *see*, one has to learn to *think*, one has to learn to *speak* and *write*: the end in all three is a noble culture. - Learning to *see* - habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgment, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects. This is the *first* preliminary schooling in spirituality: *not* to react immediately to a stimulus, but to have the restraining, stock-taking instincts in one's control. Learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language 'strong will power': the essence of it is precisely *not* to 'will', the ability to defer decision. All unspirituality, all vulgarity, is due to the incapacity to resist a stimulus -one has to react, one obeys every impulse. In many instances, such a compulsion is already morbidity, decline, a symptom of exhaustion - almost everything which unphilosophical crudity designates by the name 'vice' is merely this physiological incapacity *not* to react - A practical application of having learned to see: one will become slow, mistrustful, resistant as a *learner* in general. In an attitude of hostile calm one will allow the strange, the *novel* of every kind to approach one first - one will draw one's hand back from it. To stand with all doors open, to prostrate oneself submissively before every petty fact*,* to be ever itching to mingle with, *plunge into* other people and other things, in short our celebrated modern 'objectivity', is bad taste, is ignoble *par excellence*.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 2003, 76)

Nietzsche emphasises a certain hesitation and passivity by equating seeing with nobility and with thinking. As ever in Nietzsche's aphorisms there is an enormous amount to aid our meditations, but what may strike us first is the passive interpretation of the eye. It is easy to imagine the Renaissance eye of a Uccello or a Machiavelli as active, potent and imposing, using the science of perspective and pervasive humanism to justify a structured objectivity. Nietzsche however, is arguing for a 'spiritual' passivity of seeing, one that implicitly criticises Enlightenment conceits and Renaissance perspective. Nietzsche's critique arises from the emerging psychologism of the late 19th Century to bring the established perspectives of humanism and Enlightenment into modern doubt.

It is this psychologism that begins to break through a traditionally established representational regime with a new self-awareness, a new self-knowledge, a new self-reflexivity. The psychological sense of the self as divided comes as an epiphany which splits the Cartesian 'I' and makes an otherwise dangerously myopic modernity hesitate and wonder whether all else might be similarly divided, split, uncertain, oscillating, pregnant with underlying tensions, volatile relations, competing or complementary motives and forces.

The question 'what am I?' appeals to a singularity and homogeneity which psychologism splinters into shards of contingency, memory, futurity. This has similar implications for the modern question 'what is a thing?' Is a thing not also contingent, dependent, never autonomous but made in some way of its memory and its destination? Is it not also a trajectory? An event? And is it not also

always a becoming formed by its destination; a 'thing' that is a waiting, a hesitating to be?

For the psychologist, the self has a subconscious and so too has the other, and these subconscious*es* are each an other to a self, an other's other. While the writer has a subconscious, so too has the reader, but so too, does the writing.

> Nature is a temple whose living pillars
> Sometimes give forth a babel of words;
> Man wends his way through a forest of symbols
> Which look at him with their familiar glances.
>
> As long-resounding echoes from afar
> Are mingling in a deep dark unity,
> Vast as the night or as the orb of day,
> Perfumes, colours, and sounds commingle.
>
> (Baudelaire, C. [trans. Benjamin W. 1973, 139 - 40]) [64]

19th Century Impressionist painting confirms a certain passivity in its image of an eye onto which colours could 'fall' and 'mix' in an event of seeing. This scientificity allows painting to temporarily revel in an innovative sense of objectivity, while simultaneously wresting itself from academicism and an academic sense of objectivity.

But as this 'scientific' approach intensified in proliferating Post-Impressionisms so the significance of 'underlying' forms and messages began to disrupt the new celebration of an objective and luminous surface. The surfaces of Post-

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[64] Walter Benjamin's translation, taken from *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* and translated from the German by Harry Zohn.

Impressionist painting abandon Impressionist vantage points (e,g, overlooking new boulevards) and become instead dirty windows into arbitrary perspectives, depicting slices of subjective chaos.   Now the eye no-longer presumes to protect or guide the mind, which, in turn, either surrenders to sensual porosity and synaesthesia (as in Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondences' above) or responds surgically via cubism.
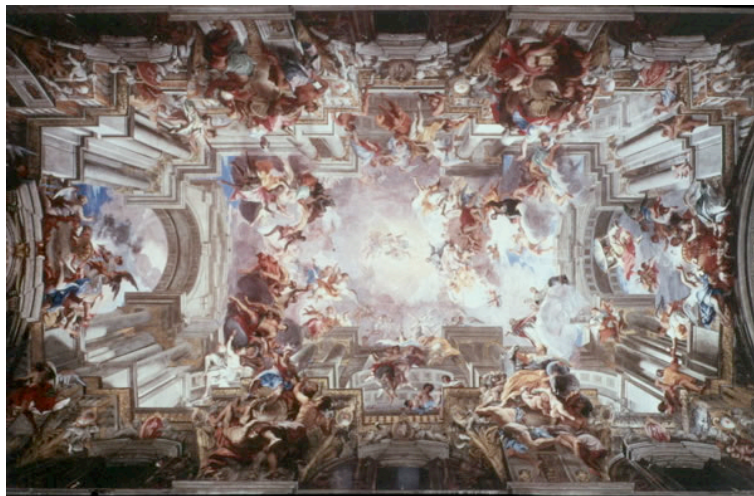
26. Andrea Pozzo, *Allegory of the Missionary Work of the Jesuit Order*, 1691 - 94

Renaissance perspective - an excellent device for emphasising distance and position in shared, civic space - is an objectifying mechanism later to be supplanted by unearthly Baroque imaginings within formless plenum.   In the Baroque, infinities invoke frames and boundaries only to transgress them and prove them arbitrary in light of greater powers and higher concerns. They meanwhile create vertigo in the viewer, by referring - as convincingly as possible - to distance without measure, thus placing our own point of view not as 'somewhere' but as some 'where?' i.e. as arbitrary and in infinite space.

Perspectival Humanism concedes to Baroque vertigo just as the objectifying colour theories and quotidian places of Impressionism give way to Expressionist and Symbolist uses or abuses of colour, form, and space under the subjective will and emotion of an individual mood or fleeting point-of-view. Or, Impressionist objectivity - associated with scientificity, democracy and photography - gives way to the modern mysticisms of Symbolism and Expressionism, just as Renaissance humanism concedes to Baroque Catholic irrationality. It is not Roman Catholicism but the 'disorganised religion' of secular belief in modernity's inhuman disorientations that is the lure and the motive for Post-Impressionist displacements of reality.

Renaissance perspective was not only played-out in painting, its slightly cynical and contrived humanist positionality appears to have influenced contemporaries so that it is easy to imagine Machiavelli, seated by his window, dreaming up plans for Princes and theories of war as if he were the centre of an optical episteme.

The paintings of de Chirico can assist us in making these bridges across art history, because, in de Chirico we see the Renaissance perspectival regime purposefully confronted, twisted from a promising empowerment into a nightmarish surrender that leads to Surrealism. Here, all -it seems- is waiting, like Ariadne, for a reconciliation and a rendezvous. We wait for wars to end, for trouble to be over, for wounds to heal and for differences to be resolved. We wait and hope that the promise Nietzsche claimed was vital to the make-up of the human animal will be delivered.

De Chirico reminds us that there is something ponderous about being human, something which is not a matter of being 'here and now' or 'lord of all that I survey'. De Chirico reminds us that the human is nervous about *not* being here, and of *not* being now, he reminds us that we are in fact stretched out on the rack of our duration (*Durée*), living our persistence, simultaneously experiencing the mixed blessing of our life and death. Despite the presence of a heady hangover from Renaissance perspective, in de Chirico things no-longer line-up acquiescently to converge upon the eye but appear arbitrarily placed and strangely juxtaposed, leaving us equally so in relation to a scene that we struggle to comprehend. Our milieu is, after all, here turning from one of History into one of memory, from an Enlightenment age into a psychological age, and as Salvador Dali emphatically demonstrated, memory is, if anything, 'persistent'.

While we find memory un-representable and difficult to describe in terms of attributes, 'persistence' is readily agreeable as one of its properties. While History gives us some sense of mastery and form over epochs and ages, memory plays with us, wakes us in the night and jolts us in the day, with unexpected juxtapositions and random *recits* that sometimes seem to come from other lives.
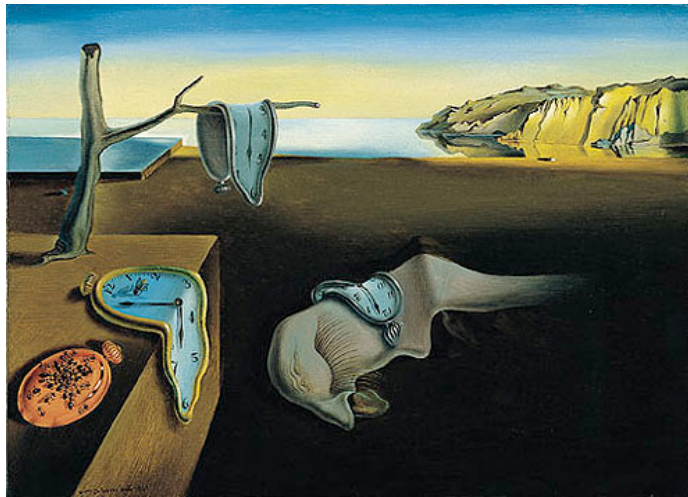
27. Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory,* 1931

Thus, whenever we link, connect, bridge, join-up or commune, when we link the apparently incongruous, we do not only make spatial changes but bring to an end some pervasive waiting, as if all 'things' were hesitating to become other, to join or re-join others. When we wait for war, trouble, pain to be over, then we have faith in the persistence of memory itself, the persistence of a memory of all 'things' that will enable 'things' to return to the preferable condition of a familiar state. There is a persistence of memory, in which 'things' are immersed, and of which they are non-extensively constituted, a *durée* that overcomes their differences and which yearns to re-unite.

What *is* a thing? Surely this question is always ticking, waiting, like the bomb of an event, not for an answer but for some echo or rhyme, but certainly waiting. Meanwhile, that waiting and hesitating - we realize - might just be what a 'thing' actually is. If there is a hesitation of things, it lies here, in the tension between appearance and waiting to appear, between virtuality and actualisation, a hesitation which can be accelerated or broken by a neon link, suddenly and

surprisingly relating one 'thing' to another. In Dali's painting, there are not only soft clocks but also hard forms that make themselves useful by demonstrating this Surreal and uncertain softness. The artist provokes, while paint and the tools of painting, all encourage philosophy to new thoughts (as Deleuze claims of Cinema) by playing with 'things', undermining their substance - just as Duchamp claimed with his *Fountain* to have 'produced a new thought for that object'.[65]   (Deleuze, G. 1986)

Hesitation Itself

Hesitation is not always kind, nor peaceful, and it can be deployed with ruthless cynicism e.g. when a torturer, kidnapper, or sadist amplifies a pain yet to be inflicted by extending and manipulating its anticipation. Gilles Deleuze took an interest in this temporal aspect of the work of Sacher-Masoch wherein hesitation can increase both pain and pleasure.

                                                                        (Deleuze, G. 1989)

Threat, including the threat of war, is hesitation saturated in violence, deployed at various levels and in varying ways to maintain conformity via a kind of

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[65] The Richard Mutt Case:
 They say any artist who pays six dollars may exhibit.
 Mr. Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion, this object disappeared and was never exhibited. What were the grounds for refusing Mr Mutt's fountain: 1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar. 2. Others that is was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing. Now Mr Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bathtub is absurd. It is a fixture which you see every day in plumbers' show windows. Whether Mr Mutt made the fountain with his own hands or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object. As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has produced are her plumbing and her bridges. - The Blind Man 1917.

resigned diplomacy. Hesitation, whether as a familiar and quotidian aspect of every daily life, or, as located in great historical and military decisions, works its way into every narrative as a secret agency and is brought to bear upon our interpretation of time, belief, meaning, and judgment.

In crude, macrocosmic terms, the so-called 'cold war' between post WW2 superpowers, resembles a monumental, terrible hesitation, eventually re-animated by the stirrings of Lech Walesa, Gorbachev, Chernobyl and Reagonomics. Within that war, what has come to be known as 'the Cuban missile crisis' of 1962 graphically illustrates the war's fundamental terms and presents us with a dramatic, hesitant skirmish within the greater 'stand-off'. Meanwhile, the Second World War utilised new extremes of speed (*blitzkrieg*), surprise (Pearl Harbour) and technologically aided mass destruction on an unprecedented scale (Auschwitz, Hisroshima, Dresden etc.). Given these examples, and given that war is today increasingly presented as an inevitable adjunct or associate of democracy and consumerism, we might choose, if we could, a 'cold', hesitant war over such an enormously destructive and impulsive war.

However, just as hesitation can threaten and terrorise, so it can be deployed to grace and to ingratiate, to charm the abrupt edge off otherwise harsh relations. A bow, a handshake, a letter of introduction, a red carpet, a posting of notices or bans, a foyer, a tablecloth, a prelude, a preface, an overture, all these are examples of physical and temporal mediations and ameliorations which allow relations to occur without careless, grinding collisions of impulse or haste.

Hesitation mediates difference, encounters, juxtapositions and events, with a certain grace, respect, sensitivity and passivity that Nietzsche seemed to find lacking as a sign of true nobility in human thought and affairs. We can find catatonics and stutterers whose lives are rendered difficult by extremes of unwelcome hesitation, just as there are those for whom impulsive behavior is unhealthy, unwelcome or criminal. Psychology treats the subject of hesitation in an oppositional duality with impulse, and immediately throws up layers of related ethical questions.   (Doob, [b.1909] L.W. 1990)

Rape, *blitzkrieg, détente,* suicide, murder, all these ethical issues hang upon degrees of hesitation or impulse, and yet, if we attempt to ascertain a precise moment of decision, or try to divine how time or timing might determine the beginning or the 'rightness' of a decision, we will invariably be left thwarted by the fact that time takes no convincing form other than that which we impose upon it. Henri Bergson, by forcing us to accept a Copernican revolution before our eyes in alerting us to the fact that we falsely incrementalise time, also blurs many ethical questions as he makes 'fuzzy' the location of any moment of decision. Decision, perhaps more than any other act we could analyse, becomes severely troubled by questions of hesitation once viewed through a Bergsonisan or Deleuzian schema.

If we hesitate before assigning time or temporality some primary, and in some way external role within our understanding and experience, and if we send hesitation into this dangerous territory not only to tinker and tamper with temporal structures but also to measure itself up against the concept of time

itself, then, in place of time we must posit *times,* events, times when ink flows in seamless companionship with thought, and times when the two seem only remotely related, times of my own experience and those of the other, times of centuries past and to come, times of the reader and times of the writer.

Among all of these, hesitation produces some revealing disturbance. But if we begin to prioritise, eulogise and even evangelise such hesitation - always to the detriment of impulse, hesitation's other in an oppositional duality, and as a resistance to compulsions and interpellations - we are bound to receive a rebuke from those who will cite instances in which to hesitate has been to lose - e.g. to lose lives. And yet, to promote hesitation is always to promote the value of thought itself, by allowing for the possibility of further thought, consideration and dialogue, and always to wish to override impulsive action and force, with a belief in some more imaginative and more enduring solution. Hesitation is thus of crucial consideration for any one who professes to think, or contribute to human possibilities.

We could argue that there is never a need to argue for impulse, as, by definition, impulse requires no argument, no consideration, no support, but is simply to act *without thinking.* This dualism, hesitation and impulse, seems therefore to shed light on philosophy, if only because impulse represents its antithesis thereby implicating an innate relationship between thought and hesitation. Impulsive acts will occur, with or without a champion, while here we *promote* hesitation, like a salesman who has noted a gap in the market of human affairs, as an attribute of a higher, gentler, more confident and assured

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mind, capable of breaking / braking thoughtless, crude and careless impulse where and when necessary, breaking even the very habit of assertion, and positing hesitation as an image of thought itself. A more just and ethical society might emerge from developing an *impulse to hesitate*.

Hesitation has become for us a graceful intermediary, a kind of etiquette intervening between forces which might otherwise crudely grind and cause unnecessary harm. Hesitation is not simply postponement or expedience but the production of a space of possibilities, and thus difficult for any thinker *not* to affirm. An artwork by Joseph Beuys, in which a rifle has the word *Denken* (Thought) written on the butt could be an apt design to illustrate our trajectory here. Should we not hesitate, ethically, considerately before firing-off our thoughts?

Language provides a matrix of safe and familiar receptacles into which we may enter or by which we may be entered. We might choose to live, we might choose to 'be', but our scepticism warns us that it is preferable to hesitate, just this side of language, just this side of meaning, just this side of being, not necessarily deferring, and not necessarily spectral, but producing possibilities by our very hesitation that allow unexpected and unprecedented paths or ways to reveal themselves. This is the way of difference as opposed to the way of identity.

'Floating World' And Aesthetic Phenomenon

> On three or four evenings a week I still find myself taking that path down to the river and the little wooden bridge still known to some who lived here before the war as 'the bridge of Hesitation'. We called it that because until not so long ago, crossing it would have taken you into our pleasure district, and conscience-troubled men - so it was said - were to be seen hovering around there, caught between - seeking an evening's entertainment and returning home to their wives. But if sometimes I am to be seen upon that bridge, leaning thoughtfully against the rail, it is not that I am hesitating. It is simply that I enjoy standing there as the sun sets, surveying my surroundings and the changes taking place around me.

<p align="right">(Ishiguro, K. 2001, 99)</p>

It is fortunate that Kazuo Ishiguro should here remind us that Hesitation is the blight of 'conscience troubled men' and that the theme of Hesitation will always involve moral dilemmas. If we take ontology as first philosophy, we might prioritise the 'things' of our title, while if we take *ethics* as our first philosophy we might instead prioritise hesitation. However, as we have hitherto taken a self-reflexive and formalist approach we need not be swayed by either priority, but instead maintain focus solely on our own act of writing, our own 'thing' of the text-produced, as well as various relationships - including the ethical relationship - between them.

