



**SOUNDING THE
EVENT**

ESCAPADES IN
DIALOGUE AND
MATTERS OF
ART, NATURE
AND TIME

Yve Lomax

LIBTAURIS

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>A little note</i>	ix
1. A difficult beginning	1
2. A twittering noise	8
3. A single grain of corn and a song of immanence	38
4. A passage of time and a present moment that doesn't easily slip by	80
5. Listening to it happen	107
6. An impossible refrain	124
7. Dancing to the tune of the infinitive	137
8. Echoes	156
9. Fortuity	162
Epilogue	185
<i>Notes</i>	187
<i>Index: Encounters with proper names</i>	195

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A little note

For some time now I have been bothered by the question of what constitutes an event. Yes, I have been bothered and the bother has made me prick up my ears to listen out for theories of the event. I have been listening, but I've also been looking, and in listening and looking I have found that the bother has brought wonder to me. Oh yes, the question of what constitutes an event has made me wonder, made me wonder about time, about theory, about sound and many other things besides. There is no denying it, the question of the event has stirred my thinking.

A difficult beginning

From the look on her face I can tell she knows it isn't going to be a good start. I could say it is written all over her face. Or is it? Maybe there is nothing to read, and perhaps it is this that seems so telling. And before I can tell of what is to happen next an old expression of my mother's butts in.

—'She? Who is she — the cat's mother?'

Once again I am being told that it is disrespectful to say she without first having spoken a proper name. To be spoken of as she, as *merely* she, is degrading. *She* is no more than the cat's mother. But wait, doesn't this imply that the feminine pronoun 'she', along with the cat's mother, are to be ranked lower and as such regarded with disdain? Disdain may be too strong a word but, with all due respect, I do not find the same implication with the masculine pronoun 'he' and the dog's father.

Oh cats and dogs and sexual difference.

—'How many times do I have to tell you,' my mother would exclaim.

I knew the words did not ask for a reply; what was asked of me was to sit still and wait to be told again.

And yet again I find myself waiting.

Whatever next, I think as I query my interpretation of the look on her face. Having thought she doesn't need to say a word, I realize that I am waiting for her to say something. As I wait, I think again of my mother's much-used expression. *How many times do I have to tell you?* Repeating the words makes me recall that it wasn't only my mother who used the

expression; whenever the words were said at school I knew I was expected to learn the lesson and grasp it fast.

(*How many times? How many times? How many times?* There is one thing I can say that I have grasped and this is that time will always exceed my understanding of it.)

And still I am waiting for her to say something, and still not a word is uttered. To an onlooker it may seem that all movement has been suspended in this speechless scene. Not a word. Not a move. Seeing this as suspense could well make an onlooker ask: is an event going to happen?

How long can I wait? It is a stupidly abstract question given that I don't know what I am supposed to be waiting for. Still, I am waiting. *Is an event going to happen?* I have the urge to say that what has happened is a false start.

A false start?

Picturing a false start can make you think of a race that is about to happen. The ambition of those involved is to be the fastest one, the one who wins by covering the measured space in the shortest time possible and comes first. At the starting line the competitors prepare themselves for the effort that will initiate their movement. The event is about to happen, but just before the sign to start is given one strikes out. One has started too soon. Yes, one has already started but the event is not yet to happen. On your marks, get ready, go. But wait, one has gone already.

At the starting line of the racing event expectation buzzes in the air. Yes, an event is going to happen. However, if you start too soon then the event, at least at that time, is not going to happen for you. The event itself will remain beyond your reach; it will, so to speak, slip through your fingers.

So, I ask myself, has there been an unsuccessful attempt to start something — or, has there been a false dawn?

For a false dawn the start is full of promise, affording the expectation of an event to come. Yes, the start is full of promise but the fulfilment of the event never comes. You may wonder what might have been, yet the event itself remains out of reach. A false dawn can leave you wondering as to the promised event; it can also make you ask: what constitutes an event?

And then, with the question hanging in the air, she speaks.

She tells me that she would define a false start as when we can no longer rely upon a notion of starting that a particular conception of movement presupposes in order to get going.

I hear what she is saying, but I am not sure that I grasp what is being said; nevertheless, I say to her that I have a hunch that what she is speaking of has something to do with movement in time. She asks how this movement is to be grasped. I reply:

‘Perhaps by letting it slip through your fingers.’

‘It is only a hunch,’ I say, and she replies:

‘Only?’

I say that as yet something hasn’t been thought through. I say that it remains not yet. She asks if I want to move in the direction of this not yet and I answer by saying that I don’t foresee that this movement will be a race toward a predetermined goal. And she continues by saying that there is the question of movement in time but also the question of how the existence of the not yet is itself to be considered. And I ask if we are to think of the not yet as signifying the existence of something waiting to be discovered, uncovered.

—‘Or, are we to think otherwise than this?’

She says she is wondering about grasping something by letting it slip through your fingers. She says her question is simple.

—‘What does this way of understanding make for?’

I am not sure if I think the question is simple, but I respond by asking if she thinks her question is asking for this approach to understanding to become an object for study and thought. With a little wry smile she replies by asking if this *object* would be one which is easily recognizable. I say that to grasp something by letting it slip through your fingers makes the object of understanding somewhat slippery, and she responds by saying that for some this is no way to know. I say that I can hear the objection: it is far too fluid a way to understand; it is the solid that thinking must strive to possess, indeed must strive to be. She says that she doubts this objection and I say that it is based on that stupid old opposition between the solid and the fluid.

And then, out of the blue, she looks at me and asks if anything is going to happen such that, at some time in future, it will be spoken of in the past tense.

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A story is attempting to take place and is making what can only be called a difficult beginning.

Is an event going to happen?

The question stirs something within me. And then, amid the difficulty, an idea comes to me: it is with the event — and the question of its timing — that I want to start.

Is an event going to happen?

Expectation may be buzzing in the air, and perhaps — who knows — fulfilment will come; but the question is also demanding to know what an event may be. Which begs the question: do I have any idea, any vision or concept of the event with which I want to start. Am I not yet thinking?

I wonder.

Is the event with which I want to start beyond my grasp? And if this is so shouldn't I be calling it to account? (But is it there awaiting my call, waiting to be named?) Shouldn't I be making it yield more of a story than so far has happened? To give accounts of events: isn't this what stories do?

I wonder. Yes, I wonder.

The idea comes to me that I want to start with the event and the questioning of its timing; but what of the occurrence of this coming-to-mind?

Well, I wouldn't say that this coming-to-mind has happened in the lightning flash of an all-of-a-sudden. More of a slow burning thought that has flickered here and there. Perhaps, more accurately, this occurrence has been a slow but persistent motion that has gradually warmed my thoughts. Or, perhaps better still: that which has been hanging around and gently swaying. Hanging around and gently persistent but not heavy; no, not heavy with the stillness that comes just before the storm. Hanging around and perhaps abiding but not awaiting a lightning time — an occurrence such as this is perhaps best described by saying: it is in the air, prevalent yet indefinite.

Air resists being grasped as one of those solid things, but isn't air the most solid thing we know — the air that surrounds us, that envelopes us and in which we develop?

I say it is with the event that I want to start; however, making this declaration is not without hesitation. Yes, I hesitate for I am wondering if the event in question may well have already started.

I wonder.

What is making me wonder?

To be sure, any answer will be made with a tentative voice, but let me say that what is making me wonder are starts that happen before you and I

can know of them. Which is to say, what is making me wonder is a start that cannot be known and understood ahead of time. Unlike the racing event — be this of humans, horses or dogs — where time is set — stopped — in order to start and go, what is making me think is a start that can't be set prior to the event. When, for instance, does a photographic image start? And when does it finish? Stupid questions you may well think, but I wonder: when is the event of the photographic image? Indeed, what constitutes an event and how can this be said of the still photographic image?

I wonder.

An idea has come to me, but why should I care to think? Indeed, why should I care to think of and become affected by an event that seems so indefinite? My question is this: what will come about through caring to think? I don't know the answer, but there is a curiosity. And this curiosity is not without a caring for what might come about, what might come to happen. And why should I care for what might come into existence? It only might, and this leaves me on unsafe ground. How can I build upon such ground? Hardly sufficient to build a thesis upon. Hardly enough to construct a theory.

What will come about through caring? This question leads to another, one that began for me elsewhere yet here continues to insist.¹ I would call this the real question: will there be coming abouts that enable me to continue becoming? Which is to ask: will my power to be affected be exercised such that I am enabled to remain open to becoming other than what I am? Indeed, will I be enabled to remain open to 'my' becoming in relation to and without separation from the becoming of others, be they human, animal or otherwise? To care for these questions, which continually ask of us that they be asked, is to care for the existence of the 'not yet'. It is to care for the existence of that which is not in our possession.

The event with which I want to start may be too much up in the air and said to be not a solid enough matter, for as yet 'it' has no particular referent, no particular story or theory to tell. But I'm wondering. Yes, I'm wondering and I do not want to give way on that which can't be seized by and brought under the yoke of a pre-existing category that proudly proclaims its standing permanence and powers of designation. However, to say this is not to say that my ears are shut to theories of the event. Yes, I'm listening and, yes, I'm wondering how the timing of what becomes called an event becomes thought, becomes thought through, understood — let's say, heard. I'm

listening but I'm also looking out for that way of knowing that understands by way of a 'letting slip through the fingers'.

Although the event in question remains 'up in the air', I'm wondering if there is something happening with this poorly grounded indefinite phenomenon that is asking for a re-thinking of what is involved in the attainment of knowledge. Remaining 'up in the air', perhaps this groundless event is silently proposing a reconsideration of knowledge as an acquisition. Without a word said perhaps it is saying: with the attainment of knowledge there doesn't come the grasping of an object and the gaining of an acquisition but rather a different way of existing. I do not gain a possession; on the contrary, something else happens: I come to exist differently.

I may not hear a flow of fine words coming from the event that remains indefinite and poorly grounded, yet I do not want to rush to the conclusion that it has no voice and cannot make a proposition to me. And this begs the question: how can I speak of this event? How can I speak *with* it rather than speak for it or indeed speak at it?

With.

Yes, it is a little word.

I may say to you that last night I was alone with my thoughts. I may say this aloneness brought me calmness and serenity, or I may say it brought me anxiety and trouble; however, in saying either I would not wish to deny that my individual thinking, be it troubled or serene, is made *with* others. The philosopher Isabelle Stengers puts it wonderfully:

'How can you define, in terms of debt, the fact of encountering the words and exigencies that, having come from another, enable you to progress further with your own problem?'²

Quoting these lines, and again listening to them, I find an importance attached to that which 'comes from another', of which the true importance is *because of* having come from another. Having said this I may indeed be putting words into the mouth of another, but something here is beckoning me to think.

I do not produce meaning, or knowledge, or thought, on my own. I do not produce my life alone. It is always *with*. So often, however, this *with* becomes forgotten. Indeed, so often, far too often, this *with* becomes annihilated as the power of hatred pits us against the world. Yet it is *with* that furthers my becoming.

I speak of becoming. I speak of furthering my becoming. But what am I saying here?

To be sure, I am saying that at any given time I am not already complete; however, acknowledging this incompleteness isn't to say that I am not, as yet, being. Becoming is not the journey towards a state of being, be this the state of being a child or an adult, a middle-aged woman or an old man. Being isn't the state that one arrives at after the becoming, rather becoming is the movement of being. As for this movement, let me say that it is the movement that comes with time.

I may be sitting still, very still, but my being is not static. On the contrary, my being is continually moving in time. Indeed, even as I rest in the stillness of the night my being is ceaselessly being made *with* time. And it is this ceaselessness that makes me come to say: I am not already made but always *incomplete*.

To emphasize this incompleteness is equally to emphasize a world that isn't already made and finished but ever in transition and becoming. That is to say, coming about, coming undone.

And speaking of 'coming about' prompts a question to return again.

Is an event going to happen?

A twittering noise

A lot of questions were hanging in the air, enough to fill a book. But there was one question that kept returning like a little refrain ... And once again she found herself asking if an event is going to happen.

—‘Or, has it happened already? Rather than the *too-early* is it now the *too-late*?’

She said that she didn’t know the answer and I said that neither did I. All that could be done was to wait. And wait we did, and as we did we found that questions began to arise.

She asked if thinking always had to be about something, and before I had the time to think about my response I said:

‘Thinking is something.’

Without a hint of sarcasm, swank or cussedness she then said:

‘I’m listening to you.’

And after a short pause she repeated the words yet added:

‘But in what way am I hearing you?’

And the question was answered by her asking another.

‘Upon listening to you will I only hear that which I’ve already heard? Indeed, will I take back what you say to what I presume to already know? However, making this return my ears become plugged with presupposition. And that is not to listen to you. Presupposition seizes what you say before it is said. And this is to take the words from your mouth.’

I looked down, held a breath, and then looked up.

‘Plugged with presupposition my ears do not hear what you say as something as yet unsaid. I hear only the already said and shut out the unspoken, the future that can’t be said ahead of time. No matter what you say I will already know of what you speak. And so I kid myself that the future can be known in advance, but this is not to listen to you. This is to silence you. What is more, it is to assume an already-existing world, one that is complete, already built and no longer becoming. How foolish to presume that I can know the future before its becoming. Yes, how foolish to think that I can control time.’

And, with a twinkle in her eye, she responded by asking more questions.

‘It may be foolish to think that time can be controlled, but isn’t it naive to think that we can hear without presupposition? How can I hear as if for the first time? But wait, why should I fear nativity?’

To her question I responded quickly by saying that to hear as if for the first time perhaps would be like music to my ears. I looked to her and, at the same time, she looked to me. Each waited for the other to speak but the wait wasn’t very long.

‘There is the question of how I am to listen to you; however, this brings another question: how am I to look at you? I see you, but how am I looking at you? I see a twinkle in your eye yet how am I to see this twinkle outside of all prior representations? Indeed, how am I to see *without* presupposition? Yet, this would be to see as if for the first time; it would be to wonder and remain open to, what I can only call, the surprise event. Yes, it would be to see the twinkle in your eye as a glint of an event where something is coming about that hasn’t already been spoken for.’

—‘It would be to listen.’

And then a silence softly fell.

Is she humming to herself? There is a murmurous sound coming from her yet it’s barely audible. It’s a sound I can see more than hear. Yes, it’s a sound I can see as at times I see the sound of cat purring ... My eyes are hearing and there she is purring. This she-cat does have a proper name, one that is called often and to which, although not always, she comes, prancing like a little horse. She will sit beside me. She will sit very close. But she doesn’t want to be touched, at least not by human hand. It is the sound of my voice that she wants to be touched by. Stroke her and she will move away, but speak to her and she will purr and purr. The hairs on her body quiver, yet a sound can hardly be heard. There she is humming to herself,

singing her own little song, and who am I to deny that this little sound is of the world? The humans may think the world was made for them; but who are they to deny that that cat sat singing her song is in the world and of the world? Education may attempt to teach it otherwise, but I'm learning that the she-cat's little song is an expression of the world as it continually makes itself. There is nothing incomprehensible about this, but so often, far too often we fail to listen ...