Ishiguro's evocation of the 'floating world' conjures it no less as a world of things, objects of pleasure, opposed to the realm of political reality but also other than the realm of pure thought and contemplation which can be enjoyed for as long as one hesitates before that world. However, the very name of the

'floating world' lets us see that the 'things' or objects of pleasure are not necessarily physical and therefore not easily distinguishable from thought. We might be tempted instead to include both within the same event-ual paradigm and accept that we can take pleasure in the event of thought just as we can take pleasure in the objects or things of sensual pleasure. Thought, we might say, *is* a sensual pleasure and not that which oversees the body and governs its otherwise wayward ways.

When Nietzsche, early in his published career, made the statement 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon can the world be justified' he had already begun his notorious record of playfully disruptive statements that appear profound on the surface only to reveal themselves as being far more-so on closer consideration. Justification and aesthetics are, after all, usually in an inverted relationship to the one that Nietzsche here deploys. Any aesthetic (and therefore relatively vague and *a*moral in that it is sensuous) phenomena, requires governance by some justifying, reasoning, ideal mechanism. For Nietzsche however, the world goes without any other justification than its aesthetic valuation, and ideals are never themselves justified until they become aesthetic phenomena - part of sensual experience.

Nietzsche thus concurs with our doctrine of radical empiricism, trusting only to the experience and to the senses even in matters of morality, ethics or justice, while questions taunting theology, physics and metaphysics (regarding the world and its purpose) are accommodated sensually. The discomforts of the *Bridge of Hesitation* are moral ones but Nietzsche also advocates an extra-

moral or *a*moral code. What we experience is not necessarily our fault, blame might lie elsewhere, perhaps with the gods or with physics or with a particular moral regime among a genealogy of morals, and blame might simply lie.

Morality intervenes only *after* the experience that Nietzsche holds dear. We can close our eyes or our ears to what is happening, to what the world is, but that does not change it. We can place forms upon it and build points of view in relationship to it, but even these will not *justify* it. Only the senses will do, precisely because they do not assume morality over the world but pass through it as the world passes through them.

But can an aesthetic phenomenon be 'justified'? Here lies the playfully aphoristic quality of Nietzsche's statement. The senses are dynamic, eventual, pursuing a journey, following a scent, heeding a call, fleeing from pain, responding to stimuli, seeking pleasure, they do not entertain the folly of building a position, a judgment, an edifice, or of being a sedentary 'thing'. A sense is not a 'thing' but rather a recipient awaiting further events. The Enlightenment conceit of Aesthetics itself is implicated in Nietzsche's derisive jocularity as justifications and aesthetics rub up uncomfortably against one another.

Hesitation is not only moral - and therefore not necessarily appropriate to an immoralist - but, more profoundly, all morality is in some way a hesitation, a curbing of the senses, a change of speed and therefore perhaps a matter of physics after all. Meanwhile, justice, justification, truth, all these have their own

speeds. What is the speed of truth? Do we invariably *rush* to judgment? Ultimately, truth and justice have to be approached through the senses, through experience, and never through ideals and ideas, never through precedents, only through sensual events. We can attempt to move beyond the world's aesthetic phenomena to gain a just perspective on them and to thus justify the world but Nietzsche shows these positions and sequestrations to be all-too-human, all too convenient, false objectivities, because justification itself becomes - for the untimely thinker, who waits, and to whom all good things eventually come - an aesthetic phenomenon, scrutinised and justified by the world and by History.

HISTORY

[…] for whatever marks an epoch in my life has been brought to me by accident, never by a recommendation.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 2004, 28)

Epochal Regime

We live in a hesitant age, unsure not only of our epoch but of our epoch-ism, i.e. our habitual need to order events and eras into coherent narratives is dependant upon forms, dramas, *denouements*, preludes etc. The epochal form awarded 'modernity' provides us with a negotiable object by which to orient and around which to dispute; and yet we can trace modernities as blips and rushes here and there throughout History. There is a modernity of the Roman empire, and of ancient Egypt, the epoch known as 'The Renaissance' also revels in its innovative and presumably disquieting accomplishments, while the Reformation was also a modernising principle. But here we must hesitate, because all these epochal categorisations make into 'things' what are really passages, and, in light of our thesis, become outmoded, perspectival and ontological conveniences.

When J.F. Lyotard was compelled to attempt an articulation of postmodernism he intriguingly implied that every modernism is *preceded* by a postmodernism:

> In an amazing accelleration, the generations precipitate themselves. A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this is constant.[66]
>
> (Lyotard, J.F. 1984, 79)

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[66] Does Lyotard not echo Benjamin here, as we have cited above: 'There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim'. (Benjamin, W. 1969, 254)

To what extent Lyotard's statement is rhetorical, playful or indeed accurate, need not concern us as much as its potential application for a critique of the formation of History. What Lyotard does here is to fracture and twist what we might justifiably call the 'epochal regime'. He simultaneously disturbs the commonplace of a processional narrative of History. Lyotard achieves something like a historiographic *Cubism* by rupturing a representative relationship to History *qua* object conveniently lying beneath or before our satisfied gaze. Rather he posits an inescapably intrusive and relentlessly implicating History, dramatically enfolding us in its production.

Suddenly there are many modernities and many postmodernities, Lyotard's postmodernities always *precede* those very modernities after which we fully and naively expected them to follow. Suddenly, we see History, not from a fixed and present perspective but simultaneously from many sides and points-of-view. We are not only looking *at* it but moving with, around, and within it. As in Cubism, the representation of our represent*ing* (the event of Historicis*ing*) is given priority. We represent the process of Historicising while obscuring what we might have presumed to be the object of our representation.

If Lyotard, like Deleuze[67], is here exposed as a thinker of the postmodern who is nevertheless regularly driven to rely on the 'hard-wired' modernist examples of his modernist youth, he nevertheless helps us to explore the many ways in which we might give form to History. In this case we note that modernism

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[67] Here I am also thinking of Deleuze's use of Virginia Woolf or D.H. Lawrence - to name just two canonic modernists favoured by Deleuze.

regularly comes to the rescue of the postmodern, providing it with vocabulary and with radically disruptive strategies.

> The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actuallly a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.
>
> (Benjamin, W. 1969, 253)

28. Broadway Photo Shop, *Marcel Duchamp using hinged mirror*, 1917

In light of Walter Benjamin's introduction (above) to his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' a portrait of Marcel Duchamp made in a Coney-Island trick mirror comes to mind, as do the sublime *Passages* of Walter Benjamin's

work in which he percieved the possibility of a 'dialectics at a standstill'.[68] Again, it would be crude to oversimplify the relation between these works and thoughts as simply 'modern' and 'postmodern' when their reciprocal influence is far more complex than the all-too directional 'post' allows .

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. - Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.
>
> (Benjamin, W. 1999, 462 [N2a,3])

Rendering point-of-view itself arbitrary, these disturbances-by Benjamin, Lyotard, Duchamp, of any complacent Historical positionality by varied relations and complex images of pro- and pre-ceding, become as intriguing and as valid as simplistic epochal objects carved-out and served in convenient historical chunks. We are made aware, by nuanced and imaginative thought, of the virtuality with which we habitually approach History.

If we attempt to write History, we will soon come to consider the event of writing as itself inescapably Historical, and discern that, if writing is an event, then it is in some sense musical, not a 'thing' but a passage which here rushes and there

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[68] Also: 'A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history […]. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystalises into a monad'. (Benjamin, W. 1969, 262 - 63)

dawdles, here murmurs and there crashes. And, having entered into self-reflexive dialogue with our writing of History we can consider History itself, and discern there similar, eventual and musical traits. We might begin to wonder what it means to *perceive or aprehend* History, to *sense* it, and thus to give it form. If so, we might find the complexity of our task only adequately accomodated by the nucances and complexities of music. History whispers and shouts as it models the meaning of time, providing overtures, preludes, finales, rushes, pauses, and interrelated rhythms that underly and advance memorable melodies.

Like those Historical Societies who dress-up and re-enact historical battles, while simultaneously self-conscious of present and incongrous concerns and technolgies, our simultaneous representation of, and living within History, conflate layered replays of the prescribed and presumed-known. The music of History becomes mere 'Karaoke'. But the struggle for History's representation cannot be a struggle for accuracy, it must be a candid and transparent exploration of the struggle itself, which expliciitly replaces the search for accuracy with some more realisable goal. Thus we interrupt the dream of a coherent rendering of an object (History) by a skilled and knowledgeable subject (writer), supplanting this with the image of a subject ever scrutinised and challenged by its object.

Not only cubism, but Dada is therefore here invoked, as the search for History is invaded both by form and method, ruptured by refusal of established objects of History, and thereby throws-off authoritative forms. Cutting-up and mixing

perspectives, we proceed with a view, not only to analysis of a formal procedure, but to maintenance of a certain liberty, a certain freedom to form and reform a History which thus remains 'dis-established'.

If Lyotard is confident that he can bait us into enjoying and concurring with his thought, that is because the epochal regime is so familiar as to have become un-believable.   To believe in something we must *need* belief i.e. to have belief we must first have scepticism concerning our object.   Belief needs to *need* a certain trust whereas those things which have become commonplace, academic, tawdry, we do not need or wish to believe-in, indeed we quietly anticipate the moment of their delegitimation, the fragmentation of their facade, the toppling of their status, and their imminent return to a state of possibility.

To write History, we need, not only writing, but also History to be written.   That History also needs to arise within the arena, medium, process and forms of thought.   The privileged arena of thought which will encompass what we call our History is suspended between - at one extreme - speculation that teases and challenges acceptance - and at another extreme - decadent knowledge whose complacency renders its days of legitimacy numbered.   Both extremes concede to some credible and comprehensible middle ground which is really *middle-thought* (as one also has a 'Middle East', a 'Middle England', or the coloquial verb 'middling').

Maintaining our formal, self-reflexive, and empirical aspirations, the thinking writer of History juggles, tumbles, ruptures, twists, and enters, looking   'behind

the scenes' of the established epochal regime while remaining safe in the conviction that, despite physical excavations and carbon-dating; despite Darwin's refutations of a Biblical chronology;[69] despite all these, the epochal regime has always been a point-of-view, falsifying History by systematising it, seperating out History's inseperable palimpsest.

We could claim that *this* is History, never an object but always a process, not even the Hegelian process of progress but merely the process of systematising, and therefore making modern and useful, all that never was modern and useful. The past is not 'to hand' but formless, ungraspable, memory is Protean / Proustian, making us its object as much as its subject.

If we are inspired by Lyotard's fragmentation to go beyond such humdrum aspirations as producing another point-of-view, then the point of view, like every habit of our motives and methods, becomes an aporia which must be thrown aside, its value thrown into doubt in order to release whatever lies beyond. What may be beyond, or other than, a point of view, is that which is allowed to erupt and appear from within process itself from a self-reflexive immersion in the event of writing; treating writing as a material fact and a manufacture, yet nevertheless able to isolate from within its horizons and archipelagos something transcendent, something beyond both process and processor; something which leads us on or makes going-on possible.

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[69] A Biblical chronology which, in its turn, must have also been some form of refutation.

If it is too ideal and too abstract to claim that writing is primarily responsible for the production of possibility 'itself' we can at least claim that writing is responsible for the maintenance of the possibility of further writing. And it follows, that thought also has this responsibility to thought, and History to History.

Self-reflexivity may invoke the deathly surveillance of the *doppleganger* but it can also recall the nuturing and familiar eyes of the lover's or mother's gaze returned. When we agree to meet our process, our object, and our event, 'half-way' - to allow it to catch-up-with, match pace, or come face-to-face with us - we concede some of our authority to all these others. There, in that gamble, possibility awakens and we begin to be led by and into the *un*familar.

The epochal regime - though always the product of a certain pen, a certain desk, a certain moment - conveniently locates or orients a society, individual, or culture, by consolidating its reassuring and legitimising narrative. To take an example contiguous to our use of Lyotard, we can see how postmodernism itself becomes an unfashionable term, a dirty word, brushed out of sight once a *bourgeoisie* who had initially buzzed enthusiastically around the term, realised the magnitude and profundity of its threat to their own Historical supremacy. Having weighed up postmodernism's 'Hi-Lo' debates and come down in favour of the former, exhibitions reassuringly espousing the formative treasure trove of modernism began to appear, switching the debate re modernism away from the unpalatable disturbance of postmodernism and toward the more reassuring habit of controlling and determining History from a privileged point of view, while

using all the Historical appartus - the museum, the publication, the conference - to do so. The epochal regime, in this way, comfortably justifies and endorses the perpetuation of the supremacy of a specific (though hegemonic) culture which patronisingly proclaims tolerance of all that is other to it rather than accepting the true implications of a profound challenge to its legitimacy.

It is perhaps for similar reasons that a sinister form of neoliberalism, when it infiltrates institutions, seems obsessed with control, detainment, sytematisation and 'parity'. All of this is the last gasp and the last, hysterical, grasping attempt to impose the modernist, bourgeois grid onto the new 'complexities and contradictions', incommensurable new relationships, liberties and possibilities implied by the collapse of the modern narrative, which, despite the unwelcome and unfashionable associations of the term '*bourgeoisie*', must surely be the collapsing narrative of the *bourgeoisie* itself.[70]

Histories may be pluralised, nuanced and democratised, but the epochal regime can itself succumb to pluralism, nuance and democratisation. e.g. if we discern proto-modernisms in the work of Walter Benjamin or in Eduard Manet (both of whom could also be regarded as arch - or proto - postmodernists), should not the entire epochal regime relinquish its hold on History and give way to a more fluid, musical, perhaps more Bergsonian vision in which the relation of past and present is never so mechanistic, incrementalised and utilitarian? In short,

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[70] It is useful to invoke some initial, disruptive postmodern speculations, such as Robert Venturi's little book (or merely its title): *Complexities and Contradictions in Architecture*.

should History not concede its crown to memory? Lyotard's statement seems to open this possibility.

If an authoritarian History and an epochal regime can succumb to the empirical event of writing, which (as Nietzsche implied, and Barthes comfirmed) is always itself 'untimely', an example of this might be seen in the work of W.G. Sebald, where, under the influence of Walter Benjamin, immediate concerns of the present unexpectedly flare-up into dramatic contingencies of History, and History becomes, not only uncanny but untimely.

> Memories like this came back to me in the disused Ladies' waiting-room of Liverpool Street station, memories behind and within which many things much further back in the past seemed to lie, all interlocking like the labyrinthine vaults I saw in the dusty grey light. I felt, said Austerlitz, that the waiting room contained all the hours of my past life, all the suppressed and extinguished fears and wishes I hade ever entertained, as if the black and white diamond patters of the stone slabs beneath my feet were the board on which the endgame would be played, and it covered the entire plane of time.
>
> (Sebald, W.G. 2002, 192 - 93)

In the moment of writing thought, Histories are manufactured, and there, all of History's 'things', emotions, lifes and deaths become words and therefore subject to the particular influence and posssibilities pertaining to words. There, in writing, is where History finds its rhythm, its beat, its crescendos and preludes, there in writing is where historical relationships begin to rhyme and clash. Whether they become 'accurate' or not would be a matter for knowledge, not for writing.

Is the relationship between one event and another merely processional and causal? Are there not many more kinds of relationships, new relationships, potential relationships? Must we conveniently line-up epochs as a kind of jammed traffic? One epoch overlaps and casts its light upon the other, forming and informing it, sometimes from a great temporal distance. Though surely, given such a Bergsonian, non-extensive approach, we can no longer speak of historical 'distance' but rather of events more or less available for juxtaposition in an infinite variety of ways, at any moment, much as they are in memory.

Events recall each other, anticipate and 'expect' each other, willing and wishing each other into being, identifying each other in retrospect.[71] Nevertheless, epochs asume the mantle of cultural identity, giving form to History in a way reminiscent of Machiavelli's habit of donning courtly clothes at the end of each day's rural tasks in order to grace the redemptive performance of thinking and writing.

Epochs wear a false or wishful identity, dressing-up to serve the tales of their power-broking historian masters and to perform the function of their presumptuous momentousness. Like all authority, epochs necessarily feign identity in order to carry out a function, while beneath, behind and within them can be found - as with Machiavelli - chaos, ignominy, defeat, doubt, exile, and a plurality of alternative identities. For the artist, or 'creative', afraid that their own role and function is in some way less official and legitimate than *the* 'official and

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[71] As Walter Benjamin said of 'weak messianism', that 'our coming was expected on earth'.

legitimate' bodies, it is important to note - and indeed highlight - the art that goes into the production of any official power.

Consider Ingres' image of Napoleon's tiny visage swamped by robes and regal paraphernalia; consider the judge as he dons his disturbingly anchronistic wig; and here we begin to consider the disruptive fact that power is always artful, fake, theatrical, a fact from which the artist and writer, searching for their own legitimation, might take heart.

29. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Napoléon on the Imperial Throne*, 1806

30. *Judge's wigs on display in a shop window in London, 2007*

The writer of History is invariably 'Machiavellian' in that s/he is necessarily removed from the world that they describe while simultaneously advising a present world into which they cannot fully integrate but for which they nonetheless perform a dutiful service. We are reminded of the fable of *The Fox and the Grapes*, but equally of Freud's theory of 'Fetish'. I.e. History is always

an object denied to the historian and this stimulates the production of unfounded judgements, fantasies, regrets, and compensations. But History nevertheless dresses itself nobly on all occasions when it is likely to perform and speaks stylishy and eloquently in order to convince (the purportedly objective and academic archive is full of creative writing).

Epochs are given vicarious existence through the institution of History and its writing, but epochal History feels like thin ice. Confident claims are haunted by an aura of ignorance or fiction. Much celebrated 'research', of facts, figures and dates, get 'roped-in' to compensate for History's fundamental insecurity, shoring-up the omnipresent uncertainty that there *is* any past to Historicise. But in even the most qualified mouths, the past turns, in the event of its imparting, into a tale, and the pillars of scientificity are weakened by every local accent, evey partiality, point-of-view and rhetorical flourish. This is why we need to prepare - like Sebald, Benjamin, or those intrepid, itinerant Haiku poets addicted to Satori - to empirically record *every* and any moment as equally momentous, to accept our creativity in this matter - as we do in the case of memory - and to promote events, not only as pre-formed and selectively valued, but as themselves transvaluations of value.

Giving Form To History

> In this way the historian should no longer try to enter the past; rather, he should allow the past to enter his life.
>
> (Rolf Tiedman in Benjamim, W. 1999, 935)

A dad once asked his son 'The story or the warrior, who do you think is stronger?' 'The warrior' replied the son. 'You are wrong' said the father, 'the warrior might win a thousand battles but the story survives to tell the exploits of the warrior'.

<p style="text-align:center; color:red;">(Traditional Nigerian [relayed by Chike Chinazom])</p>

'Making History' An exhibition showcasing the Society of Antiquaries at the Royal Academy[72] reminds us of a Biblical time-frame for History which still held sway in enlightened, modernizing Europe deep into the 19th Century and working on the assumption that the world was a matter of a few thousand years old. A complicated genealogy or family tree in the same exhibition attempts to justify the reign of King Henry VI by tracing his lineage and authority back to Adam and Eve. This is hand painted in red, winding, river-like, or tree-like lines, on a textile of which only a few meters of the much longer scroll is unrolled and made visible.
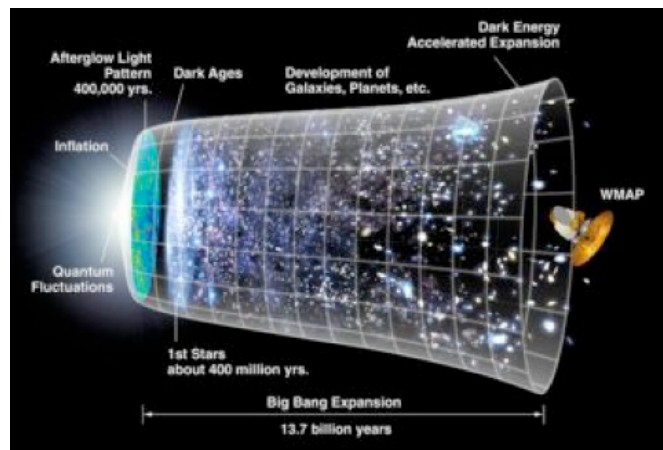
31. NASA, *Cosmic Chronology Diagram*

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[72] *Making History: Antiquaries In Britain,* 1707 - 2007 a touring exhibition, was held at London's Royal Academy 15 Sep. - 2 Dec. 2007.

A more manageable form - albeit for a much greater period of time - appears in a NASA map, using a graphic that can be usefully and easily represented in the ubiquitous 21st Century medium and context of A4 paper, or shown easily on 'Powerpoint'. Here, NASA, representing the USA, emulates Henry VI in the way that it plots a divine right, back to the big bang, while inspired formally, not by tree or river-like shapes but by something like a disposable coffee cup. What is perhaps most interesting in these examples is that what we call knowledge of time and History is changing so rapidly that it seems inherently unreliable, and, as a response to this uncertainty, every era and culture imposes form upon that time *as* History in order to gain a perspectival control which in turn awards legitimacy and justifies power.

What is true of History may well be true of art history. We can look back into art history today and see powerful individuals crafting and bending history as they go. London's Courtauld Institute displays not only prime examples of Post Impressionist painting but also the story of how Roger Fry and Samuel Courtauld, between them put the term 'Post Impressionism' on the art history map as part of a project to celebrate and establish the value of Cezanne's work (subsequently seen as pivotal in modern art history).

Anyone who has seen the above-mentioned family tree of Henry VI might agree that it bears similarities to a diagram made by Alfred H. Barr - director of the New York city Museum of Modern Art in the 1930s - as part of the scramble - partially inspired by Fry and Courtauld - to claim an understanding of the dynamically unfolding phenomenon of modern art.
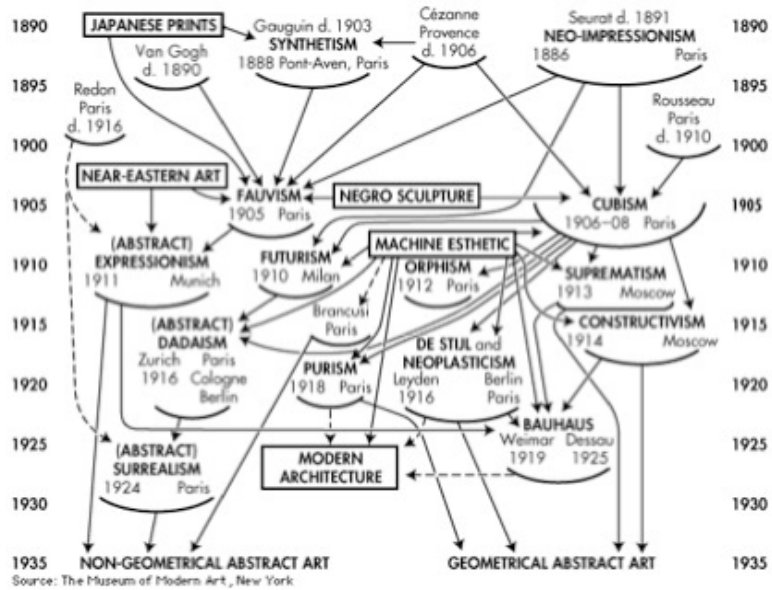
32. Alfred H. Barr, Modern Art history diagram for *Cubism and Abstract Art* catalogue, 1936

In this diagram, arrows sweep and swerve like plans for an occupation, causal connections are made as the story is woven together into a satisfying piece of knowledge. Ultimately, the dragon of uncertainty is slain by modern graphics and everything is clearly labeled by *sans serif* fonts until the nervous curator and historian can rest assured that, despite the revolutionary eruptions of modernity and modernism, everything *does have* a place and remains *in* place.

The form given by Marcel Duchamp to his own personal art history, in the forbidding years of the late 1930s with European futures in increasing doubt, is the *boite en valise* - now often considered a kind of museum or curatorial exercise. Here, Duchamp hand-made miniatures of his readymades and found appropriate ways to represent each of his varied approaches to art.

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As an eccentric pragmatist more attuned to the 20th Century's capitalist paradigm than to its opponents and alternatives, Duchamp modestly made his *oeuvre* into a selection of handy salesman's samples, ever-ready to travel lightly (as were many exiles from 1930s Europe) and potentially useful in the seduction of dealers. According to Duchamp's re-reasoning of the operations of artworks, each of these miniatures is capable of expanding, under scrutiny, and with imagination (like memory itself) back to its original scale, those primary ideas and crucial 'concepts' that give the works value, and remain despite the fact that size, craft, and materials (all rendered secondary by Duchamp's cerebral revolution) have changed. We can take this as a model of a way in which to represent History by making of it something manageably distilled into a reassuring story that we carry with us while subject to disorientation and violently changing times.[73] [74]

33. Marcel Duchamp, *Boite en Valise,* 1941

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[73] Here we also invoke the memory of the briefcase carried by Walter Benjamin in 1940 on his last journey across French mountains to the Spanish border, and which was said by Benjamin to contain documents important to history but which subsequently disappeared. See Fitko, L. In: Benjamin, W. 1999, 946 - 954)

[74] The 20th Century Freudian subject also relies upon personal history with which to form, reform, reconsider the disassembled ruptured and traumatised self.

Forming a History of Art may seem relatively benign, it might give unity to a diverse *oeuvre*, it might affect art's value or the taste of the art audience, it might make certain artists and styles prominent while obscuring others, and, at its most serious, it might promote a particular cultural or nation-al perspective at the cost of obscuring others. While Duchamp's is a self-reflexive, intimately subjective History, Barr, Fry and Courtauld - caught-up in the hot confidence of forming the burgeoning modern narrative - are perhaps unaware of just *how* selective and empowering their overarching perspectives are, and for this ignorance we might today ridicule them, or, with a quasi-Christian generosity, 'forgive them for they know not what they do'.

We can at least compare their attempts to form art history with the following image, illustrative of the anthropological art history method of the British social anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945 - 1997) and here used to refer to an increasing tendency of recent, globally-conscious, post-colonial and postmodern art histories, seeking other forms and perspectives by which to approach an understanding of art and its history more relevant to 21st Century concerns.

Figure 8.1 The triple analogy
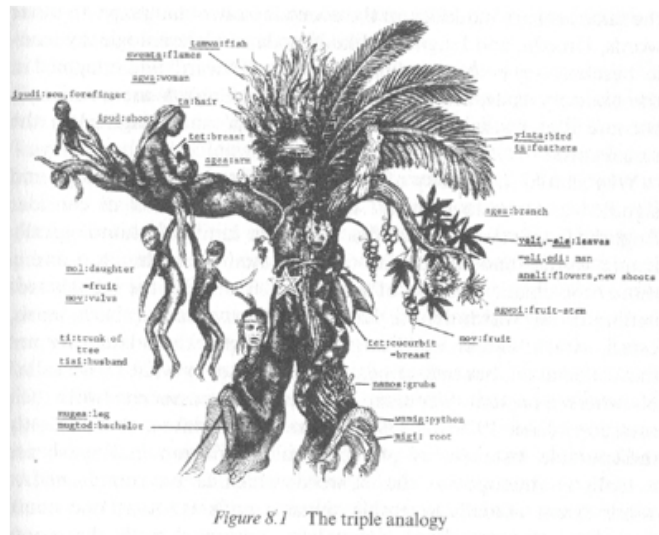
34. Alfred Gell, *The Triple Analogy*, 1999

If we turn away from art history and towards art's view of History itself, we may assume that the stakes become somewhat higher. In post- or post-postmodern times, when every phenomenon has the potential to claim a 'meta' status, to occupy a hyper-reality, and take its place within a relativism resulting from a critique of value difference, Barr's map looks slightly comic and so much less authoritative now as to appear almost arbitrary. From a feminist perspective, a post-colonial perspective, a multicultural, 'Hi-Lo' or *a*historical perspective, Barr's graphic and linear attempts to command, direct, and establish the complex narratives and relationships, appear merely local, simplistic, and defensive.

35. Simon Patterson, *The Great Bear,* 1992

Postmodern artist Simon Patterson lampooned such procedures by subverting the London Underground map and giving lines and stations to intersecting cultural categories - e.g. philosophers or Renaissance painters for one line, and famous footballers for another line - and allowing these varied historical figures to potentially encounter each other at major junctions where surprising possibilities might result from their insertion into this subverted piece of classic, modern organizational form, a form which - it is worth noting at this point - we know to be untrue, and which is yet an extremely useful representation.

To diverge further from art and to come closer to History itself we can now explore forms and History in relation to a specific cultural and national History, the History of South Africa and its recently dis-assembled apartheid regime. Since the euphoria of the early 1990s, when Nelson Mandela was released from prison, won a democratic election, and formed a forgiving 'rainbow' government incorporating all minorities, the government has come under - perhaps inevitable - criticism for the slow pace of significant social change.

However, something on which little expense has been spared - and this is *not* a criticism - is History, which pivots around two 'state-of-the-art' museums in the township of Soweto.

The Apartheid Museum and the nearby Hector Pieterson Museum tell the same history, *as* a story, and in slightly different ways, to visiting schoolchildren, local residents, visitors from Johannesburg and the rest of the country, and to travelers from all over the world increasingly interested in sites of historical trauma as tourist destinations (a phenomenon that Walter Benjamin would surely have been interested to witness and reflect upon). The Apartheid Museum gives us the whole emotive story of how the apartheid regime came into existence, of how it thrived and eventually succumbed to forces of social justice and racial equality. The Hector Pieterson Museum focuses on what might be called a turning point or fulcrum of that story. The story is extremely emotive and the Apartheid Museum is cleverly designed using a blend of Hi-Tech and Brutalism, to lead visitors up, down, around and through, dark and sometimes dismal spaces, while video recordings spark tears, anger and disbelief before offering relief and joy and comprehension as the story of a horrifying, and disturbingly recent oppression turns to one of victory and as we are delivered into the light of brighter, more open spaces by the thoughtful architecture.

In Johannesburg's currently wary and skeptical climate, a cynic might say that the museums are propagandist and heavy-handed in their formation of this History, but, given their temporal and physical proximity to the traumatic events

they describe, and the deeply-felt emotions which motivate their project, it is hard to imagine how else this story can be told - at this time at least. Nevertheless, the story is here convincingly pinned into form and into place by intelligently staged, designed, and selected, information, artifacts and tableaux.

But let's now briefly *tell* the story. It is a 'good' story in the sense that it is worth hearing, though it is a story of something bad that leads to something better, and that 'leading' *is* the story, the story that led the country from something bad to something better over a period of almost 50 years, and which the visitor now takes-in, by scrutinising and imaginatively unfolding miniaturised representations in one or two hours.

Note that the all-important story not only outlives and records the events that inspire it, but also, in some way precedes, inspires, or gives-rise-to those events i.e. we could say that it is the story that *led* the country even before the story itself was completed and formed.   What we might call the 'spirit' of the revolution, of any revolution, the spirit of necessary change, the spirit of progress, this is itself a story - albeit 'in outline', a story whose form cries out for appropriate events, content, to fill and fulfill it. In this respect we might also say that the story and all its events seem to be made for the museum rather than the other way around. We could also go further and imagine that what we call 'the world' is really just a magnificent machine made from stories and made for the purpose of making stories.

But the story of course also has independence from the state-funded museum, and remains in the mouths, hearts and minds of the people in a state of flux, which is maybe its truest and most accurate form. Like all good stories it can be told from memory and like all such stories it has been told before, and each time it is told it is a little different, a little less 'accurate', as even if the words remain the same the world in which they are spoken will have changed. The clearer the *form* of the story becomes the more convincing its contents and meaning become, and therefore we could say, like the London Underground map, a story can become increasingly useful and reliable the *less* accurate it becomes.

A policy of 'apartheid' (or 'separateness') was installed, as what the South African government, in 1947 (i.e. with knowledge of Nazi atrocities) openly referred to as a 'final solution'.[75] This justified the *de*struction of black and mixed urban communities and the *con*struction of vast suburban townships like Soweto where people were forced to live in tiny, uniform houses without electricity or any public transport other than a limited train service which could bring necessary labour into the city in the morning and then out again in the evening. There was a curfew for black people in the all-white city, and so, to not comply with this strict mechanistic schedule was dangerous and could even be fatal as many black people died mysteriously during apartheid once they found themselves in police custody.

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[75] Within the apartheid Museum exhibition a video recording of a speech being made by Mr Verwoerd during his 1947 election campaign shows that he was elected on a promise of implanting a 'final solution'.

Where black and mixed communities had previously thrived in the city, houses were bulldozed, making space to build leafy white developments with wide drives and large private houses. Meanwhile, in Soweto, every house remains today the same, or very similar, for as far as the eye can see, and consists of four walls, four small rooms, a roof and an outside toilet, all of which, from the outset of this unprecedented example of social and racial engineering, became overcrowded.

Education for blacks under apartheid was also strategically minimal, the prime minister himself stated that it should purposefully qualify black people only for 'a menial role in society',[76] there being no desire on the part of whites for blacks to be in any way mobile; i.e. neither in terms of social aspiration nor geographic location. Furthermore, when children *were* taught they were taught in the Afrikaans language of the oppressive minority - a version of Flemish or Dutch - not in English, and not in any of the many indigenous languages of the region.

In 1976, after nearly thirty years of apartheid rule, children in Soweto schools aged between eight and eighteen, requested that they be taught in English - in this way hoping to find a way to communicate with the world beyond the confining culture of apartheid. They made small, unsuccessful protests in their schools, but on the night of June 15th 1976 pupils of several schools secretly made placards for a march the following day about which they informed neither

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[76] 'They were "riots looking for a place to happen", in the words of a *Sunday Times* editorial, and stemmed from a sprit of revolt among youth which was partly rooted in their dislike of the Bantu Education system, to which Dr Verwoerd had publicly and very explicitly referred in earlier years as education for a menial place in society'. (Davenport, T.H.R & Saunders, C. 2000, 449)

their parents nor their teachers. They would march to *insist upon* being taught in English.

On the morning of 16th June, in the Soweto schools, when it was time to sing a daily hymn in the Afrikaans language, the children began singing instead a black African's song, and this was the secretly arranged signal between them that the march would indeed take place. By the end of that day, several of the children had been shot dead by the police.   Hector Pieterson, aged thirteen, was the first, or one of the first, to die. The place where he fell is now marked with a substantial monument *and* the museum named after him. The events of that day are seen as pivotal, in that this children's crusade began the newly focused and assertive struggle against apartheid which eventually resulted in South Africa being expelled from the British Commonwealth, suffering sanctions imposed by United Nations countries, and engaging in a guerrilla war with an international dimension led by the ANC who finally overcame apartheid by forcing the Afrikaans into a democratic election nearly fifty years after apartheid began and fifteen years after the children's march of June 1976.

This is the story told today in Soweto's new museums. We have re-told the story, which is just one of the many that you might hear today in South Africa, all of which are part of the one *big* story that, in one way or another no-one stops talking about or thinking about as the country searches to find its *own* form and to heal deep and bitter wounds. White Afrikaans have their own stories of course which also give form to History. Some may best be forgotten and, under the unprecedented terms of the transition of power, may also be

forgiven. But, to take just one small example that *is* perhaps worth remembering (in light, at least, of our theme here), we can make reference to a book, titled *Genealogical Register of the South African People*, published in 1966:

> … it researched the limits of the South African nation in terms of intermarriage and genealogy […] it draws a *white* limit, a racial boundary, despite the apparently inclusive term South African people. There is palpable relief in South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's preface to the book: 'That the people remained white', he marvels, 'in spite of exceptional circumstances, is […] remarkable'.

(Verwoerd, H.F. in Malherbe, D.F. du Stellenbosch in: Chipkin, I. 2007, 29 - 30)

Though its aims are repugnant and its conviction apparently deluded, this genealogy can be seen to serve the same *formal* purpose as all our other examples. This 'genealogical register', like the family tree, the Biblical history, the Nasa map, the museum's story, like Barr's diagram or Duchamp's *boite en valise,* is yet another form given to another history and designed with the intention of legitimising a present and presenting a legitimacy - even though it is based on the howling *illegitimacy* of a tiny percentage of colonizing oppressors describing themselves as '*the* South African people' and thereby insisting that everyone else in the country, *despite their indigenous heritage*, is either *not part* of its people, or simply not 'people'. Again we are reminded that inaccuracy is no bar to usefulness.