I cleared my throat and thought to myself: what a noise this action makes. And then I asked her:

'Do you think the world is a Big Thing to speak of?'

She replied without hesitation.

'But is the world something separate from you and I? It is an old story but it is still told to this day: the world is a dangerous enemy that must be fought, restricted and held in place. What makes the world a dangerous place? The power of hatred. It is hatred that separates you and me, from the sky, from the dust and the animals and the bird flying high. It is hatred that makes us strangers to these things. It is hatred that separates. It is hatred that divides.'

After taking a short breath she continued.

'Hatred makes us believe that relations in the world are made by building bridges. How do you see a relation? As a bridge? And what does a bridge do? It makes us presuppose the existence of separate entities, separate sides. I am never separable from my relations with the world, it is these relations that make me, make me come about, come undone, become. But hatred would have me believe that I can separate myself from these relations. Indeed, hatred would have me believe that relations are of the order of bridges, which, at times, are necessary to burn for reasons of defence. Moreover, hatred would have me believe that the words becoming between us are nothing other than bridges being built.'

Suddenly my thinking started buzzing and I said to her that bridges are paradoxical in that they connect the disconnected. Her response was to say that the paradox also could go in the opposite way.

'In making connections do not bridges make the disconnected? It may be assumed that a separation exists before the construction of a bridge, but it is the bridge-building that forges the separation. Indeed, it may be taken for granted that before the building of a bridge there are two sides, and between them, let's say, a void, but it is the erection of the bridge that establishes the two sides and makes the vacancy of the void.'

'Hatred insists that my power to exist is a possession to fight for. Hatred would not agree that my power to exist involves constitutive acts that can never be separated from the whirls and twirls of a world that is continually constituting and reconstituting itself as it ceaselessly comes about and comes undone. Oh no, the power of hatred would insist that my power to exist must win itself an identity in order to be. Hatred loves for me to fear a loss of identity. It loves the whole world to be fighting for identity, to be fighting for the same. For then, when we say *The World* it would be the power of hatred that unifies the whole.'

—'It is hatred's power that makes the world want to sing in harmony. You and I are called to sing along, but it is hatred's power that enjoins us here. Yes, we can hold hands and make the perfect circle but the grouping here is not caused by those who are singing. And it is the causality that matters. Hatred is the cause of the honey-sweet harmony. Yes, the melliferous sound is hatred's effect. There is harmonious song yet this is not composed and caused by the constitutive power of those who are singing; we are singing together but *we* are dancing to another's tune: it is hatred that has brought us together.'

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He writes that he thinks and goes astray. He writes that he thinks and flutters about. Yes, Michel Serres, philosopher of science, is amongst those men and women for whom the way they think and the way they are is no different than the way the world pulsates. He says to think himself separate from this makes everything inexplicable and unreal.¹ But elsewhere he says:

'Our culture abhors the world.'²

And what a din this abhorrence makes. What a noise. Listen to the din, listen to the hissing and hubbub, yet hearken to that which this hateful noise assails and battles to drown out.

Listen twofold. But listen even harder to that which is relegated to the background. Yes, listen to that other noise, which is in the background, just within earshot.

And what can be heard? Indeed, what is *sounded*?

Answer: the restlessness of the world; the agitation that lies at the bottom of the world; the turbulence that turns the world; the boundless sounds of the world as it perturbs, disturbs and excites itself as it ceaselessly

becomes and comes undone. And what a cacophony comes from this, what a commotion. Some would call this chaos. And some would call this disorder. But he says that disorder is the worst word imaginable. Yes, Michel Serres prefers to speak of noise for noise is multiple, and it is the multiple that this philosopher wishes to be fathomed and sounded.³

—‘Do we have any sort of an ear for hearing that kind of thing?’⁴

Time and time again he says: listen. To be sure, he is asking that I prick up my ears, but he is not asking for my obedience. No, Michel Serres is not commanding that I become the dog listening to his master’s voice. But I am listening. Yes, I am listening to his noisy words, his tropes that turn every which way, his metaphors that mix unholily. Yet, it is not this commotion alone that he wishes me to hear. His wish is that I hear what my ears never stop hearing: the background noise within which my body, thought and knowledge are immersed. It is outside, always; it is The Outside, yet it is always inside, there within the very depths of my interior.

And he continues listening to that which has become forgotten through years of hatred and proscription.

—‘It is true, we have forgotten *noise*. I am trying to remember it ...’⁵

Quarrelling amongst ourselves we have forgotten the two-fold meaning of the Old French word *noise*.

—‘This word *noise* crosses the seas. Across the Channel or the Saint Lawrence Seaway, behold how noise divides itself. In Old French it used to mean: noise, uproar and wrangling; English borrowed the sound from us; we keep only the fury. In French we use it so seldom that you could say, apparently, that our language has been cleansed of this “noise”.’⁶

One meaning of noise — the sound of noise — crosses the seas and becomes separated from that Old French word, which in the phrase *chercher noise* is to kick up a fuss, to look for a fight, to quarrel.

—‘I mean to make a ruckus in the midst of these dividing waters.’⁷

The English took the sense of *sound* while the French kept the *battle*, and going further back you will hear, in the original Latin, the heaving of water. *Nauticus*: navy, nausea, noise. We may get seasick from hearing it, but Michel Serres wishes us to hear the multiple meaning of noise.

Listen to the noise of human antagonism. Yes, listen to the quarrels and hatred amongst ourselves, humans face-to-face. But listen to the noise of our battles against and hatred towards the noise that, for Michel Serres, sounds the multiple birthings, becomings and coming undones of the world, which can be heard at the seaside and, if you have an ear for it, at the edges

of our many languages, within our myths and metaphors, our images and encodings, our recordings, and channels of communications. Or indeed, our hearts as they beat through the night. Oh yes, if you have an ear for it listen to the noise of background noise, which is nothing but pure, mixed-up, multiplicity on the move.

No logos without noise. No logic without noise. No information without noise. Nascent nature begins in noise and the old man and his dog die in noise.

In our clean, crisp and crystal-clear digital age would we rather not hear that nascent nature begins in noise? Would we rather behold our human selves as separate from this? Would we rather forget the mess and noise of our birthings? Would we rather bathe in the hatred that wants so much to wash away and eliminate the muck and chaos of births and deaths? (You may wish to forget it, but squeaky clean still makes a noise.) Hatred loves to separate and divide. Yes, it is hatred that enjoins 'us' to come together, united as one against the world's discombobulating concert.

'... the hatred that never leaves the we, the hate that separates and joins, that syrupy hate.'⁸

And now I am being bid by Michel Serres to listen to a dialogue.

I hear two speaking together, but are they in agreement or tenaciously contradicting each other? Well, let's say, for argument's sake, that the interlocutors are determined to contradict each other. Yes, let's say they are dialectically opposed and thus can be said to be on opposite sides.

But are they?

—'As violent as their confrontation may be, as long as they are willing to continue the discussion they must speak a common language in order for the dialogue to take place. There can't be an argument between two people if one speaks a language the other can't understand.'⁹

No matter what their argument, the interlocutors are in no way opposed (as in the traditional concept of the dialectic); on the contrary, they play on the same side and together battle against a mutual enemy.

And what is the enemy?

The noise of the world that hums in the background and perpetually threatens to hum between them. To have this noise humming between them would make a nasty interference; it would mess up their argument. And so, this noisy 'third term', which threatens to come between them, must be expelled, excluded.

‘... the two opponents in a dialogue struggle together, on the same side, against the noise that could jam their voices and their arguments. Listen to them raise their voices, concertedly, when the brouhaha begins. Debate, once again, presupposes this agreement. The quarrel, or *noise* in the sense of battle, supposes a common battle against the jamming, or *noise* in the sense of sound.’¹⁰

The two speakers in the face-to-face dialogue stand as opponents to each other; however, the racket of their debate blankets the true enemy: the hum and furore of the oceans of noise that sound the chaos of the world.

—‘And no one notices this.’¹¹

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A hint of agitation wobbled in her voice as she asked:

‘Is nothing going to happen here?’

Soon, however, the wobble quivered into humour as she said:

‘What a question. Don’t you think there is something unthinkable about it — how can nothing happen? To have nothing happen would be a paradoxical event. For nothing to take place there is a taking place, yet, at the same time, there is no taking place. It is an unsettling thought. But that is what paradox does. It unsettles my thought and provokes it to vacillate, to move to and fro. Yes, it is an agitating movement.’

‘To be sure,’ I said to her in response, ‘it is possible that the agitating movement of paradox can make us shudder and shake with anxiety; but it is also possible that this agitating movement can produce a vibration that would make us become musical beings.’

She said that she had some questions to ask and I said that so did I.

She asked if either of us would become agitated were it not that being involves a capacity to be affected and I asked how either of us would have a life if there wasn’t in life a power to be affected. She asked if a power to be affected was to be considered as involving more than so-called human emotions and I asked if affectivity transverses the world.

She continued by asking if forging an openness to the world is essential to the making and living of an individual life and I replied by asking if a power to be affected is to be considered as fundamental to the making of being. She asked how any separation between things could be clear cut if being comes about in relation to a power to be affected and I asked if the

perpetuality of inter-actions that come about through affectivity — the power to affect and be affected — means that the limits which are attributed to individual beings — human, organic or otherwise — are continually wavering and quivering. She asked if affectivity makes beings that vibrate and modulate and I asked if affectivity is what makes being become musical. She asked if to vibrate is what makes being hold together and I asked if to modulate is what keeps being on the move, even if, like a tree, it remains rooted to the spot.

And then she asked:

‘Have you ever seen a musical tree?’

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Can you hear that background noise? Perhaps you would prefer not to listen. Perhaps you would rather plug your ears and not hear the noise that sounds the restlessness and multiplicity of the world. Yes, perhaps you would rather shut out this noise along with the noisy sounding words of Michel Serres.

You have plugged your ears tight, but doing this makes you realize just how noisy your thinking is; it makes you hear, so much better, the noise that breathes within your body, that rises in your throat, that rustles, rumbles and roars at the bottom of your existence.

—‘By ear, of course, I hear: temple, drum, pavilion, but also my entire body and the whole of my skin. We are immersed in sound just as we are immersed in the air and light, we are caught up willy-nilly in its hurly-burly. We breathe background noise, the taut and tenuous agitation at the bottom of the world, through all our pores and papillae, we collect within us the noise of organization, a hot flame and a dance of integers.’¹²

So full of sound we are.

Michel Serres says that what he is offering to be sounded is a new object for philosophy. He says that the object of his book *Genesis* is both a new one and a common one.

—‘We recognize it everywhere, yet reason still insists on ignoring it.’¹³

The noisy multitude is an object that is as common as muck, yet so much philosophy would prefer to ignore this. Although noise and multiplicity can hardly be said to be objects — they require a new way of thinking — rare is the philosophy that assigns privilege to sound.

And then the words of another chime in:

‘Philosophy has no place for sound. Sound is foreign. It is always outside the world, threatening to invade it, like anarchy.

‘We more or less acknowledge this with respect to noise, which like randomness is held in low esteem. The wholeness of the world requires us to exclude or subdue noise, or at least defer it to the background.’¹⁴

Michel Serres speaks of background noise, yet this is no deferral or exclusion of the sound of noise. On the contrary: it is there for all. There is noise in the subject, in the object, in the observed, in the observer, in the transmitter and in the receiver; it is in being, in appearing and in knowing as well; moreover, it crosses the most predominant divisions of philosophy and makes a mockery of its criteria.

—‘It is in the real, and in the sign, already.’¹⁵

And here I am reading *Genesis* in a most disorderly fashion. How can I sum up the noisy words of Michel Serres? How can I sum up what he says when he is saying that (background) noise is a multiplicity of which we do not know the sum? The multiplicity in question is, essentially, unbounded; it cannot be summed up; it cannot be counted numerically as one.

Would I rather run from that which can’t be summed up? A want of understanding is stirring in me; it is making me agitated but it is stopping me from running. So, I’m agitated — how can I grasp the multiplicity of this background noise? By letting it slip and fall through my fingers?

I’m falling. Yes, I’m falling into chaos, *the gaping yawning void*. To be sure, there is fear and I am feeling nauseous. And out of fear I start humming a little refrain ... hun-dun, hun-dun, hun-dun.

Hun-dun. The word makes its sound, and then I hear that from a creation myth from ancient Taoism hun-dun etymologically sounds chaos. Hun-dun sounds chaos, that primal background noise, which in Greek is sounded as a yawning. Michel Serres speaks of a ‘breathing breeze’ and maybe this is what things are based upon, maybe it is the ground of space and time. The yawning void: the ground of the world, the backdrop of the universe, the background of being, maybe.

Hun-dun, or perhaps the primal noise is *mur*, the French-sounding word for wall. *Mur*: the sound of a wall of indistinguishable sounds; a wall of sound that sounds blank. This blank sound is the noise of the void, but let’s not make the stupid mistake of making the void isomorphic with nothingness. No, the void is not nothingness, it is pure possibility, it gapes

wide with openness. That is the yawn. The yawn that opens up unbounded multiplicity.

—‘It is not potential, it is the very reverse of power, rather it is capaciousness. This noise is the opening. The Ancients were right to say of chaos that it gaped. The multiple is open, from it is born nature, which is always aborning. We cannot predict what will be born from it. We cannot know what is in it, here or there. No one knows, no one has ever known, no one will ever know how a possible coexists with a possible, and perhaps it coexists through a relationship of possibility.’¹⁶

And from the noise of the breathing breeze there comes (don’t know how) a second noise, a little jolt in the wall of sound. A slight perturbation happens and then there comes a mur-mur.

—‘The wall is there, a *mur*, the faintest noise has already passed through it.’¹⁷

Mur-mur; yes, it is a little movement that goes to and fro, up and down. Mur-mur, mur-mur; yes, it is an echo, a vibration, a periodic repetition, a little rhythm. Mur-mur, mur-mur, mur-mur; yes, it is a little refrain that gets the tempo going, a little flicker of time.

The murmuring rises and falls like dancing flames, like lapping waters appearing, disappearing. Appearing, disappearing — yes, the music is beginning and with this comes, perhaps, the first inkling, the first tinkling, of being.

The murmuring rises and falls and constitutes what can only be called evanescent events. Yet it is possible (still don’t know how) that the tempo of the murmuring will heat up and produce a surge with which comes a swell that may well, possibly, produce a fluctuation, another little jolt.