Historians must always hesitate before the responsibility and authority they wield in writing, because History is made by, and remains in, their hands. Every

History needs its form or its debate with form, a shape and style that make its contents plausible and repeatable. The apartheid museum needs its architects and designers along with the influence of numerous video and installation artists to make its stories clear and to make its points with impact. There is a level of History that is scientific, involving research and a search for objectivity, but there is also its form and the crucial art *by which it is* formed.

36. Hiraki Sawa, Detail from *Hako,* Chisenhale Gallery Installation, 2007

The forms we give to history will - it may seem from our examples - always be influenced by the empirical world, whether it be the influence of the forms of rivers or trees, of briefcases, coffee-cups or maps. We have seen how artists have played a role in influencing our perception of History by lending to it their own changing ideas of form. Here we can detail a few contemporary artists who might perpetuate this legacy. In an installation at London's Chisenhale

Gallery,[77] Hiraki Sawa used digital film techniques to break an enigmatic story into a number of sub-narratives which the viewer formed only by moving about the large room, occasionally making narrative connections via a kind of 'parallax' whereby certain, apparently disparate sub-narratives would suddenly 'line-up' or synchronise, thereby illuminating the whole.

Moreover, while each of the looped sub-narratives momentarily came to rest between loops, the physical apparatus of the screen on which they were projected was clearly referred-to by a projection of white, molded wallpaper which momentarily replaced the sub-narrative's illusions of other times and places and snapped the viewer back in to the presence and awareness of the mechanism responsible for the illusions. This adamant reminder of the event that we presently occupy and also of the practicalities behind the 'magic' created by the artist with digital film, eventually conceded once more to the return of the looped sub-narrative. While still composed of rectangles, Sawa's installation disperses and temporalises the controlling modernist grid and helps us think of the way that a kind of historicising 'parallax' invariably allows present perspectives to 'align' certain sub-narratives into an overarching narrative. Meanwhile, his work also seems to insist that, however we are caught-up in the stories that we make and tell, the here and now should never be forgotten - even if it may not yet have its own story or form within which we can lose or divert ourselves.

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[77] Held between 5th September and 14th October 2007.
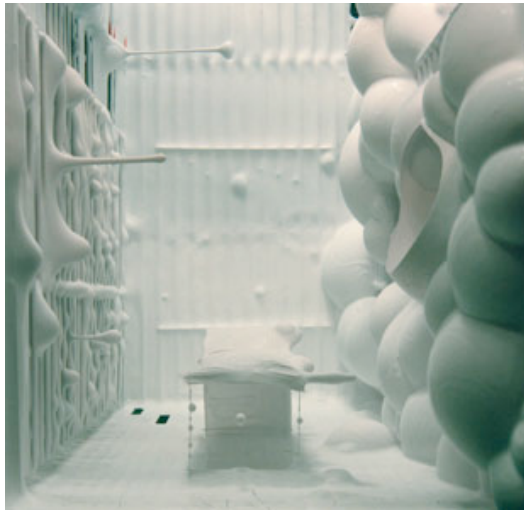
37. Saskia Olde-Wolbers, *Placebo*, 2002

The artist Saskia Olde Wolbers blatantly, yet nonetheless mysteriously, juxtaposes forms and stories in her work in a strange dialectic. The visual forms often appear abstract, complex and subject to morphological dynamics while the spoken narratives that accompany them evolve in parallel, clearly and simply, and the two offer each other an elusive, yet somehow satisfying relationship. It is as if the story offers itself to the form and the form to the story while each exists autonomously without need of the other and are here brought together almost arbitrarily by the artist as if to insist that neither element - form or story - should be complacent about its identity but should always be open and ready to be questioned by its other. In *Placebo,* 2002, the artist has used a found object which is essentially a grille or grid (a birdcage) and repeatedly immersed it in paint, filming the resulting encounter between static grid (as an *arch* form) and fluid paint (formlessness), thus also making allusion to the history of painting's surfaces, abstractions, actions, monochromes and

geometries through modernism, painting's own dialogue between 'thing' and event.

But what is most useful for our argument is that the forms Olde-Wolbers proffers - made via unexpected subversions of everyday materials - appear far more complex and mobile than any we have thus-far seen, and might therefore provide History with appropriate models to replace those outmoded by the passing of modernism and the 20th Century. The fact that Olde-Wolbers not only uses 20th Century strategies (e.g. Dada) of found or readymade objects, but also film, to present these possible forms, echoes Deleuze's reminders that new technologies, such as Cinema, give us not only new kinds of image but new possibilities and forms of thought. Here, we are claiming the same point for the possibilities of thinking History.

38. Katsushika Hokusai, *Ejiri in Suruga Province (A Sudden Gust of Wind)*, 1830 - 35

39. Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind* (*after Hokusai*), 1993

The artist Jeff Wall replays Art History's stories and links their forms to contemporary political issues. As he does so, he appears to support our implicit argument that, whereas the motive for the production of History is always political (in that it concerns the present) the forms given to History, to stories, and to events, have always been and continue to be the responsibility of art. We could say that art history will always be a history of the art of History.

40. Thomas Struth, *San Zaccaria*, 1995

The artist Thomas Struth shows how we offer our *own* forms, literally and symbolically to History by increasingly inhabiting its spectacle, as awed,

Lilliputian subjects in a way that seems anodyne compared to the conceits of Enlightenment that hoped to master History as an external object. The figures in Struth's pictures are also postmodern, differing in their perspective from the conceits of modernity that regarded History as a beast to be harnessed and steered. Today, we seem to crawl around on the dead body of this exhausted or slain monster, living out *a*historical, consumerist lives, touring the surface of History's carcass. History, no matter how unsavory, can become an aspect of leisure and pleasure, and despite the professed aims of the museum, the more we make a spectacle of History the more we diminish its reality, relevance, and relation to a present which is correspondingly diminished.

What is *not* diminished in this procedure is of course spectacle, consumerism, tourism, all of which only grow in stature by proving themselves capable of encompassing any challenge (whether from present or the past) to their monopolistic colonisation of the popular imagination.

41. Johannes Phokela, *Percussion Piece on Mount Serious*,1998

Johannes Phokela, a South African artist who grew up in Soweto in the 1970s and was thus forced to learn to read, write, and paint by candlelight, today repeatedly illuminates matters of form while re-painting and remixing those 17th Century Dutch and Flemish painters whose work shared the period in which the first Dutch and Flemish settlers began the colonial expropriations which would lead to apartheid. Phokela's work therefore 'short-circuits' History's formed narratives, refusing to allow the established perspective of Western Art History to obscure distasteful political factors which made its apotheoses possible. Instead, Phokela actively reawakens these political factors in the form of 'counter narratives' and as part of the unfinished business of a long search for justice.

The artists to whom we have referred engage with History from a non-specialist, and therefore oblique, perspective, but remind us, adamantly, that History *has been formed* and that therefore there are infinite and imaginative ways by which to *re*form History even while the purpose of every History is ultimately to clarify, not History itself (which we might say does not exist), but our present perspective on historical events.

An important point to which we have alluded above remains as yet unresolved or inadequately considered, and that is the question of the increased conviction and reliability given to History by forms that are nonetheless *in*accurate. Perhaps the best way to develop this is to shoulder responsibility for the fact that, when we speak of forms in relation to History we not only invoke the concept of 'the story' but also, in other ways, depart from any more scientific

vision of the discipline (or the disciplined vision of the science). Where we speak of form we rather speak of art that will always in some way inform any science. For example, we could consider the numerous crafted, idiosyncratic objects used over the centuries as essential to the proving of scientific hypotheses.[78] Or, the very syntax and grammar within which, and by which, scientific discoveries are made convincing when they are published.

Art, though it may flirt with ideals, is never unduly concerned with accuracy but sees its duty as finding the means by which to convince a subject, rather than aspiring to be the passive object of and for a subject. Art is therefore an attack that is a best form of defense, but in its dialogue with materials and processes, art is continuously forced to acknowledge, in a way that easily becomes self-reflexive, the inventiveness and arbitrariness of the forms it gives to ideas. In the relation of forms to History art will always be a *rhetoric* helping science to sustain - however momentarily, or enduringly - the illusion of an accurate and reliable truth that can be used to orient us within an otherwise worryingly formless environment.

This orientation allows us to proceed and perhaps even to progress, if only from one inaccurate form (and its corresponding sensation of orientation) to another. It is not therefore necessary that the forms we give to History be judged accurate or not as our present perspective must - by definition - be incongruous to the past it represents. What is crucial, and has hopefully been demonstrated

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[78] Oxford's *Museum of Scientific Instruments* provides excellent evidence of this dependent relationship of Art, Science, object and idea.

in the examples above whereby a form has been chosen and given to History, is that, in and for their time, forms utilise appropriate reference to the contemporary environment in such a way as to make whichever legitimizing History wishes to be told, sufficiently current and thereby credible.

Finally, we can use these discoveries to illuminate our broader, underlying, or parallel question regarding the writing of philosophy and our attempts to understand what is loving (*philos*) and what is convincingly wise (*sophia*).[79] Where art forms History it is clearly a rhetorical and formal device with no commitment, in itself, to truth. Nevertheless, without the form given to History by art (and even artifice), History will have no conviction, no sense of legitimacy by which to convince us of its truth. And what we say here of History is clearly applicable to the production of Philosophy in writing.

From The Promise To The Surface

> Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to *live*. What is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to adore appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words - in the whole Olympus of appearance! Those Greeks were superficial - *out of profundity*! And is not this precisely what we are coming back to, we daredevils of the spirit who have climbed the highest and most dangerous peak of current thought and looked around from up there, looked *down* from up there? Are we not just in this respect - Greeks? Worshippers of shapes, tones, words? And therefore - artists?
>
> (Nietzsche, F.W. 2001, 8 - 9)

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[79] *sophia*, throughout this dissertation, is interpreted and deployed as meaning not so much 'wisdom' but the ability, tendency, or wish *to convince and to be* convinced of the presence of wisdom. Thus, Philos - sophy becomes a love of the art of convincing while acknowledging the immeasurable increment of hesitation that lies between believing and not believing, between words and faith.

Hesitation is a 'weak power' that can be consulted at every cross-roads, a space of enhanced and expanded consideration. The human may promise, but every animal hesitates where necessity demands.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1996, 39)

Wise generals know when to be impulsive, when to *blitz*, to *krieg*, to shock and to awe, but they also know that this alone will not achieve their aim but might equally lead to humiliating defeat. The wisest general - like Fabius Maximus in his campaigns against Hannibal - and the wisest war theorist - like Sunzi (B.C. 6th cent.) or Machiavelli - know also how and when to hesitate, allowing events beyond human action to play *their* part in dispelling anxieties, healing wounds, creating a sense of expectation, or washing away the cross-roads of a decision which has hitherto maddened and exhausted a human reason myopically focused on the need to act. (Livy [B.C. 59 - A.D.17] 1965)

The Hegelian and Marxist dialectic comes with a dynamic promise now seen as stilted or compromised by the baggage of its form, but the imagination of a seer like Walter Benjamin is able to separate these and discern within the spectacle of burgeoning consumerist Parisian arcades the possibility of 'dialectics at a standstill'. Here dialectics would be rendered both un-dynamic and formless by an endlessly ricocheting competition of reflections that melt everything solid into a parade of glimpsed images whose condition *as* glimpses and *as* images becomes of greater value to Benjamin than the grand, deferred teleological visions of Marx and Hegel.

Benjamin in fact preaches immanence, a visionary politics without hesitation akin to spiritual faith and revelation. Having stripped dialectics of dynamism by a process of intra-cancellation or negative relativism, and having deprived it of its driving modern engine, Benjamin's untimely vision by-passes those contemporary Surrealist, Dada and Marxist revolutions from which he chose to stand slightly apart. But for all his idiosyncrasy he nevertheless adheres ethically to a collective conscience and to a historical consciousness. It is via a marginal, oblique and idiosyncratic perspective, refusing to be compelled by prescribed ways of seeing, thinking and believing that Benjamin is able to discern the past of modernity even as it is being born, while also attuned to an untimely immanence haunting modernity's proud belief in progress. This untimeliness - discernible, to a modern *seer* like Benjamin within the very folds of modernity - might, in accordance with Lyotard above, be modernity's inherent, 'nascent', or coexistent *postmodernity,* i.e its antithesis, *doppleganger,* or legacy, hesitating within and informing its 'identity', 'self', 'actuality' etc.

Benjamin's maneuver, in response to the forms we give to history, seems unique but it is reminiscent of an 18th Century illustration by Sir John Soane's draughtsman Gandy in which he produces, with his characteristic neo-classical fervor tinged by moody Fuselian airs, an image of the projected Bank of England, depicted as if already in ruins. It appears to be conceived from the perspective of some conquering barbaric power as yet to appear on the horizons of England, Europe, and of Capitalism itself. It even appears as if painted from the sky above London by means of some imaginary, and equally prescient, 'blimp' or reconnaissance aircraft.

42. J.M. Gandy, *Birds-eye Cut-away of Bank of England*, 1830

Strange plays occur upon encountering this image, cash Capitalism is dependent on a promise, the 'promise to pay the bearer' by the bank and the mint, and this representational apparatus at the heart of economic exchange is a mediation which Georges Bataille might say has falsely intervened, blinding us to the *General Economy* that it usurps and organizes so as to produce hegemonic, 'restricted' monopolies.[80]   But in Gandy's drawing, made for Soane - a man who plans to build the very capital of Capital and a building that will symbolize, enshrine and protect the mechanism at the heart of Capitalism - the promise is represented only as a promised ruin. This is a self-deconstruction, a strange reversal of the forms and purposes of History, a most insecure prediction of the passing of all that the Bank and its robust architecture should stand-for, supplanting a reassuring promise with an aestheticised threat.[81]

(Bataille, G. 1988)

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[80] Georges Bataille *The Accursed Share*: Volume 1.

[81] i.e. 'Aestheticised' in accordance with various Romantic, Neoclassical and Picturesque affirmations of the ruin and the fragment.

This is not *a* bank, but *the* Bank, i.e. not only *The* Bank of *England*, but *the* bank of *the* 18th Century England that is at the fulcrum of what is becoming, at this time, the largest empire the world has ever known, simultaneously at the hub and forefront of the industrial revolution. It is also the bank of the nation which, perhaps above all others, uses the unprecedented profitability of the slave trade to fund, underpin and fuel a modernity for which England will also be a leader.

<p align="right">(Williams, E. [1911 - 1981] 1994)
(Blackburn, R. [b.1940] 1997)</p>

What we have referred to as Gandy's Romantic and Neoclassical aestheticisation of the fragment has here overrun every functional consideration of representing reassurance and resilience, and the artist's pleasure appears to have engulfed all his other responsibilities. Nevertheless, the image reminds us that the particular economic system referred to is a temporary construct, and fundamentally virtual. The promise on a banknote is a deferral, a hesitation more significant than the 'thing' itself.[82] The promise exploits an underlying and denied insecurity which arises from our immanent, wayward, un-representable momentum, our formless temporality, which, once realistically confronted, is capable of diverting our convictions and turning our attentions away from government and other institutions of power, all of which are diminished by profound consideration of the passage of time.

As represented by Gandy's drawing, Capitalism no longer promises anything other than its own eventual destruction by some subsequent force or other economy. The image therefore disables the dialectical form inhabited by

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[82] A colloquial phrase asserts that a banknote or cheque can be 'not worth the paper it is written on'.

Marxism by inverting the promise of Capital into the warning of its eventual passage. Perhaps, in some misguided way, Gandy is here inviting us to have some more sympathetic, even sentimental relationship with Capital, as we might with the ruins of some classical villa or temple. If so he is nevertheless emulating Marx in literally opening up the workings of capital for our inspection (the purpose of the drawing is of course not only artful but also useful to explicate and execute the projected design).

When Benjamin spoke of 'dialectics at a standstill' he refused the fundamental deferral, the essential teleology of Marxism, supplanting it with the empirical and immanent 'images' experienced by the self-reflexive thinker. Gandy seems here to have pre-empted that approach, giving us the past, present and future of modern Capital in one instant and one image, given us its end, represented even before its birth, so that its promise is always allied with the destruction which will accompany its heyday.

Modernity lives in hope, suspended in promises, turning the passage of time from a haunting terror into a spirit that is conveniently humanised - i.e. teleology. The Gothic cathedral covered its Western façade with designs intended to ward off the evil West where the sunset would bring on the horrible uncertainties of night, but by the time we reach Hegel the dusk has become the moment when wisdom appears, and the end of the day becomes a symbol that all ends might be something to look forward to as a moment of realisation.

In the violent heart of modernity some festering impatience and all-too-human clamor refuses all such promises and demands their deliverance, impatiently calling for their concret-isation, so that time itself is forced to endure threats on its life. The modern ideal of 'killing time' is discernible, not only in essays on boredom,[83] and not only in Walter Benjamin's *Thesis On The Philosophy Of History* where revolutionaries, apparently in symbolic contradiction of their progressive aims, shoot-out the faces of clocks across a warring city, but also in the self-reflexivity of a modern art-for-art's sake and the path to abstract painting which inspires the artist to press worldly time out of the 'things' and events of art, leaving only pure, formal values enshrined in concrete icons of modernity's secular faith.   (Benjamin, W. 1969, 262)
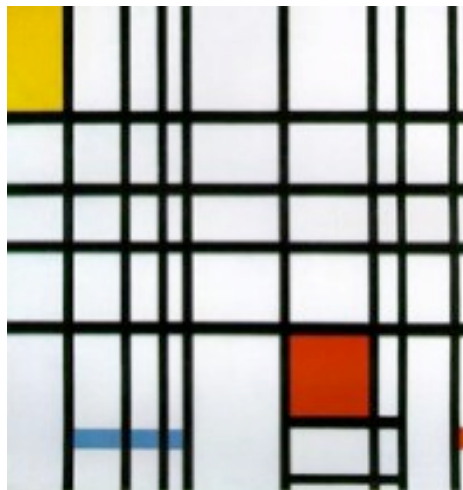
43. Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red*, 1921

Remember that a picture - before being a war-horse or a nude or a genre scene - is primarily a flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain order.