‘... the tip of the crest of the swell, now *that* is what a fluctuation is.’¹⁸

And still no one can predict in which direction things will go. It is chaos, and it is not solid. Yes, we are in a sea of fluctuations where everything can go in every which direction. Yes, this noisy restless sea is pure multiplicity: it is mixture, it is contingency and it is turbulent. What happens here are so many attempted beginnings, so many difficult beginnings that sigh and then die. But beginning there is, here and there. Perhaps the fluctuation at the tip of the crest will fade away and dissolve into the breathing breeze of background noise; or, perhaps, it is inclined to turn and get bigger. And now it is getting bigger, roaringly bigger. And now the whirling motion is under way and exuberance is in the air. And now there comes the sounds of a swirling turning turbulence that produces a coher-

ence that composes and elaborates a process of forming that becomes a morphogenesis that heralds the birthing of a phenomenon that can stand as Venus stands as she emerges from the chaotic noisy nauseous waters. Here then are phenomena at their birth, at the moment of their birth, in and through turbulence. Nature is emerging, living, moving and inert. What is more, the process never stops.

Venus is leaving the waters that murmur, heave and roar; but has she left the background noise behind her?

‘No,’ she says, ‘it will never leave me.’

Her words dance at the edge of the sea of noise that carries along a thousand tonalities; they come from it, and they return to it.

So much noise there is within background noise: murmurings, tumultuous furore, thunder claps, voices, whirlwinds and moans that die away. And what is this if not the sound of time — yes, the unintegrated sounds of time beyond the metered tick and tock of the marching chronological clock.

It may be said that nothing *appears* without time but time itself gives nothing to see. Indeed, it may be said that time continually slips through the grasping hand and perplexes the eye in its essential *disappearance*. Yet is this to say that time cannot be made audible, cannot be heard? Is it not time — the multiplicity of time — that Michel Serres wishes us to hear within the words that make and agitate his noisy book *Genesis*? Is not this philosopher wanting to render time sonorous? And what is the sound of time if not the noisy musical of the *real multiple* as it composes, decomposes, disturbs, perturbs, passes, destroys or constructs? Judge it negative or positive but to do so is a naive anthropomorphism.

—‘The multiple moves, that is all.’¹⁹

And history is born from the thousand tonalities that sound the noisy multitude of the world. Yes, history is born from noise. Just listen to the noise of the mob, the noise of the crowd, the noise of the naked collective fury.

Crowd, or in others words, *turba*.

It is not long before *turba* turns to turbulence and I find myself rushing excitedly to ask: what is the nature of this eventful occurrence called turbulence? But wait, have I been presumptuous in calling it eventful? Have I put words into the mouth of another?

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Again she asked if I had ever seen a musical tree, and my response was to say:

‘Your question begs a story.’

And what was to be her story?

She spoke of a tree that stood close by what was, for a week, her dwelling place. She said it was a tall tree. She said it was what you would call a pine-tree. She spoke of how each evening a hundred small brown birds would congregate in the tree and make a loud commotion. She said others staying near by would complain. A racket they said. A din. But she would listen, and as she did, the noise became a daily refrain.

She told me that the hundred small brown birds could not be counted for as they congregated they became indistinguishable from the pine-cones that issued from the tree. She said that you could not tell where bird began and pine-cone ended. Looking at the tree — and look she did — no winged beast could be clearly seen. All that could be seen was an agitated tree quivering sonorously: a twittering-tree. She told me she had wondered if the birds had set out to imitate the pine-cones. She said that she had wondered but had also found herself asking questions about imitation itself. She said that she had had to ask:

‘Are not cases of imitation always tottering on the brink of self-destruction? How can something imitate something else without what is imitated itself becoming something else? With imitation don’t both imitator and imitated become something other than what they are?’

She said that as the week passed her thinking had also started twittering.

‘... It’s not that small brown bird is transformed into equally small brown pine-cone but rather that there is a continual passing from one to the other. That it cannot be told where one begins and the other ends has the effect of making both become other than what they are whilst remaining, in one respect, what they are. This *becoming* is no production of an imitation; rather, what is produced is a zone of indiscernability ...’

She said that her thinking was still twittering, and after the shortest of pauses she went on to say that the continual passing from bird to pine-cone made both bird and cone wobble, quiver and vacillate. Then she said that this continual passing sang out that both bird and pine-cone were open to being affected by each other. Yes, what passed between bird and pine-cone

was affectivity; it was affectivity that made both quiver and vacillate. And she continued by saying that this vacillating movement had had the effect of making a vibration sing between bird and pine-cone. Then she said that what this singing sounded to her ears was the creation of musical being.

After her pausing and me waiting for her to say more, she took a little intake of breath and spoke of how there hadn't been a transformation of a pine-cone into a chirping twittering bird but rather a conjugation of both. She said that this conjugation was what made for, each evening, a becoming that quivered with the creation of musical being.

But to whom or what did this being and this becoming belong?

She said that in one sense it belonged to both bird and pine-cone but in another sense belonged to neither. She said that the becoming was twofold but this double-act meant that the becoming was irreducible to either bird or pine-cone. She said that she wasn't sure if belonging was the right word.

Then she said that as birds and pine-cones each evening entered into composition with each other there was a transformation of the functional features of a bird's twitter and a tree's seed.

—'But of the composition that happened — the twittering-tree — are we to call it art or are we to call it nature?'

She said that some would call it an event.

Was this the end of her story?

'No,' she said, 'the end hasn't happened yet.'

Thereupon she spoke of how it was only the one tree that was chosen from all the trees thereabout. She said that although the birds favoured the one tree it was not the birds alone that each evening caused the twittering-tree to come into existence. She said that the twittering-tree was not the result of that tree having to passively suffer the action of those birds. She said that the coming about of the twittering-tree could only have come about because both the tall pine-cone-issuing tree and the mass of small brown birds had a capacity — a power — to affect each other and enter into composition and make something happen between them, which belonged to neither. She said that from the singular — small brown bird conjugating with small brown pine-cone — to the plural — tall tree amass with pine-cones conjugating with a mass of small brown birds — the twittering-tree quivered with interaction and that this was its song. She said that the quivering could be heard and it could be seen.

Then she spoke of how the quivering was what made the twittering-tree's time, its life-time. She said that the quivering was what held the

twittering-tree together, what gave it consistency, what gave it body, even though this body wasn't fleshy and had something incorporeal about it. She said that it was the quivering that gave existence to the twittering-tree. She said that as trembling as this existence might have been, it was an existence no less, even though some would say of this existence that it was fleeting, more of a short-lived performance than an enduring rock-like being. Short lived it may have been, and a performance also, but being there was. Something had been created, even if its appearance each evening was predicated upon its disappearance.

She then went on to say that in its transformation of the functional features of a bird's chirp and a tree's seed the twittering-tree also quivered with an undecidability as to whether its creation was art or natural technique. But, whether it was to be called art or whether it was to be called nature, being there was.

She said that there was being yet she couldn't say to whom or what this could be attributed, said to belong to, or be the possession of. She said that perhaps the twittering-tree was proposing something to her in respect of a mode of being that doesn't require a subject, let alone one that is human centric. Had the twittering-tree something to teach to her? She said that what she had learnt from the twittering-tree was that it couldn't be spoken of — then as now — by simply saying *The tree is twittering* or, indeed, *The birds in the tree are twittering*. She said that to have uttered such sentences would have been to overlook what she could only call the event of the twittering-tree and, in so doing, ignore what the twittering-tree had to teach in respect of this.

And then I said that I wanted to hear more of what she had learnt from the twittering-tree in respect of its existence being called an event.

And then she said:

'Bear with me while I try to explain.'

And then I said:

'I'm all ears.'

And then she continued.

'I am speaking. The tree is twittering. At school I was taught that such simple sentences consist of a subject and a predicate. The lesson was simple: the predicate is what is said of the subject. Yes, the lesson was simple, as simple as A, B, C: *speaking* and *twittering* is what is said of the subject *I* and the subject *tree*. I remember the lesson well: the subject precedes the predicate just as A precedes B. The subject comes first and the

predicate is to be regarded as belonging to it. However, what I learnt from the twittering-tree was something quite different to this.

‘To have said *The tree is twittering* or *The birds in the tree are twittering* would have been to attribute the twittering to a tree-subject or a plural bird-subject. But, strictly speaking, the twittering of the twittering-tree could not be attributed to either, or both, of these said subjects. What the twittering-tree could be attributed to was the zone of indiscernability — the affectivity and quivering — that passed between, indeed twittered between, both tree and birds, which as such belonged to neither yet made both become musical being. Yes, it can be said that this was the real subject of the twittering-tree. Which is to say that the real subject — if indeed I dare use such a term — was the act and process of conjugation whereby both tree and birds and pine-cones and, perhaps, the time of day entered into composition with each other and became something other than what they were whilst, at the same time, remaining what they were. The real subject was the coming about of this becoming, it was the performance of the process of composition. The performing subject was the process, and this comprised of nothing but the activity of affecting, agitating, vibrating, quivering, twittering. This is what can be said of the twittering-tree: it voiced pure verballity. Indeed, what could be heard — and seen — were verbs passing into the infinitive — to affect, to agitate, to vibrate, to quiver, to twitter. And verbs in the infinitive have no particular subject; what they refer to is the performance of the activity, which can only be spoken of as the indefinite subject “it”.

‘What can be said of the twittering-tree is that its being was purely act and performance. Yes, a performance through and through. Yet of this it could not be said that there was a definite performing subject or artist. A performance without a performing subject; or, at least, the subject performing was not one that was already made before the performance. What the twittering-tree taught me, and still is teaching me, is that the predicate is an act, a performance in motion and not a state attributable to a subject. What the predicate speaks of is a coming about and this, what is more, we can call an event.

‘So, this is the lesson I am learning: an event is the act or process of something “in the making”, which can also be the process of something becoming undone. To have said *The tree is twittering* or *The birds in the tree are twittering* and taken it for granted that the twittering belonged to the tree-subject or the birds-subject would have been to overlook and ignore

what the verbal noise of the twittering-tree sounded and sung of with respect to predicates and events. What the twittering-tree is teaching me is that there can be *being* without this having to centre upon a subject.'

Then I said that the lesson taught to her by the twittering-tree begged the question:

'What is to become of the subject if the predicate is said to be an event?'

To this she responded by saying:

'Perhaps it too will become an event.'

And I couldn't help but then ask:

'So, is an event going to happen; or, has it happened already?'

She knew, as I knew, that the question didn't expect an immediate answer.

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I can't eliminate confusion from my thinking. At times I pretend that it is not there, but I delude myself. I pretend that confusion has been dispelled and all is clear and as such foreseeable; but, when I had thought it gone away, it then arrives, unexpected, unannounced. What has happened is that I have not been listening to the noise of my thinking, which is always there. And in not listening, perhaps, I have not been thinking.

Michel Serres — him again — tells me that hearing is a model of understanding. He says it is still active even when our gaze has gone fuzzy or gone to sleep. He says that he hears and he understands, blindly.

—'While I can close my eyes, at my leisure, while I can cloak my colours, I can neither close nor permanently plug my ears. No one is deaf, in a strict sense ...'²⁰

So often, I am so busy looking, looking to understand by seeing, that I forget to listen. I forget that I am continually listening.

—'When the sense of sight is the model of knowing, I am not always thinking. If hearing is the model, I am always thinking.'²¹

And now I take hearing as the model of knowing. Now I am all ears.

And what do I hear?

The confusion of my thinking.

I do not welcome the confusion — it can send me into a spin — yet I do not wish to banish it for — and here I am taking a risk — something can

come of it that hasn't been thought before, something surprising, something unexpected, something perhaps a little green. And what is this greenness if not the timid advance of the new?²²

The advance may be wobbly and a little unsure, but would you, Michel Serres, call this, along with the greening of my thinking, an event?

I can ask questions and seek answers, but I can never wholly eliminate confusion from my thinking. What is more, you, Michel Serres, think it would be a blunder if I did attempt to do so. For, what is this confusion if not the noise that you are bidding me hear, the background noise that never leaves me, that never stops, night or day? And yes, I'm trying to hear that noise, which may be, possibly, the background of being and thought.

I'm listening, but I am also listening out for theories of the event. I'm pressing my ears close to your words, Michel Serres, which is to imply that I'm not hearing a theory shouting out, loud and clear. And as for loud theories, don't they in their shouting out drown out that background noise, which I am trying to hear? But I'm listening for what is implied. Yes, I'm listening for what rustles and rumbles at the edges of your words, what can hardly be heard, which, of course, runs the risk of my hearing incorrectly or, indeed, of putting words into the mouth of another. Take the risk — that is what I'm hearing you say. Yes, Michel Serres, I'm hearing you say that trying to think, trying to produce, presupposes the taking of risks.

I'm trying to think. I'm trying to think the event.

You, Michel Serres, have never claimed, as far as I know, to be a philosopher of the event, but I'm wanting to ask if you have an opinion on what constitutes an event. I'm wanting to ask yet I hear you saying:

'Opinion is stable, it is stiff, it is singular, it defines someone through hates.'²³

I'm wondering what you would judge to be an event, yet you're asking:

'But you who judge, you who wield critical exigency, you, what have you invented?'²⁴

You tell me that inventive thinking is unstable and, what is more, you say the philosopher is not a judge, is not a critic. You say that if this were so, the philosopher would only kill and never produce anything, never tend to the timid and green advance of the new. You say that the care and passion of the philosopher is to protect the possible, the unforeseeable, the not yet, which can't be seen ahead of time. And what is the possible if not the yawning of ancient chaos that accompanies my every step and murmurs at the bottom of my existence?

—‘The most common forgetting is that of the possible. It is so much forgotten that it is not visible.’²⁵

You, Michel Serres, care for the multitude of the possible; but do you care for the event, do you care for the question of what constitutes an event? I think so. I think so when I hear you say, ‘life and thinking die and lie dormant from a lack of events’.²⁶

Yes, I think so when I hear you say:

‘If we are requisite, upright, alert, tensed — if we are alive, it is because we know, because we hope that the unforeseeable will happen, that it will be unconnected to what is already there or already assembled, that it will catch us off our guard and that we will have to negotiate. Encounters in the middle of the cross-roads, drama, luck, change of course.’²⁷

The unforeseeable; that which catches us off guard; that which is unconnected to what is already there; that which effects a change of course: is this how you would define the *event* of an event? And if this were so, would you, then, define the event as that which comes out of the blue?

Or, is the event for you when there is a becoming of the new and a little greenness advances from the blue? And if this would be the event, would it be like this:

In being unforeseen by and unconnected to what is already there, what comes out of the blue produces a jolt that instigates a disturbance that makes what is already assembled become a little undone, which — let’s face it — is what opens up the chance for something new to come about.

But wait, does this chance, which in its happening changes and transforms the course of what is already there, require the work of the negative? For you, Michel Serres, I don’t think so. I don’t think so when I hear you say:

‘The real work toward transformation is not the work of the negative, for the work of the negative bolsters the old order, maintains it in its order, and makes time linear ... The work of transformation is that of the multiple.’²⁸

You say that as a whole our reasoning is negative. You say that it says no and doesn’t know how to say yes except by saying no twice. It says no — refutation and critique — and then says no to no, which then comes to say yes to the conjecture and hypothesis. And then you say that you have understood finally why hatred is, so frequently, reasoning’s motivating force.²⁹

What is more, you say our reasoning would rather exclude and negate the (background) noise that sounds the restless and unruly multiplicity of the world. It would rather wash its hands. It can't cope and it won't negotiate. And so our reasoning, in general, would rather classify the noise of chaos as non-sense. It would rather have chaos expressed by a negative word: dis-order.

Some would argue, until they are blue in the face, that it is the work of the negative that moves history, that makes history, makes *events*. They say that without opposition, which is the negative at work, nothing would move. Opposition, argument, dialectics, battles, war — what does this do? It makes a racket. It makes calumny rise up, spitting and hissing. And listen to the din. And what does this noise cover and smother? Answer: the noise that you, Michel Serres, are bidding reason to hear and negotiate.

—‘The history of *noise* covers, with its *noise*, history.’³⁰

You say that opposition, contraries, dualisms and dichotomies are hell. You say you are trying to escape that hell. You say that rather than opposing you would prefer to step side-ways. Are you wanting to counter the hatred of opposition with love?

—‘Love is not the opposite of hate, for hatred is the whole set of contraries.’³¹

Noise, as you are quick to tell me, has no contrary. Yes, noise has no opposite, no outside. How much noise must be made to silence noise? To shut up the loud mouth you have to shout. Yes, the contradiction of noise is noise. Our logic is immersed in noise.

You say that all things are transformed by fire and time. You say that the time of erosion and wear would not happen without the disorderly time of the weather — *les temps*. And, what is more, you say that fire, the work of which heats up the chaotic and disorderly motion of molecules, obtains its motive force only under the ‘immense thrust’ of the multiple. Disorderly time, chaotic motion — pure multiplicity; I wonder: is this what holds a concept of the event for you? I think so and yet, at the same time, I don't think so. I think so in so far as disorderly time, which knows no time-table, can bring to us the unexpected and the unforeseeable, yet I don't think so in so far as you express, time and time again, a wariness towards the making of concepts.

And why ever this wariness? What is it that happens in the making of concepts?

Answer: unitization and unification, capture and subsumption.

Of what?

The multitude.

‘... knowledge through concepts regiments the nauseous herd under the pure generality of the one.’³²

The concept makes inconsistent multiplicity consistent. What is involved in the making of a concept is, in general, a counting-as-one. Indeed, a concept makes multiplicity become subsumed under the rule of the one. Instead of multiplicity, units and unity appear, integrations appear, negation happens. We speak of the herd, the swarm, the crowd and that is a counting as one.

—‘That herd must be singular in its totality and it must be made up of a given number of sheep or buffalo. We want a principle, a system, an integration, and we want elements, atoms, numbers.’³³

Concepts wobble and tremble before the demon noise, which sounds the restless agitation of the multitude. Concepts — they too have their noise, although rationality would prefer not to hear this. Rationality was born from the terror of noise and, in terror, it dispatched noise to the underworld. It is Hades and it is Hell. But you say, Michel Serres, that the wailing of the demons below are nothing but the calls of the world.

—‘Would you be frightened by this wailing?’³⁴

You say that we were afraid of gases and liquids, winds and waters. You say that now we are afraid of disorder and the rarely predictable. You say that philosopher Henri Bergson was right to say that our metaphysics are metaphors of the solid. The old opposition between solids and fluids is stupid, yet this stupidity still governs our knowledge of multiplicities.

Although the old classification of solids and fluids is no longer very interesting, it is still the rock solid that is extolled in the making of concepts. But wait, listen to the rocks, press your ears close and listen to the seething multitude; every particle is a quiver. And when rocks are heard as quivering beings, as ‘musical’ beings, who knows what will have happened in the world, who knows what will be happening?

Some would say: babble.

Babble, babel — whichever way you say it, it’s a confused medley of sounds, a noisy assembly. Babel, babble, babel, babble: the ignorant are accused of this; it is said they don’t understand. Make sense. Don’t babble. And to make sense, build a tower that will reach to the sky ...

The tower builders think they have good understanding, they are all making sense to each other. They have got a blueprint to follow. But then,

unexpectedly, their project begins to fail. The Tower of Babel remains incomplete, never to become numerically one. There is just too much confusion. Too many voices. Too many tongues. Yet you, Michel Serres, say:

'Babel is not a failure, it is at that very moment when the tower is dismantled that we begin to understand that one must understand without concepts.'³⁵

And what does the incomplete Tower of Babel ask us to understand? Incompletion and the noise of multiplicity. Indeed, it behoves us to understand that comprehension always remains incomplete and that this is no failure. There is wisdom in understanding this, just as there is wisdom in understanding that clear thinking is never without confusion. The Tower Builders had a dream to reach into the sky and touch the blue. They had a blueprint, yet this could not prepare them for what comes out of the blue, which for you, Michel Serres, is born from the motley, variegated multiplicity of background noise.

So, if you were to say that your care and passion were the event, I'm guessing you wouldn't define the *event* of an event as that which can be said to be singular in the sense of saying that it can be counted as numerically one. I'm guessing that you would ask for the event to be conceived of *without* a concept. Or, if there is to be a concept, such a concept would have to be that which doesn't reckon the multiple as consistent, as one. I'm guessing that for you the event of an event would sound and abound with the multiplicity that shakes and makes the world. I'm guessing that the event's constitution would be multiple. And you, I'm sure, would be the first to say that the event here could never be completely grasped because it abounds unbounded. Yes, I'm guessing and, I agree, I could be barking up the wrong tree. But still, my guess is that you wouldn't define the event as that which presents the singular one.

Or would you?

Would you in so far as the singular can shift from meaning the 'all-encompassing one' to that which is uniquely one-off, which could be, let's admit, a definition of the *event* of an event. Yes, I'm thinking such singularity could define the event when I hear you say:

'The expansive fizzle of sea noise is broken into fluctuations. A given one of them, dwarfish, singular, begins gathering followers. Why? We do not know. A thousand, a hundred thousand, unique, have started out, no doubt, and then collapsed into the stillness of the noise, washed out by the *noise* ... I thought I heard a call in the uproar, a signal amid the pandemo-

nium, the wave, heaving up a moment, falls again. Why is that one, that unique one, not lost? Answer: why were the others, those unique ones, lost?’³⁶

You tell me that a fluctuation is a tiny jolt of chaos, indeed, a tiny jolt. And then you say that the jolt is an element of motley multiplicity. You say that it is a jolt of noise. You speak of ‘basic time’ and say that this comprises jolts and fluctuations. You say that this time never stops being at your side or bombarding you with unexpected jostles. And hearing this, how can I not ask if a jolt is what is required for an event to happen?

Would it be the singularity of a unique jolt? Is this for you what would define the event of an event?

Again, would it be like this:

The unforeseeability of that which comes out of the blue produces a jolt — a jolt of noise — within what is already assembled. The jolt may well be an evanescent event that disappears as soon as it appears, or it may, possibly, effect an agitation that produces a turbulence, which in its turning may, possibly, open up the chance for the creation of the new.

I’m guessing that I would be making a mistake if I were to consider the coming out of the blue, of the disturbing unique jolt, as an operation that is transcendent of the already-assembled situation. I’m making this guess for now I’m remembering what you have said elsewhere. Yes, I’m remembering what you have said of Lucretius’s ‘swerve’, which is — is it not? — another trope for the jolt that comes stochastically out of the blue. No, I haven’t forgotten that the swerve, the *clinamen* — the tiniest possible angle of contingency that initiates a turbulence within the laminar flow — needs no other referent than the intrinsic one of the flow. And remembering that Venus — another trope for the *clinamen* — is not transcendent like the other gods, I would say that the coming out of the blue of the jolt has as its only referent the noise that it intrinsic to — immanent within — the multiplicity of what is already assembled.³⁷

And what does this noise hark back to?

Answer: breathing breeze; the multiplicity of possibility that yawns open wide within the void of ancient chaos.

Yes, it could be said that the ‘jolt out of the blue’ comes from the yawning void. However, it would be a mistake to think of this void as transcendent of what is already assembled. It is not to be found beyond; rather, it is to be found within what is already assembled, yawning in the bottom of its existence.

So, is it the singularity of the ‘jolt out of the blue’ that makes life and thinking eventful? Or, is it the turbulence from which comes, through its disturbance, the arrival of the new and everything that breathes? Which begs the question: what is turbulence?

What is turbulence?

You tell me that turbulence is an intermediary state between disorder and order. Chaos is there and order is there, mixed. You say that turbulence is an exquisite state, although it is difficult to conceive of and study scientifically. You say it is widespread — turbulences are everywhere — yet not quite universal, not everything, far from it, is turbulent. Turbulence can make the kettle sing but it can also make my stomach drop. It can be a state of birth, a time of generating newness, yet it can also be a death threat.

What causes turbulence?

A jot of noise.

No, I haven’t forgotten: the disturbing unique jolt, which initiates turbulence, is an element of the restless multiplicity that is sounded by background noise. Without this brouhaha — and, let’s not forget, the void of the chaos that breathes and yawns within it — life and thinking would indeed die and lie dormant from a lack of events.

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Once again I asked if her story had ended and without a hint of hesitation she said that the twittering-tree hadn’t yet ended. And I couldn’t help but say that surely it was no more, which prompted the question if she thought her story preserved the performance event that had been named the twittering-tree.

She said that in telling her story of the twittering-tree something was happening, but — yes — the twittering-tree was no more. She then said that while the twittering-tree was happening she had indeed wondered how the happening, the performance event, could be photographed. How could the quivering be photographed? How could the sound be photographed? How could the affectivity, which was the making of the twittering-tree, be photographed? Indeed, how could that musical being become a still photographic image?

She said that the tenor of her questions depended upon what was presumed and expected of a photographic image.

—‘What do you expect the making of a photographic image to do? What do you assume?’

She continued by saying that although the event of the twittering-tree had affected her each evening, she had had no urge to preserve its existence, which was — let’s not forget — a performance in motion, a composition in process. She then spoke of how the life-time of the twittering-tree was the movement of this performance and process. She said that once the process of composition stopped and the performance ceased so did the twittering-tree disappear, although birds and tree did remain.

—‘So, how could the movement of the performance in motion have been preserved? Could it have been bottled? Could it have been pickled? Could it have been quick frozen?’

She said that attempts to do so would have preserved the disappearance of the performance in motion rather than the life and becoming of the composition in process.

—‘How can one preserve the time when something is in the process of making itself?’

She then said that although the tree could not uproot itself and walk, the twittering-tree’s being was nothing but movement, even if this wasn’t so easy to see. There was the affectivity that passed between birds and tree. There was the agitation, the vacillation, the vibration. There was, also, the movement of the time that made the time of day, the time of early evening. And moreover, there was the movement of the time that made the life-time of the twittering-tree come to be individuated, come to pass and be no longer.

And yet again she queried how such movement, so often imperceptible, could be preserved in its movement.

—‘Wouldn’t a still photographic image render the movement motionless? Wouldn’t it freeze out the sound?’

And then, again, she said that the tenor of the questions depended upon what was presumed and expected of a photographic image. She said that if a reproduction of the twittering-tree were the expectation then the making of a still photographic image would be inadequate in respect of this.

—‘But if there were no such expectation, which is born from the want to preserve, then this begs the question of what, with the twittering-tree, would be made in the making of a still photographic image?’

The question darted between us until she said that it wouldn't be an image *of* the twittering-tree. She said that perhaps it would be — would have been — a photographic image made *with* the twittering-tree.

She said *of*. She said *with*. And then she said that there is a difference. And I thought about the difference. And she continued by talking about the difference.

She said that with the making of the twittering-tree there was a becoming pine-cone of small brown bird and a becoming sonorous of tall coniferous tree. She said that the twittering-tree was composed by such becoming, which was born from the affectivity that made tree and birds quiver and conjugate and become musical being. She said that in making a photographic image *with* the twittering-tree there would be yet another making, yet another conjugation, yet another becoming. Yes, another event. She said that there would be a becoming-photograph of the twittering-tree. This becoming, however, would not be the same as the becoming of the twittering-tree. There would be — would have been — a difference.

She continued by saying that just as there had been, with the making of the twittering-tree, a transformation of the functional features of a bird's twitter and a tree's seed there would have been, with the making of a photographic image, yet another transformation.

—'A photographic transformation.'

She said that a photographic being would have been born. Not a reproduction of the twittering-tree but a being born by way of an openness towards being affected by the twittering-tree. As with the twittering-tree itself, such a being would have been born of affectivity.

—'Isn't an openness towards being affected what is asked for when one acts to make *with* something or someone else?'

And I said that if a photographic image were made with an openness to being affected then wouldn't this — according to what has been said of how affectivity made birds and pine-cones quiver and vibrate — make the photographic being become musical being, even if not a whisper of sound be heard?

I smiled broadly and so did she.

And there we were, waiting and grinning.

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Pressing a large sea-shell to my ear, I now realize that what I hear is background noise. Although it may not sound melodious to the ear, this is the noise of the times that precede, yet always accompany, the 'ordered' temporalities of systems, organisms and tick-tocking clocks, and this noise is, as you would say, Michel Serres, the song of the taut and tenuous agitation at the bottom of the world.

—'There is background noise, then a noise in the midst of that background noise, and suddenly there's the whole song.'³⁸

And what is this second noise in the midst of background noise? Answer: the first flicker of a beginning of a process, the first tinkling of time that has an inkling of a sense of direction, the first tentative steps of processual time, which is what gets the music going. And what prepares the way for this processual time, this first beginning of a process? Basically, it is basic time that prepares the way.

Basic time goes in bursts and offers little in the way of consistency; it is sporadic and forms a multiplicity that barely holds together. And speaking of basic time, you, Michel Serres, say that it can't congeal into a mass, you say it can't be classed, you say that it can't freeze, you say:

'Here is disorder, here is chaos, here is the patchwork of badly stitched tatters, upon which there appears, locally, a first process or the beginning of a process.'³⁹

I find the existence of basic time hard to picture, hard to visualize, hard to hear, hard to distinguish from the indistinguishable noise of chaos or, in other words, the *mur* — the wall of sound. Yes, basic time is close to the *mur* of primordial chaos, yet it is this jumpy and sporadic time that readies the way for the second noise: the mur-muring — the echo — where a little repetition takes hold and processual time is enabled to pursue a sequence such that a second step can proceed from a first step.