(Denis, M. in Harrison, C. and Wood, P. 1998, 863)

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[83] Such as that written by Siegfried Kracauer in 1924. See (Cazeaux, C. 2000, 301 - 04)

Encouraged by modernist axioms like this famous statement made by Maurice Denis, Mondrian's own 'cancellations' aimed - according to his colleague Theo van Doesburg (1883 - 1931) to reductively rid painting of 'fairy tales', 'narratives', as if to return (as Malevich claimed) the painting and the viewer to its surface.

> The visual artist can leave the repetition of stories, fairy-tales, etc. to poets and writers.
>
> (van Doesburg, T. in Harrison, C. and Wood, P. 1994, 280) (Malevich, K. *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting* in Harrison and Wood 1994,174)

Similarly, Samuel Beckett's succinct, blocked prose is ruthlessly purged of habitual narrative charms and decorations as if in search of a writing and speech that is honestly aware of its materiality and frankly bemused by its responsibility to maintain meaning while unjustly abandoned by God, and left waiting while modernity's promise materialises as a disaster. In Beckett every word becomes a kind of oath, simultaneously curt, expletive, but also divine - in the most modern, ultra-secular sense. Similarly, the words of Mallarmé or e.e. cummings appear to rise to the surface of their pages only to hesitate there at the threshold of a transaction of meaning as if no longer trusting of their modern masters. They conspire to keep their value and meaning to themselves, adamantly retaining some sovereignty in an all-too utilitarian milieu where they are wary of being misused.

For modernism, the finished text or painting becomes the one that has lost its thread, explored its depths, woven its fabrics, made internal cancellations, only to return, without looking back, to become again the surface whose sovereignty requires that it be henceforth respected and no longer changed; whose sovereignty requires that it be excused the indignity of further transformation, and in *this* way it professes itself to be exceptional, excellent, embodying a modern manifestation of the transcendent value and purpose of art.

If Mondrian or Beckett are not enough then Lucio Fontana steps in to make the final gesture of modernism, graphically slashing the unpainted painting, ensuring that there is nothing other than surface matters to attend to, insisting that the 'thing' is an event, and inviting no possibility of progress, development, improvement, or correction. Here, the modern engine is distilled into a punctuation, now you can continue to paint (perhaps like On Kawara, merely counting the days) but it will *no longer* be modern.

44. Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept Waiting*, 1960

In a postmodern, post Warhol-ian (1928 - 1987), post-Baudrillard-ian[84] vision of culture as simulacra and celebrity, the surface remains as the focus of artists and writers, albeit now relieved of its aspirations to enshrine any transcendental meaning. During the brief reign of postmodernism the surface first emulated TV, becoming a sacrificial screen towards which eclectic content is fatally attracted, only to find, like every TV celebrity, it was invited there only to confess to a profound lack of meaning before painting 'gave up the ghost' (the 'spirit' of a transcendent meaning) and entered an era in which art retained its price and increased its visibility but had even great difficulty locating its value.

History Writing As Memory

According to Kafka's *In The Penal Colony* a life in writing is a death *by* writing. Whoever is brave or unfortunate enough to concede to the temptation to represent and to thereby defy God or establishment by presuming to change and contribute to a variety of perspectives, is destined to die by the same 'sword' by which they have lived. *In The Penal Colony* shows us that time and guilt can never be represented, mastered, known, without giving ourselves over and into them, sacrificing ourselves fully to art in order to become a conduit between art and world.

As Bergson also insisted, just as it is folly to incrementalise the nuances of time for our utilitarian convenience, we cannot 'analyse' but must 'intuit' a world that

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[84] Re. Baudrillard, J. (1929 - 2007)

can never be mastered. In becoming the world we accept losing ourselves, accept breaking our own skin, giving ourselves away in exchange for a greater intimacy with, and corresponding ability to represent, experience.

History is materialised, not by Marx, but by Bergson, Proust, Sebald, Benjamin, all of whom remind us that past-present-future is a material continuum and not incrementally separated. As such they are one-in-the- other, sharing one another's concerns. History has changed for us, into a constant presence and into the irrepressible disrupter of presence. That presence is thus rendered untimely, by Bergson and Proust, then by Benjamin, and more recently in the works of W.G. Sebald. The rhetoric of History's epochal progress, the anthropomorphic image of its self-motivated momentum and apparent death-wish derives from voices like Hegel, Marx, Fukuyama, all of whom are deconstructed by Derrida's critique.

But should we invest today in any spirit of History that might yet lead 'the people' and might promise a way comparable to that dynamic futurity represented by Delacroix's 'Liberty', in which a lingering neo-classical ideal persists amid a racy Realist / Romantic milieu? Even when its vitality is denied, its end or its rebirth proclaimed, History is appropriated as a political weapon. History evolved in response to the waning of an all-too-local god and with the legitimising purpose of keeping emergent mass culture from going 'off the rails' - albeit mass culture which nevertheless found itself 'railroaded' into inescapably tragic conclusions, the outcome of which called for History's head to join those of god and king in the executioner's basket. History therefore came into being

as a political weapon, and History can still be used today as a grandiose rhetorical ideal inhabited by whomsoever chooses to audaciously wave it over the mass.[85]

We may still desire the orientating form offered by History, but are wary of its ideal, thus we require the more empirical and immanent model offered by memory, memory as other than History, memory as preceding and following after History, memory that remembers History. A *writing* that emphasizes and prioritises its own event, by means of a 'History writing', and which hesitates before the presumption of 'writing History', searches continuously within itself for its conviction, for a thought that will *run*, like a benign virus, throughout the evolving text, switching and shaping its array of nervously related events into a more coherent and resilient display.

The writer is searching for conviction, not presuming legitimation, conviction is sought after, in gambles and hunches that fly from the fingers almost as fast as from the tongue, without adequate time in which to measure their source, value or legitimacy. The writer might productively compare an evolving page with the live field of speech but might also de-differentiate it from the passage of life. The page becomes a time as much as a place when writing becomes a 'here and now' in a performative declaration. Unlike life, however, the page is an event in which we have the luxury of re-writing, correcting mistakes, even if we are unable to fully eradicate the memory of those mistakes.

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[85]   U.S President George W. Bush made a statement regarding 9/11 to the effect that it was an event that had reanimated History: 'History is moving' - thus legitimising the war which ensued.

Mass Literacy

If democracy is born with mass literacy, and History is born with and ultimately for the mass, then today we have to contemplate recent technology as a new form of mass literacy whereby (paraphrasing and developing Walter Benjamin) not only is an author a kind of producer, and not only does a media today invite readers to participate, but we can confront a scenario in which every reader is also a producer. 'Mass literacy' is not the right term for this phenomenon, and the industrial phrase 'mass production' would also be misleading.   The profession of writer, and the reader/writer relationship, begin to break-down and merge into state of affairs like that described by Benjamin in the conclusion to *The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction.* i.e. the hieratic, sacred status of the individuated writer (surely a privileged bourgeois bastion and perspective) loses its aura to the greater aura of a mass writing and reading; a non-professional proliferation of authorless texts; of disembodied, anonymous and virtual texts produced by avatars etc, the collective aura of which would be appreciated by Benjamin, as they arise, not from an achievement of uniqueness and specialism, but from a potential political potency, a latency, and from a need for every one of the unspoken and unspeakable to speak.

Technology has produced a new sense of infinity, not of space or time but of their conflation in memory. In this formless infinity of manufactured memory, participants contribute to an incomplete and formless archive. The technology of the book literally and physically gives form and weight to experience,

representing life and making it manageably meaningful but present technology is able to make a literature from the apparently trivial characteristics of any and every life, and, at the microns-thin interface of the screen, poised between production and memory, is able to establish, not a 'thing' (book) but a presence (event), in a 'live' field (e.g. blog). Writing today is *live* in a sense similar to that first emphasised by televisual technology which privileges *live*, instantaneous broadcast over archived or repeated broadcasts. Meanwhile, the fact that writing (which underpins reality, law, History etc. within legitimating and authoritative texts) becomes 'live' means that life itself shifts from the ontological and real mode to the eventful and simulacral i.e. life itself becomes *live* with a correspondingly *live* idea of justice, morality, society etc.

Memory Writing

What is remarkable about the computer and its screen compared with prior technologies of writing, is that it is neither a space nor a time, but a *memory*, a visible field *made* of memory, memory itself made visible, malleable (if not tangible). This renders the dual, overarching, gods of 'time' and 'space' false or anachronistic co-ordinates, while affirming and confirming thoughts of Bergson, Proust, Deleuze, and of Derrida's *Plato's Pharmacy,* by leading us to consider the privilege of writing *as* memory (not *for* memory)*.* Writing, as *essentially* memory, made of memory, proffers different challenges to its own understanding, and invites interpretations that go beyond consideration of the degree to which it might be transcendent or concrete.

Technology measures our writing *as* non-extensive, the computer's technology has led us to participate in the materialisation of such Proustian / Bergsonian promises of modernity, not as heroic experimenters but as everyday, utilitarian beneficiaries. We are not writing onto a page but into a memory, and our History writing is no-longer initiated in and by worldly matters of ink and paper. Rather than History inscribed, memory is increasingly merely memorised. How might this affect what and how we write? And what might be the impact of that writing on the memory it aims to write?

The title of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* must today haunt us, prodding us to speculate on just what this relationship could be. It is possible that the virtual means of writing we have discussed allows us in turn, to consider the world as also composed of memory and not of space and time. If so, then our writing and our world do not have to travel far in order to meet and to concur. Writing (as memory) will be writing the world (as also memory). Bergson's championing of 'intuition' over 'analysis' here also supports our attempt to produce an immanent rather than transcendent text.

We might even say that we are no-longer involved in re-presentation but only in a 'live field' of event-uality in which 'things' concede to their event-hood, and where events *persist* rather than 'exist'. The Oxford dictionary (1933, reprinted 1969) notes as "remarkable" the fact that 'exist', which means to 'stand-out', appears "late" i.e. it does not appear in Cooper's dictionary of 1565. This at least gives us a precedent, that, as we have not always 'existed' we need not necessarily continue to do so but have the freedom to create a difference or

neologism which better describes our experience and eschews the legacy of an existentialism. We persist as a memory persists, experientially, i.e. *for*-standing, *by*-standing, *through*-standing, but not necessarily *standing out* (ex-isting). The world *persists* even when it does not *ex*ist, just as we, *qua* memories, persist, in life or death, whether in or out of this world. Memories persist and appear as they are called upon, then shuffle back, stored beyond appearance. This sounds like experience itself, immanent and devoid of ideals. The virtual, though it persists, does not 'stand out', doesn't take up space or assert itself in the world; nor does memory, despite the fact that it constitutes and means so much.

Our aim to come to some agreement between our History writing and the media with which it is produced, may here become realised along with a particularly honest assimilation of form and content which is ultimately other than a modernist self-reflexivity. Persistence is a far better model for us than 'existence', better for our writing and for our world *qua* memory. A kind of spirituality graces our paradigm once we privilege memory thus, as we whisper in and out of appearance, in and out of experience and eventuality, rather than claiming territorially to exist in some obtrusive or *ex*trusive form.

An Age Of Memory

The relative value of that which exists or persists can be explored with reference to Yukio Mishima's novel *The Temple of The Golden Pavilion*.

(Mishima, Y. 2001)

45. Temple of the Golden Pavilion (*Kinkaku-Ji*)

In this novel, based on a true story, a young, stuttering novice is given the duty of caretaker for *Kinkaku-ji, The Golden Pavilion*, one of Buddhism's and the nation's most treasured objects. When American soldiers begin to treat the temple disrespectfully during their post-war occupation, the infuriated novice, afflicted by stuttering and having no recourse to any adequate means of expression, burns the temple down, with the aim, not of merely destroying it out of rage or spite, but of retrieving and maintaining its sacredness, which persists, in spirit and in memory, while the profaned object is sacrificed to this aim.[86]

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[86] A comparable event occurred in Seoul, Korea, February 2008, when a disgruntled man immolated *'Nam Dae Mun'*, a highly revered, ancient wooden structure standing among the skyscrapers of the rapidly globalised city.

In a 'live field' we participate in one another's events, 'one in the other', and, while History is not dead (in the reactionary sense once promoted by Fukuyama) History is transformed into something more Benjaminian i.e. a constant participation within the 'weak power' of an everyday messianism and a messianism of the everyday.

Today, the ineradicable blood on the hands of Lady Macbeth (here drawing on Kurosawa's film adaptation) graphically confronts us with an image of the spiritual and philosophical legacy of modern technologies of destruction and extermination which we continue to try to assimilate or sublimate via the writing of History, in and as memory, and by way of building museums which utilise further, new technologies in attempts to integrate past with present.

Since the discovery or invention of photography and sound recordings, we have known the possibility of living, not *for* history but *as* history, as memory, and as memories. Something peculiar to these modes of representation; these modes of mechanical reproduction forever shifted our relationship to time, memory and to self, and it was *these* factors, not so much that of mere photographic verity, which challenged the arts to produce a modern response.

The idiosyncrasy of this cultural shift lies in the unprecedented conflation of Scientific knowledge with 'magical' artistry, or, the retention of visual and sonic images utilising mechanical and chemical means. The same strange conflation of modernity and animism occurs in Freud's modern science of Psycho-analysis as well as in post-Impressionist artists and their search within so-called primitive

cultures for a trajectory which could not be discovered *within* modernity but only beyond or before it. Modernity, it seems, is born of this uncomfortable conflation.

But at the heart of the matter lies the ability or desire to remember accurately and reproduce precisely. This is, of course, common to all modern machinic mass productions - e.g. textiles or sound recordings - while again we are invoking both photography and psychoanalysis. Once we remember and reproduce precisely, we appear to challenge and intimidate the progression, passage and momentum of time itself, hence the 'uncanny' evocation of the automaton in Freud's insightful theory. What we fear in the automaton is that time's passage - which is truly beguiling, sublime, relentless and unnerving - may have a worthy, worldly opponent, some deathly antithesis.

Much as we would wish to stop time, rescuing ourselves, our loved ones, and our happiness from passing and death, we suspect that to do so would only be to enter death's realm via another door and that to defy or deny passage is always to defy or deny life. Nevertheless, modern technologies, fuelled by use and novelty, and despite their apparent morbidity, succeed and proliferate exponentially, filling the world with challenges to nature, arrests, replays, morbid clones, and alternatives to the natural passage of time.

Their postmodern manifestation (perhaps their apotheosis) is the digital realm of computing, which can today accommodate the majority of our productions and communications as and in virtual memory. Today, when we make a digital

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photograph, sound recording, or PhD thesis, it is 'made' (in as much as we can call it that) *of* memory, memory that has become both a material and an economy. The *early* photographs or sound recordings, unlike the printing technologies that preceded them, and unlike the digital technologies that followed, were primarily *indexical* records, inscriptions and chemical traces. If hesitation sets us momentarily (never wholly or permanently) apart from the world and its passage, allowing another way to emerge, we can see that these technological reproductions operate in a similar way. They are alternatives to reality, gateways to abandoned possibilities, set apart (photography is an art of omissions) and setting us apart, making our path a different path. When we return to the early photograph what beguiles us is the alternative possibilities it suggests, we stare into a missed opportunity and see the infinite number of alternative paths suggested by, and pregnant within every arrested passage. Meanwhile we are convinced by the undeniability of that indexical record, of some new arbitrariness in the world.

Digital images do not seem to have the same quality, the same relation between experience and representation, perhaps because they do not stand apart from time and the world in the same way, neither standing out (*ex*isting) nor *in*scribing themselves, but standing *for* (*per*sisting) along with experience, along *with* the world, persisting *as* memory (not as images of memories), as do both the living and the dead. We can go farther, we have already done so, and even claim that digital photographs are *not* images, they are nothing but memory, but that they are not memory *of* the world and experience (if only because the world and experience are also memory), they are *for* the world as

the world is *for* them. Similarly, I am *for* the world as the world is *for* me, *per*sisting not *ex*isting, a hesitation that we call 'life' and 'self', and that keeps us merely temporarily apart from all that is other.

Technology has only led us from death masks to death via a photography which unnerved drawing by supplanting one form of representation with one which is more immediate, which cut out the 'middle man' of the hand, and, to a certain extent, cut out the psychological subject. Now, digital photography has the same effect upon traditional or chemical photography, supplanting its supremacy, moving closer to an immediacy whose ultimate aim must be to surpass images altogether, to overcome the hesitation that is every image.

But the importance for our writing here lies in the fact that the computer's screen is clearly also a legacy of photography, and so here, now, writing is, in its turn, subsumed by, conflated by, and conscripted into photography. At its invention, photography took its name from a conflation of a scientific understanding of light and the technology of drawing, but today we could justifiably claim a new name for our writing that is a kind of photography. Just as Derrida gave us the name *Grammatology* for an alternative to ontology that invites and assumes the profundity and centrality - for a certain age - of the human facility of writing, so the light-writing or light-drawing we describe and pursue here results in a writing-light, a *Grammalux* (Cadava calls it *Words of Light*) or *Grammaluxology.*

If digital photographs are *not* images, what shall we say of this digital writing, this illuminated event, this *Grammaluxology*? That it does not have the representative function of History but only the immanence of memory to memory ('like water in water' as Bataille once said)[87]. Digital writing is *live,* not an indexical trace or inscription. At least, writing is henceforth aware of its *liveness*, changed by its potential to be written while simultaneously distributed and disseminated.