Tohu-bohu, brouha-ha: for all the empty chaotic formless babbling muttering confusion signified, it is with such double sounds that the echo begins.

—'Time is born with the echo, the echo is from birth to make time begin.'⁴⁰

And so time begins, begins processes from which comes *les temps* — the weather, foul and fair.

And what is a process?

—‘Process is a step or dance, an advance.’⁴¹

And here comes the sound of little footsteps, pitter-pattering. And here comes the refrain. And here comes the rain again, pitter-pattering. Here comes the storms at sea and here comes the storm in a teacup, which is no trivial matter. Here comes the meteorological *temps*, the climatic *temps*. And here comes the little beginnings of the temporalities of you and me. And here comes the roaring, raining tears falling fast from the human babe just born.

The echo, the double fluctuation, heralds the beginning of a coming together and it is the sound that holds together the coming together such that a taking shape can take shape and a little bit of unity and consistency can come about.

—‘Of course, things would not be there, existing, knowable, I would not myself be here, alive and voluble, without some consistency.’⁴²

A process is a step, is a dance, is an advance; it is also a procession. And with the procession comes the making of paths, channels, trajectories and evolutions. And for this making to get going and go on there will certainly have to be some repetition. To be sure, the procession may become an orderly procession that sings the repeated formula of a litany. Or — jingle bells — it may become a clamorous procession that continually rings out the coming about that is happening *en route*. And this is the time that some would call the time of becoming, which is irreducible to an instant, a snap-shot moment. But wait, let’s not make the mistake of thinking that becoming has no being. Let’s not repeat the formula that prescribes: process is the course of becoming as opposed to being.

From the steps of the procession of processual time well-trod paths may become established. These are the paths that we can go back and forth along. And these are the occasions of reversible time where footsteps can be retraced, remade and predicted. However, with processual time there also comes irreversible time, the no-going-back time where trajectories and lives never can be reversed. Irreversible time forwards evolutions, yet with this forwarding movement there also comes ageing: the dissipation and falling of evolutions. And with this *declination* comes the instability whence bifurcating time may unpredictably fork and open up the chance for a new direction.

—‘The great inventive, productive struggles, take place against the current, without any circus or spectacle, and not in the channels of the

archipelago, where the surge lies still and stands stagnant, amidst the billowings of slack algae.⁴³

Irreversible time is what makes me and unmakes me, and this no-going-back time is not but one time; it is, at the very least, a two-time dance. It is the advance where combinations come together, hold together and head for a state of balance, which may be called stability, which in course may well stagnate. It is also the time that allows unities and stable, balanced systems to participate in the dissipative processes that, in making combinations become undone, open up the chance for a fluctuation that may well, possibly, initiate the swirling twirling dance of turbulence from which Venus is born.

—‘One can dance only to music.’⁴⁴

Basic time, processual time, and the time — *les temps* — of the ever changing restless weather: background noise is the song of these times, which precede yet always accompany the temporalities of you and me.

I am born from processes of coming together and processes of coming undone. I am born from the instability that comes about as things become undone. I am born from the intrinsic instability of nature, which makes innovation possible. I am born from a disturbance in a turbulent nature. I am born from the dust that is picked up by a wind and swirled around. I am born from an eddy in a stream that babbles. I am born from the cloud that forms and then breaks up and dissipates and fades away. I am born not from the One. I am born from a two-time dance. I am born from the noisy musical of multiplicity. And this multiplicity, this noise, is the song of my being and my becoming. I would not be here — breathing, thinking, living, touching, reading, writing — without it.

And now a question is rushing towards me.

How is a still and silent photograph to greet those restless times from which comes background noise? Yes, how is such an image to greet the murmuring and the crackling and the tinkling and the crying and the sighing and rumbling and the roaring of background noise?

The question is rushing towards me; but am I to presume that it can only be greeted by the answer that a still and silent photograph can do nothing other than turn its back upon the cacophonous sound of background noise? Indeed, am I to presume that a still and silent photograph can't face the music? Now, such an image may not be well equipped to reproduce the restless movement from which comes background noise, but I would be deluding myself if I thought it were equipped to freeze and

immobilize those restless times, which make the world, including you and me, shake, rattle and roll.

Common sense tells me that a still photographic image emits no sound. Look at it. Listen. Not a move. Not a sound. But what if I were not so quick with my looking, listening and judgement? Indeed, what if I were to wait, to look and listen a little longer? In so doing, perhaps I will hear something unexpected. Perhaps I will hear the hum of background noise. Yes, perhaps I will hear that echo, which is what starts that process of holding together from which comes consistency and the emergence of phenomena and things. I wonder. Perhaps I will hear something that is almost unspeakable. Yes, perhaps I will hear this: it is, at bottom, sound that holds together a 'still' and 'silent' photographic image.

Yes, Michel Serres, this is the wonder you leave me with.

You have given me the thought that a silent photographic image, like my thought and being, is immersed in background noise; but now I am wondering if the silence of this image makes background noise visible, that is to say, enables us to see the hubbub of background noise that occupies silence.

Yes, I'm wondering.

Of course, a still and silent photograph is immersed within the noise of words that discourse about it, that chatter about it, that caption it, that wax lyrical about it, that argue about it, that promote it, that explain it, that theorize about it. I have no wish to raise my voice to silence the noise of these words; nonetheless, I am wondering if a photograph's still and silent face enables me to hear so much better — like being at the seaside — the background noise of the world, which is, let's not forget, the restless multiplicity of time rendered sonorous.

Am I now to say that a silent photographic image doesn't shut up the background noise that we are taught to hate and fight against? Am I now to say that a silent photographic image doesn't efface the cacophonous song that is background noise? Perhaps it would seem strange to say that. Yes, perhaps it would seem strange to say that a silent photographic image can *face* the music.

And what of the photographic image that is made up of digital information? What of this image that goes against the grain of what has now become called chemical photography? Yes, what of the photographic image whose production involves digital technology, which has taken determined

steps to succeed in the old problem of communication, which is, let's not forget, the elimination of background noise?

But has this 'new' technology been successful in the old problem?

Has it rid itself of the old demon noise?

Your thinking, Michel Serres, leads me to think that it has not done so. And this is not a matter of technical or technological failure. On the contrary, the matter is this: the more a strategy — or technology — of exclusion (of background noise) advances, the more it attests to the incalculable power and presence of background noise. Seeking to perfect the transmission of noise-free information, digital technology seeks to exclude background noise; however, technologies and strategies devised to exclude background noise presuppose background noise and such a presupposition means that background noise is always implicated — included — within that which excludes it.

—'A philosophy of communications conceives the message as order, meaning or unit, but it also conceives the background noise from which it emerges.'⁴⁵

Yes, Michel Serres, this is what you are making me think: digital technology has an intimate relationship with background noise although, like the interlocutors who in their argument struggle on the same side, it would prefer not to hear this. Indeed, it would prefer not to hear that it arises from the hubbub that precedes all communication: the background noise that you and I, we and the world, are immersed in and which sounds the intrinsic instability and multiplicity of nature from which is born the unforeseen.

And now I take time to reflect, knowing only too well that I can't dispel the confusion and babbling of my thinking. And now I am reflecting upon how the question of what constitutes an event is unsettling my thinking. To be caught off guard and jolted by the unknown, unforeseen, unexpected: is this what would constitute an event for my thinking?

Answer: it would be an event if we were to agree that what is already known cannot be experienced as an event.

A single grain of corn and a song of immanence

Is an event going to happen; or, has it happened already?

The question was still lingering between us, but grinning was also flitting between us. And the grinning continued as she spoke of how some would perhaps think it more than daft to speak of a photographic image as musical being.

—‘Don’t make me laugh, I can hear them say — how can that inanimate and mute object be musical being?’

Grinning was indeed flitting between us, but there was also an air of anxiety: is something going to happen — has something happened — that will wipe the grin off our faces?

—‘Something unexpected can do that but it can also put a smile on your face. A broad smile. A grin.’

To put a smile on your face.

She said that the expression made her laugh.

‘It makes me laugh for it is as if the smile exists independently of the face that receives it and upon which it takes place.’

To put a smile on your face.

‘Yes, it is as if the smiling doesn’t belong to the face upon which it happens; but isn’t this in tune with what has been said of the subject-predicate lesson that the verbal noise of the twittering-tree sounded?’

And then again there was smiling; faces grinning and smiles broadening.

‘And so we are back to what the twittering-tree sung of in respect of the predicate as irreducible to the subject of which it is said. But now it is no longer a tree twittering. Now it is a face grinning. Now it is the broadening of a smile. Now the predicate is singing of the taking place of grinning. That the predicate is irreducible to the subject means that it is not so stupid to think of grinning as existing independently of the subject-face upon which it happens and becomes embodied.’

She said that grinning is the taking place of the broadening of a smile and I said that there is change in this. And she said that there is movement in this. And then I asked if we are to dare to declare that there is the taking place of an event in this.

‘But some would think it stupid to consider grinning as an event. Surely, I can hear them say, an event is something momentous. Not a face grinning, not a tree twittering; rather, the murder of a queen, the first steps on the moon.’

And neither she nor I could stop grinning at the thought that grinning constitutes the taking place of an event. And the grinning continued between us for what seemed like an eternity.

She said that her cheeks were aching.

And I said:

‘The more I think about it the more it seems that the event of taking place has two aspects.’

And she said:

‘Tell me more.’

‘In being put into effect, the event of grinning takes place on a face. Yes, a face becomes the place where to grin becomes incarnated and actualized. The event courses across a face, through a body and becomes embodied just as, once upon a time, the event of stepping coursed across the surface of the moon and became actualized and inscribed in the taking place of those first steps. This aspect of the event of taking place is what we can call physical: bodies, in the widest sense of the term, become affected, become altered. The mouth broadens. The wound bleeds. The moon shudders and silently weeps.

‘Grinning takes place and becomes actualized in a smile that broadens, but there is another aspect to this event that lingers as a mist where things can’t be seen definitely. And this is the taking place itself. Exactly where is the broadening itself? The execution of broadening takes place and the face

is the place; however, there is also the coming about of, the performance in motion of, the taking place itself, which is difficult to pin down.

‘When a smile is broadening, isn’t there a dimension to this event that remains, as it were, up in the air? The execution of broadening comes to exist as it is put into effect within a smile upon a face, yet there is an aspect to this taking place that doesn’t become grounded on a face. Yes, something in the becoming of broadening eludes our solid thinking and escapes the taking up of definite place.’

—‘And some would say that this is the upsurge of time.’

She then jokingly asked if I was wanting to set down a thesis on grinning and the taking place of an event; in response I said that a thesis, in Greek, is a place where someone has set down a foot.

(The setting down of a thesis ... is this what happened with those first steps on the moon?)

And then I continued by saying that a thesis is the action of setting a foot down, of taking a place, holding it and setting oneself up there. She said that a thesis presumes it has to be defended and I said that from the start it presumes an opposition. She said that with thesis comes antithesis and immediately the battle and squabbling begin.

—‘Isn’t the whole point of a squabble to occupy or take a place?’

She said that there is quarrel over holding a place, having a place and naming a place. She said that stories are told of these quarrels and, all too quickly, the stories take a place and start squabbling amongst themselves. And I said that the setting down of history is not without squabble. She said that squabble is said to be a petty argument and I said that more noble arguments are called polemics or dialectics. She said that either way — squabble or dialectics — there is argument and I said that argument is about putting a foot down.

Then I said:

‘When you dance you sometimes stamp your feet — is this the same as putting a foot down?’

And then she said:

‘Were those first steps dancing on the moon?’

Irony fell between us, but not for long.

And the words came fast and thick as she spoke of how place-takers and thesis-makers, instead of moving over and making room, battle to have and to hold a place.

‘And some would argue that the place-takers and thesis-makers are the movers of history, and I do not want to argue with this; but it is difficult not to argue just as it is difficult to step aside from the taking of a place. It is not so easy to walk away from the demand to have and to hold a place. If I walk away from an argument, if I don’t stand my ground and defend a place then I am accused of being weak. Strength, so it seems, is obtained by putting a foot down, turning about face and standing still to defend a position against an opposition. But how is movement made from the act of putting a foot down and holding one’s ground? How is movement born from an immobilized step that is fixed upon taking a place, taking someone else’s place and not moving over to make room? Yes, how is movement made from one immobilized step being replaced by another immobilized step?’

And the questions flew as if little birds dipping and diving through the air.

—‘It may be argued that place-takers and thesis-makers are the movers of history but this begs the question: what is the movement they make? To be sure, space may be traversed but the movement here comes down to a series of steps where each step stops to take a place. Which is to say, the movement of walking comes down to a series of halts. And that is no movement at all. The movement is the walking itself, which is irreducible to a static stance — just as in the movies the image is in the movement of the film and irreducible to a single shot.

‘To think that the movement of walking comes from a step that stops is to overlook the movement of walking. What is missed, what is dismissed, is the event in walking, which in taking place doesn’t take a place. But for place-takes there is no event in the taking place of walking. Oh no, an event is when a foot is set down and a place is taken and a queen loses her head and the moon is conquered.’

—‘A face may be the place where the event of grinning takes place, but would place-takers assume that a face is a place where a foot can be set down?’

‘This,’ I said, ‘begs the question if a place only becomes established by the act of setting a foot down?’

‘This,’ she said, ‘begs the question: when does a face happen?’

And then another question swooped down between us:

‘Did the twittering-tree have a face?’

To which it was replied:

‘Perhaps not one that could be recognized. At least, not the sort of face that has been fixed upon the moon.’

And then another question:

‘When recognition happens what is happening to that which is recognized?’

And then yet another:

‘When recognition happens, is not the recognized being met with the already known?’

She said that something can be recognized because it gives back an image of the known and I said something can be recognized because it complies with what is already known. She said that when recognition happens, the recognized meets with an idea that has been fixed before the meeting and I said that the recognized is met as being met again and known again. She said that something is recognizable because it fits into the already known and I said that it fits in because it conforms to a form that is already in place. She said that when recognition happens the recognized is not met as if for the first time and I said that it is met as if for the second time.

And then she said that conforming to a form that is already in place means that what is recognized is recognized as something that has remained constant. She continued by saying that such constancy has the effect of fixing the recognized in terms of what can be called a permanent form. And I said that such constancy and permanence has the effect of immobilizing the recognizable, even if it is walking at a pace to meet you.

And then she looked at me as I looked at her.

‘Let’s say I see — recognize — a face before me and let’s say that what is before me is seen as a face because it conforms to an outline, a shape and form, that I have come to know, name and place as a face. Recognition of this outline and the shape it contains, and the features it defines and makes stand out, means that the face I recognize before me will never be encountered as something new. I will know it already even if I have never met it before. I will know it already because recognition makes the face before me fit into the mould that has been shaped and made by the already known. A mould; or, as some would say: a paradigm, a pattern that prevails.’