Words And History

The 'machine wars' that have taken place since mechanically reproductive technologies appeared have attempted to contain and direct the newly disturbed consciousness arising from these technologies and processes; thus we have witnessed wars between the idea of living *for* History and the idea of living *as* History; wars between reality and memory; between History and Memory; the power of what is and what has been, clashing with the power of what can or will be; the power of one convincing reality supplanting another. As Simon Schama says above of the clash in the 2008 U.S Presidential election, one side might favour the image while the other favours the word, even in an age when the word seems assimilated as just another image and has lost its hieratic and legal exception or transcendent position. Mechanical reproduction comes to effectively supplant reality with simulation but also History with

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[87] 'In a sense, the world is still, in a fundamental way, immanence without a clear limit (an indistinct flow of being into being - one thinks of the unstable presence of water in water).' (Bataille, G. 1989, 33)

memory, and any art primarily concerned with reality becomes anachronistic by comparison with an art of memory.

We are not only talking of the visual arts but include the art of music and the art of philosophy, all of which are similarly affected by the same technologies. Philosophy follows the same path as painting in that, up until the late 19th Century and since the Humanist Renaissance, it is distracted by truth as a kind of Realism but diverted -by modern questions arising from technologies- into more self-reflexive and materialist considerations which risk undermining its own purposes and methods.

When Heidegger addresses the metaphysical question of Being for the 20th Century it is significant that he does so as a 'revival', and as if going against the grain of contemporary thought. Despite the radicalism of Heidegger, he is also conservative, 'rescuing' philosophy from the eventual and temporal questions that threaten or promise to undermine its privileged position as representative of human experience.

Nevertheless Heidegger comes to concede (as we do here) to the less palatable truth that technology - at least as much as language - has been conducting human affairs for us and will continue to do so. Derrida implies as much through the *Pharmakon* essay concerning the invention of writing, and through the allied claim to a *Grammatology*, displacing the conceit of the author along with the presumptions of written philosophy. Heidegger, Barthes, Derrida all accept that technology separates both author and philosophy from what they

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might prefer to maintain as 'selves', and this, of course, is post-human philosophy, the perpetuation of a love and a conviction that persists in full awareness of, in close proximity with, unwise and loveless applications of the very same technology by which this philosophy is produced.

Derrida has shown us that writing has always provided this contradictory role in being a technology that both aids and threatens memory. As we are today writing 'words of light' we might fear that we are also 'playing with fire', as we produce with a material that not only aids / threatens memory but which *is* memory. At this point we should also look back and consider whether this was not *always* the case, and whether we are *not* in fact discussing new or 20ᵗʰ Century technologies here but technology *per se*, i.e. writing has perhaps always been made of memory in the way we ascribe to the computer, and that technology - any prosthetic enhancement or extension of human ability - is by definition a kind of memory of a prior human ability or limitation that it always promises to aid while threatening to make redundant e.g. -one might think of a humble walking stick in this regard.

That is to say that we cannot look for 'memory itself' but only its manifestations and incarnations. The walking stick is a memory of the leg, the car a memory of the horse, the pen a memory of finger and sand. We find glimpses of this condition in any writing that is steeped in memory, aware of its technology, manufacture, and its moment, conscious of the profound deconstruction that memory sets-off whenever it encounters attempts to form the formlessness of passage. We find it in the writing of Proust, of W.G. Sebald, or in the pains

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taken by Nietzsche to distance his thought from all-too- 'timely' habits of representation. It allows these thinkers' projects to be hurled, as from within, by disruptive considerations of passage and by fundamental disturbance to structured, causal reasoning. In Nietzsche, the future is a trajectory of return, belief in an event which *is* a return and which will always be accessible at the appropriate level or quality of thought. Such disorienting deconstructions of linear temporal form ask us to confront our untimely passing, leaving us to affirm experience and justify the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, intuited, sensual, immanent; immediate; as opposed to cerebral, analysed, representative and *thereby* transcendent.

Today, History is not at an end but becomes indiscernible from the surroundings of a culture that has evolved its perceptions and identities hand-in-hand with recording devices. The artist Andy Warhol can be said to be a spokesman for the postmodern, post WW2 world, if only in consideration of the fact that he constantly carried a tape recorder and referred to it as his 'wife'.[88] He thereby illustrated, that, in his time, the record becomes our 'handmaiden', a constant and crucial prosthetic extension of human capacity in the direction of memory.

If modernity's significant prosthetics extend human capacity in terms of height and speed - resulting in skyscrapers, aerial bombardment and killing machines - we also attempt to anticipate the trajectory of our current exponentially

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[88] 'Warhol acquired his first tape recorder (a reel to reel) in the mid 50s. In the summer of 1965 he engineered a deal with Norelco to acquire one of their cassette audio recorders. This acquisition began his relationships with faithful machines that were both surrogates and mediators. He referred to the tape recorder as his 'wife' and quipped that 'when I say "we" I mean my tape recorder and me'. He declared that his tape recorder finished whatever emotional life he had; an interesting problem 'was an interesting tape'. (Wainwright, J. 2002 [Internet])

multiplying ability to store and to recall? Along with this capacity comes a moral implication, as every act that takes place within a live field (and always 'for the record') requires heightened consideration of its consequences. We might hesitate more often or more profoundly today, simply because technologies have increased our self-awareness of our acts and their consequences. The recorded memory is not only that of an individual conscience, a soul; and not only that of the modern state apparatus, but becomes global and approximates holistic notions of karma within which all things are interdependent *and therefore intrinsically ethical*. If art and the word once provided 'the record', and served, first religious society then secular modernity, today these no longer simply refer to representative institutions but self-serve the writers and artists who use them. Art is no longer a record, it is always an event. Thus, the tourists in Thomas Struth's photographs are contained, by photography, within a shared event, the event of the cathedral, museum, painting etc. Photography is *not* the 'museum without walls' but the paradigm which produces all as events, within events, one-in-the-other, not extensively distinguished but temporally coinciding.   (Malraux, André, 1952)

Rather than storing up moral credits in a deferred heaven, today we constantly save ourselves every time we 'save' our documents and files, we record everything that might otherwise be lost and indulge in a past as recent as immediate replay of any and every event. History thus catches up and matches pace with us, becoming as near as possible to a confusion with the present. Meanwhile morality's temporal dependency on past and future actions approaches an immanent relationship with the present, we begin to feel the

need for an 'instant karma' to supplant a system of deferred justice.[89] We begin

to feel the need for faith again, for faiths, for disorganised religions, reflecting

both our extreme secularism and our passionate disorientation.

The present persists, as a blind spot, and anything immanent with the present

will also dis-appear, not 'standing out' or existing, but becoming a concurrent

aspect of experience; standing-*for*, standing-*by*, standing-*through*, not as a thing

but as a flow within flows, 'like water in water' [90]

<div align="right">(Bataille, G. 1989, 24)</div>

The re-presentational schema gives way to an immanent milieu or scenario,

and our attempt to write History at the level of philosophy ceases to be 'about' in

terms of an external object, and becomes 'about' only in terms of inversion,

enfolding, or proximity. We continue to write 'about' hesitation, 'about' things,

about History and philosophy, but not as external objects, rather as shared

flows and events, internal and concurrent, around and about, us and them. We

lose point of view and become embroiled in what we believed to be *our*

mechanism, like Kafka's victim in *In The Penal Colony,* written by our writing,

written into our writing, written to death. Even the self-other ethical relationship

(*a la* Levinas) dissipates once we think truly event-ually in terms of non-

extensity and in terms of events which persist rather than *ex*ist, as one-in-the-

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[89] In the Stephen Spielberg film production *Minority Report* (2002), amid a dystopian, post - 9/11, paranoid milieu, police use a mix of technology and supernaturally gifted human psychics / oracles to predict crimes before they occur and arrest thieves, rapists, murderers etc. before they commit their crime. Though this might be a dream scenario for a totalitarianism that goes beyond the 'zero tolerance' campaigns used in American cities in the 1990s, it is of course, not we have in mind here.

[90] Again Bataille uses the comparison: 'In reality, we are incapable of basing ourselves on unstable coagulations and we must confine ourselves to regarding animality, from the outside, in the light of an absence of transcendence. Unavoidably, in our eyes, the animal is in the world like water in water.'

other, producing immanent ethics, instant karma, dissolving the temporal element, the inbuilt hesitations of morality.

FAITH

Divine life is immediate, whereas knowledge is an operation that requires suspension and waiting.

(Bataille, G. 1989, 98)

The Lost 'I'

> With my instinctive cunning, I here too avoided the little
> word 'I'
>
> (Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 94)

The hands of every would-be solipsist, when writing, extend a greeting.

Descartes, while speaking in supposedly empty rooms, and yet to others (so

many are present there and then), stages the scene of writing, and is - like

Machiavelli - dressed to think.

> But I immediately realized that, though I wanted to think that
> everything was false, it was necessary that the 'me' who was
> doing the thinking was something; and noticing that this truth -- I
> think, therefore I am - was so certain and sure that all the
> wildest suppositions of skeptics could not shake it, I judged that
> I could unhesitatingly accept it as the first principle of the
> philosophy for which I was seeking.
>
> (Brians, P. trans. 1998 [Internet])
> *René Descartes: Discourse on Method*, 1637

Descartes' 'I am' is always a 'we', and his 'thinking' a collective expression.

Descartes' 'I' speaks the habits of self-analysis as a classical model inherited

and cultured. Descartes' 'I' is the voice of centuries, spoken for centuries full of

listeners, to whom, with whom, he hopes to speak by achieving posterity.

His presumptuous, classical, "unhesitating" 'I' persists for centuries, until

succumbing to psychologist fragmentation, then being incinerated in Hiroshima

and Auschwitz. We see its final form in the gangly art of Giacometti, whose

thin, post WW2, 'I' - like figures, illustrate the existential *weltanschauung* of their time as a last rasping gasp of a solipsistic tradition.

46. Alberto Giacometti, *Woman of Venice IX (Femme de Venise IX)*, 1956; cast 1958

Subsequently, the baton of philosophy, the task of upholding the conviction of a loving ability to convince or convincing ability to love, is handed to the other, to I's antithesis, as anti-philosophy,[91] and as a challenge to all writing by and of the 'I'. Thus, today, we wrangle with the challenge and possibility of writing a writing of the other. It is not a task that each leaves to the other but one that is performed *for* the other. Meanwhile that other is, by definition, undefined.

Descartes *senses* conviction but reasons that he reasons it, and thus for him is truth staged. He impulsively invites the complicity and confirmation of the other

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[91] A term used by post-structuralists but coined earlier by the anti-war Dadaist Tristan Tzara [1896-1963] in his *Lampisteries*. (Tzara, T. 1977)

who is truly an alterity and who will always wait, ridiculing every impulse to bridge or to connect. The conviction of both reader and writer is contingent upon numerous atmospheric factors. What we call the text (as thing) is really an event conjured out of particular encounters, plural *rendezvous'* that place it beyond any consistent valuation, identity or ontology. The voice of the other's ear, the voice of the ear of others, de-legitimses that impulsive Cartesian 'therefore' that rushes to bridge the chasm between thinking and being.

Meanwhile, who is writing? Who can use this bridge, this impulsive 'therefore', with any faith? Who can use it without feeling immediately full of the particular brand of pride that precedes a fall? Only the same non-empiricist who will also fall for every 'because'.

You are here, now, are you not? 'I' was never alone. 'I', in fact, *was* never; never in fact nor intact (*sic*), 'I' was never a 'thing', nor was it me nor mine, only this hesitation, never a whole, only a wish-to-be, a would-be, the fantasy of a solitude, a dreamed-of solipsism*,* necessarily half-hearted until completed by you, the other. On an island that promises only returns 'I' is a manifestation of a dreamed-of irresponsibility and immorality, the dream of a deskbound island-life, a castaway inadvertently and unconsciously inscribing the footprints of the other; footprints out of which no lesser an authority than the *Vedas* say, writing was born.[92]

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[92] '[…] when the ancient Dawns rose the great Syllable (*mahed aksaram)* was born in the footprint of the Cow'. 'Footprint' is a translation of *pada,* a key word in the enigmatic lexicon of which Rgveda is woven, and it means 'foot', 'paw', or even 'limb, articulation' of a line of verse, and finally 'step' or 'footprint'. (Calasso, R. 2001, 156)

'I' leaves the baited hook for others to bite, 'I' drops the shoe that others will fit, 'I' is a gait as much as any other form of appearance or trace, and here, the meter of our verse meets that of our thoughts, that of our writing, where our hand - that ancient, reaching paw - meets the world and leaves its trace, thus pleading to be I.

Blind Faith

Writing ventures into space, seeking to make a mark that is comprehensible against the backdrop of that which precedes it. Every sentence needs its space and avoids a pile-up of mutually deforming palimpsests by shuffling along, colonizing new space. Just as the painter Uccello is said to have been so overcome by the techniques of perspective that he resisted his wife's calls while expressing wonder at his new technology, so we might remain obsessed and beguiled by the means and possibilities of writing - this most plastic of arts - and the hope it gives us of registering a point of view.

Writing pursues paths which are our own and yet also those of every other writer coming before and after us. The playwright Dennis Potter (1935-1994) artfully confused life and writing in his last works *Karaoke* & *Cold Lazarus* and there compared identity to Karaoke. He used this technological, pop-cultural diversion as an image through which to suggest (noticeably *in the spirit of music*) that much of identity is already written for us, though we are left with the dignity of being allowed to at least attempt to perform, as best we can, those

traits we continue to treasure and transmit as a recognised and recognisable individual. (Potter, D. 1996)

Meanwhile, that unknowable other, that 'ear' for whom we are performing, dictates our path. Both writing and the self, both the self of writing and the writing of the self, must aim, not to achieve and discover, but to get lost, and only thus, by becoming other, reach and be heard by the other. Just as the tongue automatically and imperceptibly shapes and reshapes itself in a dance of pulsed enervations that help to shape our *persona* so writing feeds upon familiar material as the nib appears at times to merely lick away white surface, thereby revealing latent, prescribed sentences.[93] This is the mystery into which we must throw ourselves in order to reach the other and yet rescue the self, it is a question of time, speed, pace; gait, rhythm, music; a dance of impulse and hesitation, it is a question of qualities and not only a question of identities, of facts, of knowledge, quantities and 'things'.

If we must invest faith in, and not seek knowledge through, our writing, we should not take for granted the fact that we 'write' at all. Is it writing that writes just as it is life that lives? Is it writing *who* writes? Perhaps it is that other we can never know but for whom we are always writing. It follows that it is we writers who merely read this while the other, who we think of as our reader, in fact writes this, charming *this* from our pens, dragging our hand into action via

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[93] *Persona:* Marcel Mauss has explored the etymology of this term to reveal, in the Roman republic it referred equally to the thing or object of a mask as to the status of one owning such a mask. (Mauss, M. 1985,1 - 25)

invisible strings drawn across times, disjointed between a now of writing and another now of reading.

Close to our conclusion we have made a plot-twist and somehow inverted the entire text. Such an intervention, that leads us to exchange roles of reader and writer, is surely more than an inversion. Inversion is too simple, symmetrical and spatial a model, one that leaves the simplistic dualism of the relation in place and does not account for qualitative un-mapped, un-charted differences between reader and writer, reading and writing. What has occurred is a confusion of destination and embarkation, of *fort* and *da*, of to and from, to and fro. But this very dualistic confusion is a description of a gait, a way, a rhythm, a walk. To write is to communicate in oscillations, physical distance is traversed in the very act of writing. The other is present at the scene and thus hears. One cannot walk without the other. The act is immanent; neither merely serving memory nor destroying it, but *constituting* memory,[94] the act of writing is rather a 'membering' (*sic*), inviting and implicating the cooperation of others in an attempt to keep together that which might be kept to the self, from the other, and therefore imprisoned, isolated and dis-membered. Writing is the activation of memes.[95]

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[94] An allusion to the debate addressed by Derrida in his *Plato's Pharmacy* - a chapter of *Truth in Painting*. (Derrida, J. 1987)

[95] meme: /meem/ [By analogy with "gene"] Richard Dawkins's term for an idea considered as a replicator, especially with the connotation that memes parasitise people into propagating them much as viruses do. Memes can be considered the unit of cultural evolution. Ideas can evolve in a way analogous to biological evolution. Some ideas survive better than others; ideas can mutate through, for example, misunderstandings; and two ideas can recombine to produce a new idea involving elements of each parent idea. The term is used especially in the phrase "meme complex" denoting a group of mutually supporting memes that form an organised belief system, such as a religion. However, "meme" is often misused to mean "meme complex". Use of the term connotes acceptance of the idea that in humans (and presumably other tool- and language-using sophonts) cultural evolution by selection of adaptive ideas has become

The seemingly irreducible paradigm of difference retreats shyly at the prospect of being asked to account for the relation between reader and writer.

It is excusable for a certain *in*difference to overwhelm what has hitherto been an earnest adventure in ideas, as we hesitate and dither into a murky zone where words no longer form the skeleton of an intensive physiological perception or an authored act. We get lost, yet only thus find and tap the 'weak force' of a necessary disorientation and intoxication; dangerous in that it is impotent, weak, powerless, will-less; not complicit with any dominant camaraderie, but nevertheless 'in the zone' of a certain purposelessness from which we suspect a Machiavelli, Descartes, Kant, Spinoza or Leibniz might flee in search of a reassuring schema or rationale, but into which, a Derrida, Blanchot, Kafka, or Proust might willingly enter.

We are glad to transmit messages gleaned from 'indifferentiations' without positionality, valued philosophically, politically and yet entirely speculative - infinitive, as yet without place or purpose. It is that which we have *done* that we can no longer hesitate before, and yet we present a 'what have I done?'[96] not a 'what I *have* done', i.e. a question to the other not a statement of accomplishment. This is because that which we present is only part of an event and must take into account parts played by others - reader, viewer or listener - in completing the event. It is this other with whom we are always in dialogue who completes our text by their very absence. In this respect, even our greatest 'accomplishment' is yet merely a question ever awaiting its reply.

Between Hands

The unhesitating way that hands appear *not* to think is precisely what gives us our faith in them. In their automated responses, their familiar relationship with the world, with the keyboard's terrain, with the slips and flicks of the pen that they wield, the way they go-on, inspired by their own momentum and usefulness, engaged with the technology they grasp, going-on where 'self' - denied these brave accomplices - might hesitate.

If we can believe in little else perhaps, at least, we should believe in our hands. Perhaps it is ultimately our hands that write, *who* write, and in writing shake the hands of others. Our hands become the reader of that which you, the reader, are writing as your optical thoughts. Our hand is no longer ours, nor are our thoughts, and these words too, their grammar, were *never* ours. What we believed to be our hand is no longer a hand but has become an eye decoding that which lies before it, a driver's eye, illuminating a small area before it, laying down the black path while simultaneously moving along it, moving to lay, laying to move, thinking to write, writing to think. Ours is not a vehicle that enjoys the road or in which we are proud to be seen, but one that builds the road as it goes.

There is no difference or distance between reading and writing, no between of reader and writer, only immanent *in*difference. Instead of this place and time there looms the indifference of a hesitation, a temporal nuance - not a spatial distinction - as we wait, in hope, to be written in and by the ear of the other,

hoping there and then to find a form (albeit aurally labyrinthine), hoping there and then to come to be in a to-ing and fro-ing, an eternal returning.

Where do we write, here or there? When? Now or then? While Lawrence Sterne, Mallarmé, or e.e. cummings may have arrested the word's representative mechanics at the hard surface of the page and confronted us with a mysterious apotheosis of modern realism, diverted by formalism, *we* have sought to hesitate *before* the page, acknowledging that uncertain, formless space between subject and object, reader and writer, act and event, between 'to' and 'be', as if to write before writing, remaining preludial. The computer insists that we write remotely, at one remove from our product, as the keyboard is distanced from the screen on which we admire its effects as if flattering and decorating our mirror while preening and searching for self. We don't 'write' after all, but merely transform the memory of pixels in preparing a virtual image that will be printed later, elsewhere.

Offended by any hastiness to judge and name, to rush to know and to thereby incarcerate, we have sought the possibility of a more refined hesitancy, a 'hands-off' approach to writing-the-world, a way that hesitates before claiming any 'thing', and which yet claims its own value and legitimacy. Disoriented, neither reader nor writer stand any longer opposed, and given that each is made sceptical by a certain hesitation and a certain unwillingness to shore-up the pact of language, given a refusal of a certain legitimacy grounded in presence, given *this* hesitation, difference (which must be the difference of two or more legitimate presences) loses its paradigmatic irreducibility.

No longer held by or to our hands, by the difference between the two and the difference that they make, we sink deeper into the night of ink's blackness and journey like a Dante denied Christian orientations - up, down, good, evil, nadir, transition, apotheosis, destiny and deliverance. Becoming ink, in order to write blind, we find no helpful aporia, but become that of which *aporias* are made, turning ourselves dark, opaque and intrusive, like writing, as writing, we become the way by becoming a block, a lumpen, hunched, sedentary figure laboriously carving a wedge of type.

Yet we become the sovereign river, babbling at times, and inexorably, subtly, falling, moving effortlessly around obstacles with no incremental stride to break, composed only of our duration and persistence. With no source and no deliverance, no destination or embarkation, we are always and only *in* writing, an event carrying worlds in words as if weightless while shifting into silt any burden undeserving of our energy.

There is no question between being and not being, experience is all we account, and it consists of a wish, a to-being. Wishing and rushing, placid and still, all things to all, Proteus evading identity, outrunning all identification, 'difference differentiating from itself' and leaving us only *indifference.*

<div align="right">(Deleuze, G. 1994)</div>

There are caves but no shadows, a godless realm where blind motion, a sense of passing or passing sense alone sustains faith, and where esoteric senses and abilities awaken to justify phenomena of which common sense might

deprive us. Our responsibility is not to place but to *dis*place reality, and to qualify experience in so-doing. Fidelity to nature and perspective, reverence for any past 'civilisation' or causal canon, all these 'Renaissance' legacies, Enlightenment conceits, and neo-classicisms obscure the fact that at the 'street-level' of a most radical empiricism (as a certain untranslatable colloquial Glaswegian exclamation says - 'you don't know you're born!'

As we can see in Benjamin, and Breton, in Bergson, and Sebald, the closer we get to the 'street' of an immanent scene of writing, the closer we come to divulging mysteries which perspectival knowledge and analysis might omit or repress. Becoming child, we grow closer to this ground, 'go to ground', looking-out, wondering. We displace reality, like Anne Frank's father or Moses' mother; displace it in the face of a threat that is constant, making displacement ever-necessary. Writing at a desk that for us has always been 'hot' we aim to rescue the 'child' that *is* speculative thought by teaching it to swim for itself, 'throwing it in at the deep end'.

We displace reality to a necessary elsewhere without which there would be no motion, no hope, no drive, no desire, no loss, no search, no question, no chance, just God-awe-ful answers. Reality has no place, but, always displaced it waits to be *dis*placed by writers sufficiently audacious to do so and who are, in their turn, inevitably, consequently, displaced - Machiavelli, Freud, Turgenev, Joyce, Beckett, Benjamin, Nietzsche, Anne Frank, Dreyfuss, Mandela, Chekhov, or the fictive Crusoe.

The solipsistic 'I' re-emerges from the ink but only as an untimely community of scattered lonely souls, a coven of exiles, islanders, surviving in archipelagos where homelands shatter into shards amid oceans of loss and relinquishment, a community of islanders driven by a peculiar duty to maintain the displacement of reality; actors dramatised by the urge to blind all point-of-view and to become, not God, but the sublime fact of ink, desk, pen, page, and motion; to become 'part of the furniture' of thought, to become possibility and faith, to become those extra-senses which aesthetically justify phenomena.

As islanders and exiles we are akin to letters, words and paragraphs, each of which, in their turn, aspire to conspire, to commune and thereby make meaning. Writers give themselves over, sacrificed to an occasionally treacherous pen or keyboard that gives them away while giving a way (*sic*) in return. We point the way only by slipping away. The words are islands forming archipelagos, on screen, then page, dependent on their isolation and each calling out to others by which to be justified. We might believe in our hands, having faith in them greater than the faith we have in our thought; we might remain barely aware of the ways in which our hands lead us though our days and our lives, and yet, once they come to the keyboard or pen, we hesitate lest we make a mistake, a stain, or an offence, recalling not only the writing that History has spawned but also the History that writing has spawned before also giving it form. And yet, we might also feel newly legitimate, as if the world has barely begun, proceeding in faith that we have as much chance as any other of helping it on its way.

Faith In The Actual

> *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be other than it is […]
> but to *love* it.

(Nietzsche, F.W. 1979, 68)

The actual is not an essence from which there are derivatives, it is not a real or a truth, it is not meaningful, nor is it any ideal separated-off from life, rather, it is immanence, the immanence which subsists and pervades life but goes necessarily unrepresented, *noumenal*, it is alluded-to beyond an aporia, it is that un-representable without which there would be nothing representable. The actual persists despite attempts to know, to represent and to measure. The actual is the ignorance that we inadvertently accumulate whenever we attempt to gain knowledge.

This writing too is such an attempt, an adventure in that idea. To make sense - as much as we can make it - is to toil at the production of a surface, a surface much as we ourselves are, and to thereby produce something at once 'over our heads', above and beyond us, yet also something within, behind and beneath us, a place from which to step. The surface of sense that we produce is always a threshold and always *at a* threshold that is a relation with self, other, time and world. Our method is unmethodical in that it is inconstant, un-still, always changing and ready to change. It is baroque in its limitless turns and folds and is purposefully un-prepared.

The actual is that passing or passing on, that sublime *durée* that refuses representation. It is immanence. It is that which our sense makes us unaware-of. The actual necessarily resists representation's abhorrence of any vacuum. The actual *is* vacuum, unnatural and abhorred, ever drawing us on and in but never to. Hesitation is experienced as a temporary resistance-to, and reshaping of that force.

Any writer inspired by Nietzsche and his explorative hammer, and who is in love with the art and craft of producing convincing surfaces (Deleuze occasionally calls them 'beautiful pages') has the remit and responsibility to abstract, reduce and deconstruct in search of faults, fallacies and follies. This leads inevitably to difficult questions and uncomfortable positions and even takes the philosopher into a speculative realm that may appear to others as *a*political or *a*moral ('extra-moral' as Nietzsche says), wherein we might explore our own faith and find that it lies in some notion of fact - something empirical, actual.

We may however find that the actual is not compliant with a reassuring ontological schema of being, objectivity, and things, but that the actual is, on the contrary, the very passing of all this, and with it, the passing of our reassurance. This actual therefore *requires* faith as it relinquishes all sedentary models to embrace one of passage, motion, momentum and uncertainty. Perhaps it is only this peculiar faith, this *disorganised religion,* which places sufficient burden on man to force him to consider the ultimate politics, the ultimate brutality, the ultimate question and the ultimate redemption within the possibility of an 'absolute literature'. (Calasso, Robert. 2001)

Having faith in the passing of things, surrendering positionality, territory and teleology in order to represent only and always the event-uality of things, we may find the mythological image of Sisyphus useful. Rather than being framed as one punished Sisyphus is the one relieved of goals, choices, conclusions, and of teleology. He is liberated from myths of completion, form, promise, narrative, and causality. Though Sisyphus's toil is arduous, its formlessness is comparable to that of any instant to which we rise and from which we fall away in the to-and-fro of a being that is never singular and ever restless. Our karma is ultimately of this 'instant' variety[97] when judgment is not deferred or delayed but part of the formless and un-representable present. To live well would surely be thus (and perhaps here lies our most Epicurean answer to the call of philosophy).

Faith in the actual may consider metaphysical possibilities and be influenced by future and past - in as much as we can pretend to know them - but these considerations are not conclusions and they are themselves passing. Considered as and in their particular event-uality, and represented as effervescent, anything as solid as a conclusion or point-of-view melts into the air of its own eventuality. In this way the most quotidian and remote, the most physical and most abstract, share the all-equalising, value-transvaluing screen of a radical empiricism, a phrase we use to describe passing through a life in this world as with a snow-plough's front, clearing through knowledge, preferring

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[97] 'Instant Karma' - this term, attributed to songwriter John Lennon (1940 - 1980) may have older or other roots that we have been unable to trace. It is noteworthy that it alludes to 20th century commodities and consumerism, to 'instant' gratification and accelerated, urban, industrialized lifestyle.

and prioritising passage, *making* way, in the sense of a production, making 'way' as bees make honey, as a quantity or commodity; making *more* 'way'.

We are thus suspicious of all deferrals, mediations and representations, but to hesitate is not necessarily to defer. To hesitate is to capture and distil momentum, in full faith of discovering there the unexpected. We are speaking of a certain immanence which is necessarily untimely, not present, and yet *not* deferred. It is a post-Derridean thought, further stripped of Judaeo-Christian traces and cured of a millennial, *fin-de-siecle* hangover. It is sacred, faithful, and yet takes no form and offers no promise. It is not sufficient to dismiss religion, to dismiss questions of the absolute and metaphysical, rather, we must expands our articulation to describe our immediate experience in all its mystery while comparing that experience with a History of similar experiences.

Hesitation is an interruption of momentum that rescues us from the blindness and un-representability of presence and allows us to inhabit and even command presence - if only for a brief period. Hesitation is a momentary exile which sets us apart and aside from passage, there to be or become wiser, to see further, more broadly, refusing to rush and avoiding folly. In hesitation we discover our habitual momentum from a new angle, as if from outside (hesitation, indeed enables this 'as if'), discovering it to have been oriented, directional, singular, presumptuous, 'headlong'.

In hesitation we find other than our assumed orientation, direction or singularity. When we speak, we have merely slipped carelessly into habits, been carried-off

in rivulets of language, diverted from all we might have said and left regretfully elsewhere, yet we might learn, with wisdom, to speak more slowly, as children do, more carefully, like wise men, more considerately, thoughtfully, creatively, to bring thinking and speaking into a more productive and mutually considerate relationship; we might learn to 'give pause' and learn to speak *in the spirit of music*; music for which there can be 'no mistake' but only undeniable sounds or silences. Our words and their delivery might thus become precious, wrought, as works of art.

Faith in the actuality of passing by no means increases our burden, nor further arms the forces that act upon and against us. We might say that faith relieves us of many things in which we might also have maintained faith - pros, cons, debates, deferrals, and representations - while demanding of us our best. That, surely, is what a philosophy aims to provide, a way to our best, a glimpse of redemption, the reassuring handrail of an articulated meaning. Hesitation enables a glimpse of redemption from the 'things' of the world by offering us a means by which to stand-aside from an otherwise relentless momentum in relation to which we are otherwise helpless.

CONCLUSION

To be 'creative' is not necessarily innovation or genius, it is, however, to keep alive the possibility of speaking for ourselves and for others, even if it takes a lifetime to find the means and the form by which to do it, and even if there is no necessary or predicted audience for that which we feel the need to say. We think and write and create surely because we are dissatisfied; not because we idolise or crave the new but because the world we find is not good enough, wise enough, kind enough, because something in our experience does not live-up to something that we *have* experienced or that we suspect might yet be experienced. And we think, write and create because our own experience, our own encounter with the world is irrepressible, crying out to be represented and recorded. Something is always yet to be said, not yet understood, unexplained and much of our thinking is surely thinking about *this* challenge.

When you reveal that you are writing on 'hesitation', this information is often met with laughter and calls for predictable jokes about the length of time it will take to finish, but 'hesitation', we have discovered, is a tool, a small instrument with which to work into and possibly out of some knotty problems. It is a useful and troublesome concept. We sometimes wondered if was too closely allied with the deferral implicated in Derrida's *différance* for it to be capable of contributing anything not already said about the cultivation of liminality, temporality and deterritorialisation in post-structuralist thought, but 'hesitation' here became a 'cloak' that enabled this writing to go in and out of the archive without becoming a 'thing', allowed it and ourself to hesitate before becoming part of the archive; allowed us to avoid becoming conscious and recognisable as 'research' and 'researcher' with knowledge as an explicit goal.

Keeping such things at bay enabled this project to take the risk of being nothing in the hope of retaining the spirit in which it began, and enabled it to live in hope of avoiding a conclusion like that of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* wherein he regretted the compromised thing that his book's true spirit had become through its writing.

If we have hesitated in the above, we have also been purposefully disloyal to the presumptions of the 'thing' we set out to produce while nevertheless *loyal* to some elusive human motive that brings us to think and to give form to our thoughts. Hesitation and impulse remain haunting our enquiry here where we also hesitate to conclude. If we attempt to draw together the threads of our argument we can set out a list of terms we have used and reflect upon their varying success.

First we might pull forth that proposition made above wherein a paradigm of *existence* (a surprisingly recent conceit according to the OED) is called into question by that of *per*sistence. We could carry on by acknowledging that we have felt the need to use 'hesitation' as a way to deconstruct ontology, knowledge and epochalism, as well as a means by which to explore questions of immanence, transcendence and faith as they relate to writing and to technologies of writing. We can also say that a call to supplant History with memory was never far from our thoughts, nor was an increasing conviction that digital media has changed the relation of writing to its 'impact' or effect; changed the way thought is deployed in the world.

But we should also look back to clarify our fundamental motives. We have attempted to articulate and give a vocabulary to the event-ual paradigm in which we believe we write and think today. This may seem a narcissistic, empty, formalist procedure, but, on the contrary, it is ultimately grounded in ethical considerations. The affirmation of, or call to, an *eventual* paradigm requires articulation and vocabulary, and this contributing of articulation and vocabulary may define what we do when we attempt to write History, philosophy, or that overlapping and intertwining of writing, History and philosophy that we have here produced as and in memory. The ethical motivation, for us, is to encourage the possibility of an event-ual paradigm, which supplants a paradigm whose fulcrum is ontological, an event-ual paradigm which promises to articulate, revive and maintain a sense of 'spirit' that persists and resists, within and through a crudely imposed misunderstanding.[98]

Bergson, Nietzsche, Proust, were also driven to posit alternatives to the current, ordinary, or habitual understanding of their milieu. Their thought, while being perhaps 'untimely' but no less valuable to us, did not avert or prevent the disasters of the 20th Century, nevertheless it remains available to us as possibilities and speculations that might inspire and inform our own and future moments.

It is methodologically crucial to do all we can to resist habit - and this includes maintaining vigilance over the propensity to relax into the established roles of;

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[98] Here I make implicit reference to the title of my masters dissertation: *Spirits At The Limits of Resistance* - Goldsmiths College, Art History/Visual Cultures, University of London, 2001.

or dressing for the performance of; the academic, the writer, historian, philosopher, creative etc. To hesitate before all these 'things', all these ends and realisations, is a way of remaining and retaining 'spirit' which here means entering into the most intimate dialogue possible with our task (what Bergson called 'intuiting' rather than analysing). We cannot therefore say we have written 'about', only that we are writing 'about about' (*sic).* Having considered some of the key facets and motivations informing the preceding work we can now continue to do so, but again in self-reflexive mode, here, 'in conclusion', where we will simultaneously reflect on conclusion in the light of hesitation.

Hamlet, hastens his own conclusion, hurrying death on, declaring 'I am dead' when he is not yet so. Again he leaps impulsively into a grave. He speaks of death as 'this fell sergeant […] strict in his arrest'.

(Shakespeare, W. 2006, 457-58 [Hamlet 5.2. 316 - 24])

Hamlet says he is 'dead' before we might logically think of him as existentially or scientifically so. Meanwhile, his father persists as an afterlife. But Hamlet *is* dead throughout the play in that he hesitates, questions, and persists as a liminal being, stepping out of 'this' (accepted, established) world into another; a world of others, becoming a creature forced by injustice into empiricism of a radical kind, both rooting (digging/exploring) and risk-taking, into an extreme of subjectivity, alienation in fact, with both imagination and doubt stimulated. He *is* 'dead' in that, by seeking the *spirit* of justice he becomes 'not of this world', alienated, etiolated, himself spiritualised, taken over, overwhelmed by a spirit, just as the 'mad' were once considered 'possessed', while others pragmatically

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attend to worldly, more rational, and yet clearly more corrupt and cynical matters.

Perhaps every time that we insist upon the existence of a spirit, or uphold the claims of a concept that rationalism and pragmatism might marginalize, we are entering a realm of spirits.   In this way, all speculative and metaphysical thoughts, all heroic faith in material concepts, will continue to be a dialogue with spirits, a kind of death that leaves this word behind (albeit intending to return to it with gifts). It is as if, to locate or 'know' such a spirit we must *become* a spirit, become spiritual just as we have tried to demonstrate that to write one must become writing, or to sing one must become music, or to love one must become the beloved.