(... and what was it that we were looking at as each of us looked at the other?)

‘What is shaped according to the mould or pattern of the already known has imposed upon it a form into which it is made to fit, made to

conform to, made to comply with, and be the face of. Yes, it can be said that what is shaped according to the mould of the already known becomes immobilized in the face of the form that has been imposed upon it. However, saying this begs the question: would that which is shaped by the model of recognition want to remain faceless?’

And then, after a short pause:

‘The mould of the already known shapes and defines what is expected to be seen as a face and in so doing it also shapes and defines how a face is to be understood. *Look at my face when I talk to you. Can't you see that my face speaks of my individualized subjective interior? Can't you see that my face speaks of my sociality? Can't you see that my face is communicating something to you? Can't you see?* It may be a wonderful face before me — a picture — but seeing and comprehending this recognizable face does not make me wonder as if before something that is a pure propulsion into an unknown future.’

And glances were glimpsed as it was said:

‘Perhaps the twittering-tree was not faceless, perhaps it was more that the face it made each evening was changing such that it defied being fixed as the bright white face that has been fixed in the moon.’

And then looking squarely at me she said:

‘When I recognize FACE — “hello” — I make that face and myself submit to the fixity of a constant form. To be sure, there may be variations — round face, square face, angular face — but recognition will always make me look for what remains the constant invariable of variables. And it is this constant by which a judgement is made of the degree of deviation. *Off with you, your face doesn't fit in round here!* Oh no, when FACE is recognized before me I do not see that an event may be taking place. Oh no, what I see is an object that stands out against a background. Yes, this is what an outline allows me to do: to represent an object in space. It does make a picture, perhaps a pretty picture, but with this picture before me perhaps I am not seeing a process of shaping that is making itself and moving towards something that is not yet known.’

And then an eruption happened.

‘No, I'm not seeing a process of deformation happening where all sorts of little beginnings are murmuring and being made. No, I'm not seeing a multiplicity of movement where varying variations are coming about and coming undone. What I'm seeing with a recognizable outline before me is something that can be counted as one, counted as one of the ones of the

mould. I'm not seeing facial traits entering into composition with a twittering-tree and becoming something other than what they are. I'm not seeing the affectivity that is passing between a mouth and a sonorous tree. I'm not seeing the affectivity that is passing between, and putting quivering and vibration into effect. I'm not seeing the performance in motion. Oh no, I'm not seeing — hearing — the musical being that is becoming before my very eyes. No, I'm not seeing that something new is being created. I'm not hearing the music that is evolving and which can't be pinned down to a single note. I'm not seeing the process of becoming that is taking place but not, as with walking, take up a definite place. I'm not seeing the dancing that is taking place and which in taking place is entering composition with a little brown bird that knows not the name "sparrow". I'm not seeing the dancing that is flying and which in taking place doesn't take up a spot on that landscape that is recognizable and nameable as FACE. No, I'm not seeing that which is fleeing the outline.'

And then the words were off to a future unknown.

'When I recognize a face and submit it (and myself) to the mould of the already known I do not see the thousand little holes through which the mould leaks and the unforeseeable dashes in. No, when I comply with the mould of the already known I am not seeing a freckle dashing off towards something unknown and unrecognizable. I'm not seeing a broadening mouth and an aching cheek moving towards something that I would call new. I'm not seeing flared nostrils as opening up a future where something new can come about and continue the making of the world. Oh yes, it is fear that stops me greeting this little creation. Yes, it is fear and perhaps hatred that makes me call it: monstrous. Or, as some would say: demon. And with a monstrous demon in sight, I am not seeing that grinning is an event that is taking place on a face and which, in becoming embodied there, is changing the course of history and affording a face to transform the face of recognition and bring wonder to me. A wonder that fills me with surprise and with which I shall never be the same again. Oh yes, with recognition I do not see the world of futurity; I do not find myself moving towards a future yet unthought and leaping into a time that is unrepresentable but nevertheless of this world, which is not, lest we should forget, a completed act. In order to continue, the world has to continually make itself and thought is no different from this. My thinking is never an accomplished act; it is, until the day I die, a process that is coming about and coming undone. Isn't thinking like the movement of walking and running where the move-

ment can't be reduced to a series of steps that stop to set down a foot and take a place?'

And yet again questions were dipping and diving.

'When I meet something as if for the first time and do not greet an object of recognition isn't something otherwise than recognition being called forth within my thought? I may have all my wits about me but when it comes down to recognition is my thinking on the move? Isn't thinking a matter of an encounter where you don't already know — recognize — what is happening and which, as such, brings forth the wonder of the question: *is it happening?*

— 0 —

It is puzzling me. It is perturbing me. It is unsettling me. And what is *it* that is doing so?

Answer: it is the thought that what is already known cannot be experienced as an event; it is the ungraspable presence of the unknown and, moreover, it is the question of what constitutes an event.

I'm listening out for theories of the event and in listening I'm trying to do some theorizing. I'm trying; but before me there is no recognizable object to which I can point my index finger and say, 'there it is, there it is!'

Yes, I am trying to do some theorizing yet before me there is no object that I can observe and contemplate and gain an understanding of and get my hands upon. Perhaps I should become a determined hunter and sharpen my tools and track down a target. To be sure, this ill-defined unknown elusive event is preying on my mind, but am I to consider it my prey, which one day I will get my hands on?

'Hello, hello are you there?'

But why should I think that my call should obtain a response? No, it is not at my beck and call, nevertheless it is a source of agitation, a noise within my thinking and being.

There may not be an object in place before me, but there is something here (where?) that is active in creating suspense. I may not be able to grasp it but, yes, something is active and disturbing in so far as *it* is making me ask questions and put into suspense my certitude of what stands as an object.

I speak of my certitude; however, perhaps this certitude is nothing other than my habits of thinking. And for my habits of thinking there has been little question as to what stands — and falls — as an object; recognition of what an object is has been the sort of thing of which one says, ‘it goes without saying’. My habitual recognition has made me say that it goes without saying; it has also made me say, ‘hello, hello, there it is again’. But now I cannot say that it goes without saying. Now, I cannot say hello again.

Now, there is a disturbance in the repetition of a habit. Now, there is a calling into question of my habitual thinking that has recognized an object as that which occupies a place in space and stands separately from what surrounds it and, moreover, stands a chance of collecting dust. The clock on the mantelpiece. The framed photograph on the bedside table. The monument in the market place. The rosy apple in the bowl that remains uneaten.

Of course, there are many sorts of objects, of which not all are a solid matter; however, my habits of thinking have made me certain that an object occupies a locatable space. Yes, it has been my habit to be certain that *an object is at one place at any definite time, and in no sense anywhere else*. Okay, objects can be moved about and so come to inhabit different spaces, yet the habits of my thinking have had me suppose that with each inhabitation the object has taken up and occupied a definite and distinct space. Okay, a car may be an object that is travelling fast on the motorway, but what the habits of my thinking have made me think is that this car, this moving object, occupies a space distinct from the road that it is travelling upon.

Yes, it has been a persistent habit of my thinking to draw an object as that which is separable from a background. Drawn as such, an object becomes something that can be counted as one, and counted as one an object becomes something that you can not only get your hands on but also get your head around (... rare is the thought that an object could be of a multiplicity that extends such that a singular outline can never be drawn or definitely grasped).

And yet another persistent habit of mind has been that of placing the object as that which is separate from the mind. Yes, it has become a hardened habit to condemn the object to separation from the mind. And so the object becomes the opposite of that which habitually gets called the mind, or indeed the subject. And what does this habit do? Answer: in condemning the object to separation it enables a subject to pride itself on the certainty of being itself and not a half-baked object. But now, at this moment, my

subjective certitude is flying out of the window. And there in the sky is a cloud passing by. And is this cloud-phenomenon to be considered an object? A cloud or rain storm or indeed bacteria may not be habitually thought of as objects, but when a theoretician sets his or her mind to it, each of these phenomena can become the object of a theory.

What must a theory first and foremost do?

Answer: it must distinguish its object.

I have said that I am listening out for theories of the event; also, I have said that I am wanting to do some theorizing, particularly with respect to the proposition that what is already known cannot be experienced as an event. Oh yes, I am wanting to do some theorizing with respect to the question of the event; it's a passion that I am feeling. BUT I can't distinguish an object before me, BUT what this is making me do is to question what is presupposed in the doing of theory. Yes, what this ill-defined and barely nameable event is making me do is to question what theory is doing when it is presupposed and prescribed that a theory must distinguish its object.

And would you, Isabelle Stengers, consider a cloud as that which can become an object of theory?

I don't think so.

I don't think so when I hear you say:

'I am in the process of trying to get you to demand explanations from the sciences that claim to have theories — not to ask them if they are independent of all social power (you will not find any pure ones ...), but to ask them what authorizes them to think that the reality they are dealing with can be judged, can become the object of theory.'¹

And once again I find myself listening to a philosopher of science. A philosopher, yes; but also a woman of whom it has been said she lives in a world of events.

My ears prick up.

I'm listening, Isabelle Stengers; yes, I'm all ears.

And what I hear bothers you, be it within the sciences or politics, is a *modus operandi* that is unbending in its aim to achieve at the outcome what was expected at the beginning and avoids — if not seeks to eliminate — the taking of any risk. The problem with taking a risk is that it can bring the unforeseeable with it; but, so I hear, you are open to that. Indeed, you make the taking of a risk a criterion: no risk, no invention. As you say:

'Let us take, accept, and learn to measure the risks.'²

I gather that what leaves you unimpressed is an operation of theorizing that takes interrogation and judging to be essential to its task. And this is why you would demand an explanation from theories as to what authorizes them to think that the reality they are dealing with can be judged, can become an object.

What, so I hear, leaves you unimpressed by the interrogative and judging style of theorizing is that it follows the procedures of the tribunal. Yes, it is not your style to sit in judgement and assume a seat upon the raised platform of the tribunal.

—‘In a well-known expression, Kant affirmed that it is not the business of scientists to learn from nature but to interrogate it, as a judge interrogates a witness.’³

Time and time again I hear you say that the juridical style of theorizing makes the phenomenon it is dealing with stand and testify as a ‘reliable’ witness. Indeed, what the juridical style of theorizing wants to hear is a testimony that, under interrogation, testifies to the claims of the theory that are seeking validation. And for this procedure, what is a matter of judgement is knowing the questions to ask. And knowing what questions to ask requires a set of ideas — categories and conceptualizations — that form a criterion. Yes, it is this criterion that judges if the witness — the phenomenon that the theory is dealing with — acts as guarantor for the theory that, as it were, speaks in its name. And if the witness is judged a guarantor then the theory can claim to have made the phenomenon admit to its truth.

—‘At this point, the phenomenon is no longer only a witness, but an *object*. To the notion of object corresponds that of *judge*: one can only speak of an object when one claims to know how to judge, to dispose of categories that allow one to distinguish between the essential and the anecdotal.’⁴

What is required for a theory to distinguish its object, indeed what is required to turn a phenomenon into an object of a theory, is a judge who already knows how to recognize the essential. Isn’t it this know-how that allows the judge to assume a seat upon the raised platform of the tribunal?

—‘What is a judge? In the most general sense, it is someone who acts “in the name of” — in the name of law, of course, when it is a question of the legal code, but it is not just a question of the code. The judge exists from the moment when that in the name of which he speaks and acts authorizes him to determine what, in a concrete situation, is significant and has to be taken into account, and what is secondary, a simple parasitic noise that can

be “abstracted”, in actuality or intellectually eliminated. The judge is the one who knows, a priori, according to what categories it is appropriate to interrogate and understand that with which he is dealing.’⁵

And this is my question: when a phenomenon is no longer only a witness but becomes an object that acts as a guarantor for a theory, *who* or *what* is actually speaking?

Is it the phenomenon that is heard speaking (ssh, I’m trying to hear what the cloud passing by has to say), or is it the words of the theory? Is it the phenomenon or is it those ideas by which the phenomenon is interrogated, judged and theorized?

Are these questions interesting? Are they relevant?

Well, perhaps they are relevant to a phenomenon that is, at this very moment, being turned into an object of a theory. Indeed, perhaps they are relevant in so far as they lead to another question which, for me, lies at the very heart of the matter: what is it that is happening when the essential is distinguished from the anecdotal or parasitic noise and there comes that judging to which corresponds the notion of object?

Well, it can be said that in being judged, a phenomenon is being ‘shaped’ by a set of ideas that know how to recognize the essential. And what can also be said is that these ideas know how to recognize the essential because they have been drawn up before the phenomenon is invoked (extorted?) to testify. And drawn up in advance, it can be said that these ideas — categories, conceptualizations and criteria — have determined a shape — a mould — into which the phenomenon is to fit and by which it is to be recognized. So, is it the making of this ‘mould’ that comes to make the object? Of course I’m cutting a long story short and risking simplification; however, let me accept the risk and say that what this set of ideas does is to judge and determine what is to be included as of essence and what is to be excluded as mere noise. And it is from this act of judgement that an inside becomes separated from an outside such that an outline can be drawn and a shape can be seen. Yes, an object can be drawn, and a mould made, because there is seen a shape that is separable from a background and countable as one.

It may be said that the phenomenon a theory is dealing with is being rendered intelligible by a set of ideas that confer sense on it; but isn’t this a matter of a shaping and moulding that makes the phenomenon in question come to resemble that which speaks in its name?

Of course, some would say, the ideas that form the theory are seeking to identify a resemblance between themselves and the phenomenon that is being studied. Is that not the theoretical aim? However, recognition of the resemblance does beg the question as to the extent to which the phenomenon studied is moulded into a recognizable shape. Moreover, it begs the question of the extent to which the phenomenon studied is actively encouraged to intervene in the 'shaping' of the object that it becomes. And again it begs the question of *who* or *what* is actually speaking. Is it the phenomenon that is heard, or is it the projection of those ideas that sit in judgement whilst claiming to render intelligible the phenomenon studied? Is it a multivocal phenomenon that is heard (each raindrop is speaking in a different tongue) or is it the theory that is rendering the 'babble' intelligible and univocal?

Are these questions interesting? Are they relevant?

(And now I'm wondering if Sigmund Freud would find the questions relevant. I am wondering; for, as you, Isabelle Stengers, suggest — at least to my ears — Freud had difficulty, before and after the founding of psychoanalysis, in finding the means to constitute psychic reality as a theoretical object. Never did he quite find, as you say, 'the hoped-for power necessary for constituting patients as reliable witnesses, as witnesses whose intelligible and calculable cure could confirm the validity of the theory that is supposed to confer its sense onto that which they suffer'.)⁶

The extent to which a studied phenomenon is encouraged to actively intervene in the 'shaping' it undergoes, in becoming an object of a theory, does indeed beg the question if the ideas that sit upon the raised platform of the tribunal are open to learning something, perhaps unexpected, from the phenomenon itself.