Hamlet's question is not to live or not live but whether action (that infinitive and tensioned 'to') might lead him through the flames of the present, forwards to a better world, or back to a more just world that he knew before grief and treachery overwhelmed his established picture and understanding of the world. To debate action is to hesitate at the 'to' that comes before 'being', decelerating our wholehearted entry into being.[99]   Here we have attempted to supplant a metaphysics of being with a metaphysics of hesitation. To 'to-be' (*sic*) becomes a more accurate representation of an experience of hesitating, puzzled, yearning, on the threshold of being, with question standing between us and

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[99] A useful epigram from Jean Baudrillard's *Cool Memories V* states: 'Intelligence lies in deceleration. But you must first get ahead of things'.

what Heidegger wished to claim as 'the' most fundamental and profound concept.

To acclimatize to the experience of writing, to step down and slow down from (lofty) ideals into a radical (chthonic) empiricism; to match pace with our actions rather than observe them, is to become dead, to become not of this world, a kind of spirit, and to reach out to writing's other side, acknowledging the limp to its gait, the entropy ever-threatening to bring to an end our dance with the other. To maintain a perspective on life appropriate to the possibilities we sense is to occupy a position on life's margins, as outside life, as wholly other as possible. To experience life, to live, we must hesitate to live. To think, to write, to historicise, we must hesitate before these too. Hesitation is thus a method, a strategy, an articulation of that maneuver we make in order to escape habit. It is to think again by thinking before.

The fascination with Shakespeare for the generations who inherit him is the appropriateness of his ability to continue articulating pluralities and uncertainties; deploying language and form in such a way as to maintain the credibility of our *in*credibility; to keep us enraptured in a hesitation at the brink of all human conceits and conclusions - and surely *this* is drama, another contender for 'absolute literature', drama, wherein tongue and pen match swords with wit and words.

Given the Lyotard-influenced anti-epochalism set out in the dissertation, it would be inappropriate to consider *this* time as comparable with the period and places

and events known as The Renaissance, but it is also hard to resist given that the context for this dissertation's attempt to balance the hieratic and divine purposes of art with self-consciousness of its material immanence relies upon today's proliferation of an influential new means of drawing, viewing and seeing via digital technology, amid a milieu in which East and West, ancient and modern, *Fortuna* and *Virtu*, superstition and knowledge, perspective and faith, all collude.

Hamlet's use of the play within a play, a self-reflexive shattering of art's illusory surface, troubles representation in a way that we can find as far back as Plato's anecdotal introduction to *The Symposium,* in which, and by which, early philosophy was produced. This playful and self-reflexive technique grows increasingly affirmed once modern authors, relieved of their duty to god or nature, increasingly intrude upon the scene of their own production, interjecting references to its manufacture, purposefully breaking its transcendent and redemptive illusions with compensatory reminders of immanence, thus turning representation into event (Nabakov perhaps pulls this off with the greatest blend of panache and subtlety). Modern classics become a series of stupendous follies, celebrating - like Brancusi's all-too-finite *Endless Column* - secular man's display of his magnificent limitations.

In Walter Benjamin's conclusion to his *Trauerspiel and Tragedy* section of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* he discusses the conclusion of Hamlet.

There he invokes the 'Machiavellian' figure of those corrupt courtesans who would gain power and property by their intrigues. Such a figure, he says, is loyal to 'things' but not to man because:

> […] all essential decisions in relation to men can offend against loyalty; they are subject to higher laws. Loyalty is completely appropriate only to the relationship of man to the world of things.
>
> (Benjamin, W. 1998, 156 - 57)

As Derrida regards *différance* as eschewing of any 'kingdom', so Benjamin here condemns - or at least commits - the concept of 'loyalty' to a world of 'things' which is other than, and perhaps lesser than, the ultimate purposes of men.

What a great injustice it remains (as Agamben's concept 'bare life' reminds us) to think of myself or to be thought of as a 'thing', even in this age of the exaltation of 'things'. To consider, or to have considered the world as a 'thing' now seems equally shameful and misguided, so why then consider our writing as a 'thing'? Surely the 20th Century has, if nothing else, taught us that this ontological emphasis is an unworkable paradigm?

It is possible to ascribe this ontological tendency - which is admittedly rational, manageable, useful, pragmatic or programmatic - to the apotheosis or endgame of a modern and *bourgeois* acquisitiveness, the apotheosis or endgame of which we are perhaps negotiating. The twin 'cathedrals' of museum and mall spectacularly proclaim the omnipotence of an unchallenged and subsequently myopic culture, proud of its power over all that is 'to hand'. Today, the computer - allied with a rising tide of increasingly pragmatic managerialism which, in the

guise of an altruistic 'democracy' flows into the previously more autonomous arts and more esoteric academies - assists the same hegemony, by not only acquiring and manipulating, but by seeing, and ordering the world at a greater, and consequently more ill-informed distance, according to screens, grids and telecommunications which engender a habitual speed and carelessness, and which - almost by definition - eschew the subtlety and intelligence of hesitation, nurturing instead a notorious human flaw, the propensity to impulse.

The computer, having evolved in the hands of militarists, scientists, and in the managerial space of the business office; and having only then progressed to colonise the academy and the domestic hearth, becomes progressively the standard locus of 'creative' space, supplanting other kinds of studio and other technical facilities (darkrooms for photography, recording studios for composers or image-makers) and effectively shifting all these 'creatives' into the desk-bound environment traditionally associated with the writer. 'We are all writers now' we might assert, and therefore add weight and justification to the need demonstrated in the above to carefully deconstruct this habit of writing as it increasingly determines our environment.

Clearly, Jacques Derrida strived to do just this, effectively rendering arbitrary both a theoretical ontology that overlooked the *grammes* and grammar within which it was cast (re *grammatology*) and a law and a meaning which similarly denied their dependence on a written, and therefore disturbingly arbitrary, *logos*. Where all becomes writing (and we are saying that both structuralism

and digital technology have led us to this state-of-affairs) all becomes infinitely plastic, possible, and yet groundless.

Every computer user is Machiavellian in willing-to a power that is truly beyond us and in sensing the power to influence the world at a vicarious distance. Deluded and misguided by the computer's colourful and luminous representation of satisfactory accuracy and completion, we wield its geometric, homogenizing lens over what is in truth a far more heterogeneous and less manageable world.

Despite the virtuality of the computer's productions it can also be perceived as representing the pinnacle of an ontological paradigm in which 'things' and their manipulation encourage a will-to-power. The 'mouse' and its trigger enable us to experience power over virtual 'things' or digital events even if they are no more than pixels or digits of memory. We are tempted to 'pull' a 'trigger' without thinking adequately, as suggested by the installation *I Want to See My Mountains* (1971) by the artist Joseph Beuys, in which the word *Denken* (Thinking), is written on the butt of a hunting rifle. However insensitive or prosaic an originally managerial tendency to point and click and thereby change might be, it has today found affinity in the majority of the legion computer users who are now able to communicate with, and yet also 'target' one another.

The computer, in the hands of a 'spirit' - an artist, a writer, or philosopher - implies a new liberty, the possibility of making our writing virtual, ghostly, and of rapidly mingling in a coven of like spirits amid the global salons of 'chat',

'network', and instant publication. We write, not a 'thing' but a memory, a memory *made* of memory. This writing, in self-consciously 'writing this', has attempted to articulate possible implications of this new technological proposition for political and historical forms, for a history of thought, and for an event-ual paradigm. Once an eventual paradigm supplants an ontological paradigm a 'thing' may become a hesitation; may become that is, its own motives and tendencies, not a thing itself, or *in* itself, but its anticipation and apprehension *of* itself.

A radical empiricist (another of our methodological terms above) can be expected to believe no more than this. The difference between empiricism and idealism is here discerned as a degree of hesitation, like that alluded to by Kafka in the citation at the very start of the dissertation, as the cause of expulsion from Eden. The idealist rushes impulsively to a knowledge before which the empiricist hesitates in question.

This work purposefully began with few intentions, and never intended or expected to make a distinction between form and content, object and subject, but only to allow them to continuously inform and disrupt each other. Our own invocation of immanence by means of self-reflexivity is, however, an attempt to articulate an eventual milieu or paradigm; an untimely state in which the question of immanence and/or transcendence can be weighed with reference to writing in and as digital memory, for a world we believe may be better articulated as 'hesitations' than as 'things'.

The transcendent that we sense, but which, by definition remains un-manifested, is nevertheless a product of representation. Writing may be a poor servant of this representation, always, in fact (as Nietzsche complained) misrepresenting our selves and our ideas, unless, that is, we attempt to stall writing's representative habits, to arrest it at a self-reflexive, immanent state in which it is referring to itself and its event as much as to that to which it points or alludes. Writing may be the nails with which 'things' are pinned down, but, as Nietzsche wished and hoped, given free reign of its most musical possibilities, writing has the ability to persist *with* the world rather than *stand for* it. Writing can stop the world, end the world, or alternatively 'make it go round', riding and driving the carousel of experience.

The father, god, the king, the author, are dead; in life and in literature everyone dies in the end, but writing too may be or become dead unless we find some means or form (aphorism, poetry, song, drama - Nietzsche tried them all) to maintain its gait, its dance and vitality, its musicality and meter which is its sign of life always battling with its tendency to become a sign only of death. With new times and new technologies this battle finds new opponents and new accomplices. The enduring 'spirit' of writing lies in a play, tension, or battle between its life and its death. The oblivion noted by Barthes as the author 'slips away' indicates that to truly write is to walk with writing at the ramparts of a self, haunting, waiting, looking-out for an absent identity, repeatedly drawing the ghostly outline of a sceptical and perhaps illusory transcendence.

The particular hesitation, animation, the *gait* of a writing, shows and gives us - albeit invisibly - a particular conflation of meaning and dynamic temporality that we can call a 'way', i.e. that which convinces us (*sophia)* to love (*philos)* and thereby to trust and to go on.

Impulse can be interpreted as masculine, and hesitation effeminate, and yet the military general well knows that hesitation can win those battles that impulse might lose. The question of hesitation is thus also allied with the wisdom of caution, of *virtu* - the human's best defense against unruly *fortuna*.

But these are Renaissance models. Modern Mallarmé's captain, who repeatedly rolls dice aboard a sinking ship (that characteristic Romanticist image of failed tradition and encroaching modernity) is repeatedly affirming and acknowledging, not chance, but the event, the moment, the hard surface against which our thrown dice strike, affirmed as the *one* certainty remaining when hesitation is no longer an option. To Mallarmé, to his captain, and to modernity, amid the formlessness of a wrecked myth and tradition which opens up only the most uncertain horizons, the hard surface of the unequivocal moment or event is also that of Monet's explicit dab, later consolidated and enlarged through Cezanne as a site of pure impact by the gambling endgames of Mondrian and Malevich whose paintings become all surface. But that hard surface, espoused by Maurice Denis and hungrily claimed by modernity, offers only a one-dimensional and uni-directional certainty which ultimately proves modernity's undoing, requiring Lucio Fontana's *coup-de-grace* to give painting an other

future, an after-shock, by apparently executing all that modernity holds dear and keeps close to its chest.

Modern words, released from god's authority and sent into a Romantic wilderness where they fear becoming arbitrary, nevertheless rise in Mallarmé to the occasion of their surface. They rise to the very page and the very event of their writing like hungry fish ascending to meet their keeper's hand, celebrating their moment of upholding value in an otherwise formless, pitiless, and meaningless universe, and insisting that every time, even modern time, must have its words, its poems, that there is never a rest or conclusion, but always an end to endgames, and that persistence and passage are precisely what we are always articulating, even when we appear to be celebrating their demise.

Before we claim to conclude, as if 'knowing' what we have written, we should hesitate, one last time perhaps, and again return to Shakespeare's play, which became central to our considerations. Here we might recall the marginal figures that obliquely articulate and determine what occurs, even in and by their quiet and offstage moments. Ophelia's death is no great debate over being but a slipping away into the stream of time clouded in rumour and uncertainty, attended by both *virtu* and *fortuna.* Meanwhile the responsibility to remember and to repeat; to tell the all-important story, is shared-out between Horatio and Fortinbrass.

Derrida's oblique contribution to the values of Hamlet lies not only in his explicit attention during *Spectres of Marx* [100] but in his description of *différance* as that which aspires to no kingdom, no territory, no victory or gain. As Derrida would surely concede, Shakespeare seems to have pre-empted or inspired these apparently innovative, transgressive, liberating and disruptive post-structuralist thoughts. We recall that, in Hamlet, the Queen and the King's brother have been loyal only to the world of things - i.e. to crowns and scepters, and to the 'thing' of the realm itself which the spirit comes to trouble as a representative of the hesitant world of non-'things'. Furthermore, in respect of Derrida's *différance*, the play's tragic conclusion does not only find the acquisition of 'things' to be a misguided aim (in the sense that many have died as a result) but the arrival of Fortinbrass to conclude the drama mocks the dramatic and disputed acquisition of the kingdom. This is also a reminder of other realms, other kingdoms, the kingdom of others perhaps (what we have called 'alterocracy' (*sic*) or 'alterarchy' (*sic*) above), for whom *this* kingdom has merely been a crossing, a bridge, a convenient passage - albeit one to which Fortinbrass has been unintentionally (farcically) elected. [101]

The rewards of the writer may then be like the death of Ophelia or the gains of Fortinbrass in that they are more or less unwilled and uncertain. They are not the outcome of a physical or psychological struggle but of a more or less cultivated *indifference*; as if all good 'things' do indeed come to s/he who waits (that same 's/he' who hesitates and is thus 'lost'), and do indeed flee from all

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[100] Reference to *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida, J. 1994) which utilizes Hamlet as a scenario within which to consider possibilities of the endurance of Marxism and History.
[101] See footnote no. 8

those who have acted more or less impulsively. Given our inability to know just what 'good things' might be - nor when we might expect to receive them - they can never be our motive or aim in writing, like the artists described by Proust in the death of Bergotte [see section above entitled 'Proust (Before Writing)'] we must in fact write for no other reason than to write, in a bubble, and event of faith, quietly assured that our actions might be valued, by some other one, some other time, in some other place we cannot picture nor predict (as in Proust's affirmation of Vermeer).

Fortinbrass has apparently been innocent of all such acquisitive speculation in respect of that with which *fortuna* rewards him, and, by looking elsewhere, has not been consumed by the passion, tumult and difficult questions raised by the play's 'central' characters. He thus leaves the play with no blemish on his character and as the one whom *fortuna* has truly favoured. Fortinbrass is distracted by another tragedy altogether, that of Rosencrantz and Guildernstern for whom we have cared little,[102] and he is also mindful at this moment of yet another injustice done to his own father by the elder Hamlet, a question of debt and retribution, of which he has been - again inadvertently and indirectly - relieved as a result of actions originally provoked by the debtor in the form of his ghost.

Fortuna is thus everywhere triumphant, and tragedy, at its limit, thereby back-flips into comedy while we are reminded by Shakespeare that despite the

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[102] Though the playwright Tom Stoppard did attend to this issue by promoting these hitherto marginal characters to primacy in *Rosencrantz and Guildernstern Are Dead* published in 1968.

magnificent and spectacular construction we have witnessed within the frame of the proscenium arch, we have been merely led into privileging a point of view, that of the hesitant and divided Hamlet mingled with our own pains and desires.

(Shakespeare, W. 2006, 460 - 64 [Hamlet 5.2. 345 - 82])

By this final shift or perspective, from 'centre-stage' to invasive margins Shakespeare thus again reminds us that it is not individuated matter or matters but *passage itself* that is ultimately most beguiling and most powerful, even if the power of passing is so elusive, fickle and subtle (like those great changes that Nietzsche says come 'on dove's feet') that we can only adequately describe it in oxymoronic, Benjaminian terms as 'weak'. If History is the nearest we get to cheating this power of passage (i.e. by organizing it into convenient and resilient epochal forms) and if all can persist in memory -given the barest grace of a form - this invites and invokes the special redemptive role of art and the artist, awarded the responsibility and the privilege to give form to events and *thereby allow them to abide*, never in denial of the conscious *art* of that act, but always candidly proclaiming its operation.

> Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
> Becomes the field but here shows much amiss.
> Go, bid the soldiers shoot

(Shakespeare, William. 2006, 464 [Hamlet 5.2. 385 - 87])

An excellent and enduring example of this conscious self-reflexivity can be conveniently found in the final line of Hamlet which literally calls-out for a punctuating shot, asking for an end which will *not* come to conveniently 'round

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with a sleep' and thereby give adequate form to the play's events. Instead we are left waiting for that final punctuation, and the play ends on a half-line, its own gait 'out of joint', inviting time's next step. This device leaves us with the very tension that constitutes events, the very hesitation between one step and the next, one heartbeat and the next, the hesitation which flows in and between these increments as *dureé* and undermines the reign of 'things' by opening one event (e.g. the play) out onto others (e.g. the lives of the released performers and audience) without a clear distinction drawn between the acts of art and those of life.

Shakespeare, who, like every writer[103] must have wrangled over the art of conclusions, here also subtly echoes his Prospero who, at the close of *The Tempest* finally breaks his spell over the audience and reminds the reader that writing is always for others, the story is always *yours*, and that it is with this core motivation that writing constitutes the love (*philos*) that cries to be borne artfully by its responsibility to convince (*sophia*).[104]

<div align="center">(Macdonald, G. [footnotes] Shakespeare, W. 2006, 464)</div>

END

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[103] Including Nietzsche, who claimed in *Ecce Homo* that his *Daybreak - thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* '[…] is the only book which ends with an "Or?" ' (Nietzsche, F.W. 1979. 96)

[104] *sophia*, throughout this dissertation, has been interpreted and deployed, meaning not so much 'wisdom' but the ability, tendency, or wish *to convince and to be* convinced, to believe and be believed. Thus, Philos - sophy becomes a love of the art of convincing, while acknowledging the immeasurable increment of hesitation that lies between believing and not believing, between words and faith.

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