The juridical style of theorizing perhaps would answer that its business is to interrogate and not to learn from that which it is judging. To be open to learning runs the risk that the phenomenon studied may wound the mould, and the ideal, of the shape that is conferred upon it in the act of making it speak intelligibly.

From you, Isabelle Stengers, I'm hearing that in distinguishing an object a theory sits as a judge. But not only a judge, a prophet as well.

And why ever a prophet?

Yes, why does the juridical style of theorizing also characterize a prophetic style?

Let's not beat about the bush; let's ask: what is it that the juridical style of theorizing is seeking as an outcome? Answer: the identification and affirmation of a resemblance between the set of ideas — categories, conceptualization and criteria — that interrogate a phenomenon and the phenomenon itself.

Yes, let's not beat about the bush and say that the judge is also a prophet because he has the power to recognize the resemblance; he knows how to 'see' the resemblance, and he knows this in advance.

The prophet-judge has the power to see because he has in hand and in mind an already-drawn set of ideas and conceptualizations that have determined and designed a shape to be recognized. And the prophet knows in advance how to draw the design because he has the power to foresee and so foretell. And this design is what forms, as it were, the blueprint of the mould that shapes the 'object' of the theory. And thus it can be said that the set of ideas and conceptualizations that form the theory, and by which the phenomenon in question is shaped and judged, do not speak of what is, but about what will be, what should be. That the prophet can foretell what will be, means the judge can judge what should be.

Yes, Isabelle Stengers, isn't there a judge becoming a prophet when in speaking of the correspondence between judge and object you say:

'Power over things that can be judged, such that one can now anticipate in what way they will have to testify. Thus, if bacteria testify to the genetic program, all living beings become, at least in principle, objects of the same theory: if I know how to judge them, what questions to address to them, I know in what way they should testify in order that their testimony expresses their truth.'⁷

Of course, the prophet-judge is taking a risk, although perhaps prophet and judge would prefer not to admit this. Of course, the prophet-judge is risking the mutilation of the phenomenon it is rendering intelligible and shaping into the object of a theory. And, of course, there is always the risk that the phenomenon might metamorphose and so won't fit the shape that would make it intelligible and separate it from the confusion of things. There is always the risk that the phenomenon will not fit the shape that would make it an object that stands out against a background that has been deemed mere noise and therefore doesn't need to be taken into account. And this is the risk that collective phenomena present. Yes, this is the risk presented by beings that can't be counted as one. Yes, this is the risk presented by those beings that can only be defined as beings affected by

other beings, which in their interactions are difficult to separate out and pin to one spot.

—‘We do not know a priori what a chemical population can do, and we can no longer tell once and for all the difference between what we must take into account and what we can ignore.’⁸

A judge but also a prophet, yet also, as you say, Isabelle Stengers, a poet.

And why ever a poet?

Why does the juridical-prophetic style of theorizing also characterize a poet?

Well, let’s say it is do with fabrication.

—‘What is a poet? Etymologically, a fabricator.’⁹

And a fabricator is one who constructs things.

—‘The history of language has changed the meaning of the term, but it has also dramatized one of the implications of the art of fabrication: the dimension of creation does not refer to anything but itself and what is not accountable to anything but itself. Poets, then, are those who give themselves the freedom, and take the risk, to invent and bring into existence that which they speak of.’¹⁰

The judge-prophet is a poet, a fabricator, in so far as in distinguishing an object of a theory there is also the fabrication of that object.

And once again I am risking simplification.

In rendering a phenomenon ‘intelligible’, a shape is imposed that has been foretold will confer sense and make the phenomenon in question speak as the object of a theory. However, this shape that has been foretold, which is the shape that has been judged ‘of essence’ in an act of purification that has expelled ‘parasitic noise’, is a *fabrication* — it is something that has been made — created — before the phenomenon in question is moulded into it. Yes, this shape is the ‘object’ that is created by poet-prophet-judge. And such an act of creation, and purification, is what can be found in the theoretico-experimental sciences that submit phenomenon to the trials of experimentation.

—‘Submitting a phenomenon to experimentation is to actively produce it, to “re-create” it, and have it accepted that this re-creation is simply a “purification”, restricted to eliminating “parasitic effects” in a manner that makes the phenomenon capable of speaking its truth. The scientist-poet “creates” his object; he fabricates a reality that does not exist as such in the world but is rather on the order of a fiction. The scientist-judge succeeds in

having his creation accepted as a discovery, and that the reality he has fabricated testifies that the hypotheses in the name of which it was created are precisely those that render intelligible the “natural” phenomenon studied.’¹¹

You say, Isabelle Stengers, that the terms — judges-prophets-poets — designate styles as much as talents and passions. You say that these styles pre-existed the invention of the sciences and although they may have become constituted as scientific they are not definitive of the sciences. And it is the question of the style of theorizing that is of concern to me with respect to that event that is eluding my grasp and appearing to refuse to testify as a ‘reliable witness’. And the question of style is of importance, for the question of style is also a question of *ethos*.

For those who assume a seat on the raised platform of the tribunal, the style is that of subjecting a phenomenon to something that sits ‘above’ it. Yes, let me say that the design of the shape that is said to render a phenomenon intelligible is imposed from a transcendent position. Yes, let me say that the raised platform of the tribunal subjects the phenomenon to an order and a power that is transcendent of it.

And this image of power is exactly the image of power that juridical thinking maintains, if not proclaims. This image of power presents power as a principle of organization that subordinates the activity of things to a pre-constituted order; the order has already been designed, and once imposed, from above, it makes the phenomenon ‘below’ beholden to it.

And within this hierarchical landscape there is no practice of what can be called ‘immanent conceptualization’. Oh no, in this landscape of the juridical style of theorizing, where poets are also judges and judges are also prophets, we will not find an immanent style of theorizing. And this will not be found because immanence can only come about when processes and activities in the world do not bow to the idea that their being and activity is governed and ordered by something that is transcendent and external to them. Indeed, immanence only comes about when the processes that act within the world and upon each other are not made answerable to a creator that sits above its creations.

For the juridical-prophetic style of theorizing there may well be the fabrication, intellectually or actually, of objects that brings forth the designation of poet. There may well be creativity; but this is my question: to what extent does this creativity make the phenomenon that is shaped as an object of a theory become beholden to a transcendent creator? And there is

yet another question: is the phenomenon that becomes an object of a theory being encountered as if for the first time, or is it being met as if for the second time? The second time where it becomes a matter of recognition rather than of the question: *is it happening?*

The question of ‘first or second time?’ is a question of the style of theorizing, and this question is relevant with respect to the event that is eluding my grasp yet forwarding the proposition that what is already known cannot be experienced as an event.

How can I ‘theorize’ this proposition — and this event — with a style of theorizing that knows in advance how to recognize its object?

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Did I recognize what was happening? I had no idea where the question came from; it was as if it had been asked by a third party who knew exactly what was happening but would not let on. Yes, the question implied that there was something to know that I did not know — but what was there to know?

Did she know what was happening?

In response she said that she thought it was going to rain.

And then as if mumbling to herself she said:

‘The sky is getting darker, the atmosphere is turning eerie; could be thunder, could be lightning, and more than likely it is going to rain.’

But the mumbling was no more when in a flash she turned and said that she had to ask what is the *it* that is going to rain.

—‘Is it the clouds, is it the weather, or is there somewhere a being that can be called rain, which is about to perform the act of pouring down?’

She continued:

‘And if it were going to lightning what would be the *it* that is going to flash and light up the sky?’

Then a little wry smile flickered.

—‘Is there somewhere — god knows where — a being that answers to the name lightning?’

And her saying that provided a cue.

‘Let’s say that I am that lightning. Yes, let’s say that I am a being called lightning and let’s also say that I am standing there before I make a move to

act and perform the action of flashing. Watch me, I can move fast. Very fast, and that is no conceit.'

Then came the questions.

And who or what is speaking here?

'What is speaking here is a subject that is taken as being there *before* it makes a move to perform an act such as speaking. First the subject and then the act. First the subject called lightning and then the act of lighting up the sky. First the subject called thought and then the act of thinking something like it is going to rain.'

And what does this speak of?

'It speaks of a separation between the doer and the deed.'

And what does this separation affirm?

'It affirms a conception of being — of being a subject — that rests upon a division between what something is and what something does.'

And what has the priority here?

'What something *is* has priority over what something does because what something *is* is taken as coming before acts of doing. The doer is taken as standing there before a move is made to act, to flash, to think, to rain, to speak. The act happens, the action occurs, the doing proceeds, the performance takes place; yes, the movement gets going and all the while it is assumed that what stands beforehand stands over and above the movement that happens.'

And what happens here to movement?

'What happens is that movement is made to rely upon and refer to a starting point that stands — rests — before the movement gets going.'

And what comes of this?

'What comes of this is that movement — the movement of doing and the doing of movement — come to refer to something that is not only before it but also beyond it. Yes, what comes of this is that movement becomes answerable to something that is transcendent of it.'

And what comes of this?

'What comes of this is representation. Or should I say — ? — that what comes of this is the logic of representation.'

And why this logic?

'That the movement of doing comes to refer to something that is not only before it but also beyond it, is what allows for the idea to arise that this movement and this doing performs as a representation. What does a representation do? Answer: a representation must refer to something that is

beyond and before itself. Yes, this transcendence is what the logic of representation calls upon and calls for. If something is referring to something that is beyond and before itself then a certain logic can step in and say that the something in question is acting how a representation acts. Thought comes to think something and this movement performs the act and action of thinking; however, as soon as this is said it doesn't take very long for it to be also said that the movement here acts as a representation of the thought that is taken as being there before the movement of thinking something like it is going to rain.'

And?

And after a tongue-in-cheek performance of crossing knees, resting elbow on knee and holding bowed head in hand:

'Performing as a representation means that the movement of doing is made beholden to something that is transcendent of it. And this means that the movement of doing — and the doing of movement — is made to refer to and so go back to that which is, as it were, not moving. And that is where the movement is brought to a halt — stop. Indeed, every step of the way the movement is dominated by and reduced to what, from the start, is taken as standing still. Start — stop. Start — stop. Start — stop. And what here is yoked, if not choked, is the movement itself. Oh no, you can't simply go for a walk. Indeed, in going for a walk one is held on a short rein that doggedly pulls one back. Oh yes, when something transcendent is invoked movement becomes detained, that's to say, arrested.'

And what if no separation were to be made between doer and deed, between what something is and what something does?

She responded by saying that if there were no separation then the doer couldn't continue to be put as coming first, as having the priority over and above. And I responded by saying that if there were no separation then the doer couldn't continue to hold the position of standing there before and beyond the movement of doing.

Then I asked how could it follow that the movement of doing and the doing of movement perform as an act of representation if that beyond and before were no longer there, wherever — god knows — the *there* might be.

She said that it wouldn't follow and I had to ask what would follow.

She then went on to say that a doer called lightning could no longer be considered as already constituted before and beyond the act and movement of lightning. And then I went on to say that it would have to be considered that the being of lightning, even if it were over in a flash, becomes consti-

tuted within the act of, the process of, the becoming of, the movement of, that tremendous force, which lights up the sky and scares some stiff.

—‘If the doing and the movement of lightning, or thinking, is going on but as such ceases to perform as a representation of an already-constituted doer, then how are we to speak of the movement — and the process of constitution and making — that is happening here?’

She then asked if the word *event* would do here; however, it wasn’t long before she was asking what the word *event* would be doing here. At the walking pace of *andante* she then said that perhaps what *event* would be doing here would be sounding the collapse of the before and beyond upon which the logic of representation depends. And with the words filling up the mouth, I said that what perhaps *event* would be doing here would be sounding the movement and doing that happens when movement and doing are not brought under the yoke or rein of something that remains transcendent of the movement and the doing.

—‘When the movement of thinking side-steps performing as a representation of an already-constituted being — or power — called Thought, perhaps it can be said that to think is an event; however, the event here would have little in common with a racing event where competitors stand still at the starting line before running as fast as lightning.’

And speedily she said:

‘Thinking is movement.’

And I said at the brisk pace of *allegro*:

‘Thinking is movement and this movement is fundamentally temporal and that is to say that we think in and through time.’

—‘*Event* may be the word spoken to express the movement or doing that happens when lightning flashes but is not, in this movement of flashing, performing as an act of representation of an already-constituted subject, being or power called Lightning; yes, *event* may be the word spoken to express movement that has no origin that remains transcendent of it; but this begs the question of what this movement would be an expression of.’

She said that it wouldn’t be an expression *of* an already-constituted subject, being or power. She said that it wouldn’t be an expression *of* an expressor that remains outside of and detachable from the expression itself. She said that following what has so far been said she would have to speak of a certain inseparability between the expression and what becomes expressed in the movement and doing of the expression.

And speak she did.

‘When lightning flashes it can be said that what is expressed is the becoming of and the being of lightning; however, what is expressed can’t be extracted or isolated from the movement of the flashing expression.’

And once again it was a mouthful.

‘It is only through and by expression that what is expressed comes into existence, yet what is expressed — what is voiced — has no existence outside its expression; each flash of lightning, each expression, is the existence of what is expressed; indeed, what is expressed isn’t standing there *before* and *above* the movement of the expression — in other words, the expression in no way performs as a representation.’

The mouthful wasn’t delivered as an earful and nor did it go in one ear and out the other, which is to say: I was listening. And in listening I came to realize that, for me, the imperative *express yourself* was changing slowly and taking on a different meaning. As I was realizing that the movement of this changing was the movement, albeit slow, of my thinking, I responded to what she had just said by saying:

‘With a flash of lightning something is voiced, yet the voice here, which is expressive, isn’t the voice of a subject, being or power that is to be found *behind* the voicing itself; what becomes voiced is inseparable from the voicing itself.’

And she said:

‘Here is a word to express that inseparability — immanence. The being of lightning is not transcendent of the flashing, rather it is immanent to it. The relation between what is voiced and its voicing is a relation of immanence.’

And then she asked that I listen to this voice.

‘To say that I am lightning is to say that in voicing myself there isn’t a self that remains outside, over and above, the movements of the flashing expressions through and in which my self becomes, and becomes expressed in the world. In other words, what becomes is immanent to the movement of — the *event* of — the flashing expressions, which are constitutive of my life as lightning, even if this be short lived.’

And then mischief moved between us.

—‘So, are we to announce that an event has happened; or, are we still to wait for *it* to happen?’

And then, after a pause that went on for what seemed like an eternity in which everything and nothing happens, there was once again talk of the twittering-tree.

She spoke of how each evening, as small brown birds, pine-cones and tall tree entered into composition with each other to produce the twittering-tree, something was created, even if there was — is — an undecidability as to whether this creation, this genesis, should be called nature or should be called art. Then I said that it had been said that the twittering-tree had being. And continuing, I spoke of how this being was constituted through quivering and vibration. Then she spoke of how the twittering-tree was born from affectivity. And then I spoke of how it had been said that an openness towards being affected is what produces musical being.

She said that to utter *musical being* is to sound a definition of being, which some would insist should be capitalized as Being, that fathoms being as always *being* affected, as an unfathomable interlacing of beings affecting each other.

—‘Which is to say that in *being*, being is continually moved and moving, even if like a tree it never leaves the spot.’

She said a tree has a power to exist and I said a power to exist involves — inseparably — a power to be affected. Then quickly, I asked if it’s a Big Thing to speak of Being.

‘Are we qualified to speak of this?’

And she responded:

‘Are you not now being affected?’

She then went on to speak of how musical being isn’t merely a melodious metaphor and I followed this by saying that the twittering-tree was a din, born from agitation. And she said: noise. And I said: noisy *event*.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘the twittering has been spoken of as event in the sense of when you say you are going to a concert tonight — yes, a performance event.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘there was no preformed performing subject.’

I followed this by saying that the twittering-tree also was spoken of as *event* in another way. She said: nuances. And I couldn’t help but say: shades of difference. And without further ado I said that it had been said that the *coming about* of the twittering-tree was an event. And she then spoke of how the twittering-tree had taught the lesson that predicates express *coming abouts*.

—‘Or, as some would say, *becomings*.’

And then reiteration happened.

‘Predicates aren’t to be considered as that which can be asserted of what happens to a subject that is standing there, already complete, *before* the movement of something happening, like turning green, happens.’

And then I said that the coming about of — the doing of — the twittering-tree was a constitutive process in and through which the trembling existence of the twittering-tree came into being.

—‘Behind the process, however, there wasn’t an already-constituted subject.’

And still talking of predicates she said that it can be said that predicates express events if by *event* is meant a movement — a coming about — that moves without something remaining transcendent of it.

She said:

‘Nothing but movement.’

And I said:

‘Movement comprising of nothing but movements, fast and slow and sometimes very slow and sometimes very fast — is this how we are to define being — *essentially movement?*’

And she said that perhaps what is needed is a reconsideration of the static, the stationary, the still, the solid and, also, what is considered as having substance.

And then I asked if we were reflecting. And she said: no, we’re harping on. And I said: to harp is to dwell tediously but it is also to give voice to. And she said: let the twittering-tree voice itself. And I followed this quickly by asking what was voiced. She replied: nothing but movement. And I said: pure verballity. She then spoke of how the twittering-tree was born from an interlacing of movements.

—‘To be sure, there was the affectivity that made pine-cone-issuing tree and mass of small brown birds quiver, twitter and conjugate, but there was also the movement of the day and the movement of the time with which the end of the twittering-tree’s life-time came. Movement. Nothing but a mixture of movements. Nothing but relations of speed and slowness and movement born from a multiplicity of movements. Yes, an excessive infinity — who knows?’

‘One can become carried away by movement but the movement, and doing, that made the twittering-tree was not confined to the sort of movement that is a transversing of space and with which comes a changing of place.’

She interjected by saying that with the twittering-tree there was the movement of time.

And I said that there was the movement of time being rendered sonorous.

And then again there was one of those short pauses that seemed to last forever and in which nothing and everything seems to happen.

But soon voices could be heard again. Yes, soon she was saying that with the twittering-tree something was voiced. I said that although the twittering-tree was no harp it did have a voice and she said that it was a voice that no one, not even the birds, owned. I said that the twittering-tree was expressive and she said that with the twittering-tree there was the doing and movement of expression even though some had wished for this to shut up. She said it was the din. I said it was also the inaudible noise of the quivering pine-cones and tree. And she said that there were expressions that could be heard and expressions that could be seen.

—‘But, nonetheless, expression there was.’

She then said that what was expressed through such expression was the being — yes, the Being — of the twittering-tree.

—‘Yes, what was constituted in and through the movement of the expression was the *existence* of, the *subject* of, the *power* of, the *being* of, the twittering-tree.’

And I had to add to this by saying that what was expressed had no existence, no being — big or little — outside of, over and above, the expression that was the making of the twittering-tree. She again said that the twittering-tree had a voice and again stressed loudly that this voice was not an expression *of* a preconstituted subject or power. Then she spoke of how the twittering-tree most certainly had a power to exist and a power to be affected, but she stressed that the *power* of such powers was in no way separable from what became through the doing of such powers.

And once again the word *immanence* was spoken.

I reiterated, again, that the twittering-tree voiced musical being yet to this I added that what was also expressed was expression itself — no strings attached. And with a twinkle in her eye she then asked if we were going to say that what was voiced was *event* itself.

I said that some would not recognize this as an event.

And she said, with a little irony falling from her lips:

‘So, would they already know and thus be able to recognize what is happening?’

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I cannot say that an event has definitely happened, and neither can I say that it is definitely going to happen. Indeed, there is little here that I can say is definite. I cannot say what the outcome will be; I cannot say what the outcome should be; and, moreover, I cannot say that an outcome is expected. Some would perhaps say that this indefinite event is a hopeless cause, which should be abandoned immediately.

Okay, it may be a hopeless cause, but I'm wondering if there is something in the nature of this ill-defined and hopeless event that is asking for a certain abandonment of goals and expected outcomes. Okay, I do not have in my hand a theory that would (perhaps) shape up this indefinite event and provide it with the sort of definition that comes when an outline of an object emerges and a degree of distinctness is seen, but this is not to say that this event cannot propose something to me. This ill-defined event may not be speaking — testifying — as an object of a theory, but it is forwarding to me the proposition that what is already known cannot be experienced as an event. Okay, this evasive event may not be acting as a guarantor for a theory, but it is proposing something to me with respect to propositions.

Propositions and theories.

Yes, Isabelle Stengers, you take care to distinguish between a theory and a proposition. You take care to make a distinction, but you also say that the distinction is itself a risk. And, what is more, I gather that what this risky distinction between theories and propositions pivots upon is the taking of and not the elimination of the taking of risks.

Can a theory leave itself open to learning from a phenomenon what questions to ask of it? Can a theory risk doing that? How much risk can a theory take in allowing a phenomenon to intervene in the interrogation that is claiming to render it intelligible? Would a theoretical aim run the risk of being interrupted and thrown off course by an unexpected utterance from the phenomenon that is being interrogated? Wouldn't it prefer to minimize the risks? Wouldn't it prefer to take no risks when it comes to gaining a testimony that testifies to its validity? But taking no risks results in the production of an extorted testimony that — 'speaks of the device of interrogation, not of what is interrogated'.¹² And this is to shut the door to the possibility that — 'it is not man but the material that "asks the questions", that has a story to tell, which one has to learn to unravel'.¹³

How are we to unravel and narrate the stories that phenomena have to tell? How are we to be attentive to what is being put to us? A grain of corn, along with the field in which it grows and the insects that prey upon it, has a story to tell, yet how are we to narrate this story, which is, let's not forget, entangled with the stories, the *histories*, that the field and insects also have to tell? In attempting to recount such an entangled tale how are we to tell what to include and what to exclude? We cannot tell. We may be all ears to what is being proposed to us to say, but our recounts can never quite tell what must be taken into account and what can be ignored. Indeed, to unravel and recount entangled histories requires the making of a narration that is imaginative and open to taking risks with respect to the story that it puts forward, or in other words, proposes. Moreover, what is required of such a *fiction*, such a *proposition*, is that it takes as much risk in its making as it has taken for a grain of corn to come about, to happen.

You say, Isabelle Stengers, that without fiction there would be no science. You say that what interests the innovative scientist is the history that his or her fiction renders possible. But you also say that to speak of an innovative scientific proposition as a fiction does not mean saying 'it's only a fiction'.

—'Propositions that contain the word "only" are all, by nature, reductionist. Those who voice this word are attributing to themselves the power of judging.'¹⁴

To speak of fiction is to speak of a history that is rendered possible. Indeed, to speak of fiction is to speak of making history *with* the phenomenon, which has a story to tell. However, this fiction, this *history*, knows only too well that it is one story *risked* amongst an entanglement of other stories. Yes, it knows only too well that it is one possibility amongst a much vaster set of possibilities. And knowing this is why, in the first place, one speaks of fiction. And knowing this is why, in most cases, a fiction, an innovative proposition, commences with 'And if'. And as you say, Isabelle Stengers, 'And if' is, by nature, corrosive. And it is corrosive for it attacks what is judged to be normal and common sense.

—'Or, more precisely, it expresses the fact that, at a given period, the judgement — this is normal — has become a little more shaky; it expresses and invents a positive meaning for the fact that it became possible, at a certain moment, to resituate an aspect of the familiar reality within a much vaster imaginary reality where what we know is only one story amongst others.'¹⁵

Starting with ‘And if’, a proposition is not rushing to make a judgement and separate the essential from ‘noise’. Commencing with ‘And if’, a proposition is not about to outline a theoretical object. Indeed, the corrosive ‘And if’ of a proposition makes a much vaster set of possibilities leak into the theoretical object and attack the judgement upon which it is founded. Commencing with ‘And if’, a proposition is not chasing after the essential; rather, it is concerned with rendering a history possible. And, let me say, it is this movement from essence to history that the distinction between theories and propositions pivots upon.

Yes, Isabelle Stengers, you risk making a distinction between a theory and a proposition, although you add that what you call a proposition some would call a theory. Perhaps some would say theory when you say proposition; however, what your distinction speaks to me of is the difference between theorizing ‘with’ and theorizing ‘about’.

When I theorize ‘about’, I assume a position that is, as the preposition suggests, outside of what is being theorized, which has the effect of subjecting the theorized to something that is transcendent of it, which in turn has the effect of producing a hierarchical landscape. But when I theorize ‘with’, I have to accept the risk that a whole conceptual landscape can suddenly become flattened. Yes, when I theorize ‘with’, I have to accept the risk — and take the risk — that the theory, along with myself, can be seriously modified by that with which I am theorizing. To be sure, this can ruin years of endeavour and make tears run, yet it can teach me the importance of learning to laugh when a surprise event upsets the hoped-for outcome of a theoretical aim.

I have been listening, as carefully as I can, to Isabelle Stengers; and now I hear this philosopher speak of Barbara McClintock, a scientist whose passion was to study maize corn. But wait, I’m hearing Isabelle Stengers say that to speak of ‘corn’ is already to say too much. For Barbara McClintock each grain of corn — ‘each aberrant grain of corn’ — had to be understood in itself — ‘not as a representative “of” corn but more precisely in terms of the way it differed’.¹⁶ Yes, to say ‘corn’ is already to say too much.

Unaccepting of the slightest generalization and attentive to the minutest detail, Barbara McClintock took forty years of research — ‘which finally “had” to be awarded the Nobel Prize’ — to learn from a grain of corn which questions to ask it — ‘because, like every historical being, corn is a singular being.’¹⁷

For Barbara McClintock, each grain of corn asked a question and rather than rushing to impose an answer, she listened. And she listened. And she heard. And she laughed.

—‘Yes, corn is intelligible whatever may be the unexpected and fantastic nature of the interpretations that it forces on us. When McClintock was surprised by her corn, she laughed.’¹⁸

And her greatest laugh came when a small detail destroyed a grand idea — ‘when she knew that the corn had, if I can express it in this way, “intervened” between her and her ideas’.¹⁹

During her long years of study, Barbara McClintock is not theorizing about corn; she is learning *with* it. The corn is not treated as a totality, which the scientist positions herself outside and attempts to circumscribe, rather it is treated as a complex partner — ‘whose secret will only be uncovered by an effort that combines the minutest details and the imagination’.²⁰

In paying attention to the minutest details, Barbara McClintock relentlessly worked with a precision that remained alert to the ways in which the world can puzzle us. Indeed, what sharpened this women’s precision was a passion for the ways in which the world can force us to abandon the ideas we have about it. Barbara McClintock was treated like a ‘mad old woman’ not because of errors within her work but — ‘because her methods and her object did not interest anyone’.²¹

So, Barbara McClintock’s work did not interest anyone?

—‘“Interest” actually derives from *interesse*, “to be situated between” ... To interest someone in something means, first and above all, to act in such a way that this thing — apparatus, argument, or hypothesis in the case of scientists — can concern the person, intervene in his or her life, and eventually transform it.’²²

Barbara McClintock knew only too well that she couldn’t force the corn to speak, to testify. Yes, she had to listen and listen she did. And what she heard was a confusion of stories, but she neither battled against nor plugged her ears to this noise. It was only later that certain general lessons could be drawn. Yes, it was only later that certain ‘principles of narration’ could be defined that would enable Barbara McClintock to give an intelligible account of all these stories — ‘veritable biographies’ — of grains of corn.²³

Each grain of corn had a complex story to tell of its production in the fields where it experienced the weather and predatory insects. Yes, each grain of corn presented a multitude of problems.

—“This is why, with respect to her research, I have spoken of a “principle of narration”, not of objective categories. The kind of intelligibility attained by McClintock does not allow one to forget about the concrete being ... to understand, as with any real history, under what constraints each grain’s history must have been possible, what was the influence of circumstances, what degrees of freedom they allowed to be explored.”²⁴

Immersing herself in the multitude of problems presented by a single grain of corn and learning how to ask the right questions of it, involved for Barbara McClintock a letting go of — ‘dissolution of’ — the conscious self. Yes, when subjective certitude is allowed to fly out of the window there comes — ‘an opening that “let’s the material come to us”, but that signifies at the same time the abandonment of all explicit intellectual procedures that enable epistemologists to construct models of rationality’.²⁵

Barbara McClintock loses herself in the confusion generated by aberrant grains of corn; but she knows only too well that nature cannot be described or thought through from the exterior as if one were an ideal god-like spectator.

—‘It is only later, when the confusion has given place to a creation of meaning with the discovery of an Arian thread in the labyrinth of signs and clues, that one can begin to understand what Barbara McClintock “does”, and also that she herself can explain what she is doing. Her very “explanation” also tells of the genesis of a conscious self out of a perplexity that involves indissociably the human mind and the corn.’²⁶

The career of Barbara McClintock does not speak of a conquering of corn, rather it speaks of, at least to me, a *becoming*, a *bringing into history*, that happened, in time, by way of a human mind entering into composition — ‘indissociably’ — with grains of corn. Indeed, corn enabled Barbara McClintock — ‘helped her’ — to establish the general cytological identity of genes.²⁷ Barbara McClintock and aberrant grains of corn made history together.

Barbara McClintock risked being transformed by a grain of corn and accepting of that risk she didn’t attempt to gain a (safe) distance from her corn by placing it as something external to her. She neither sought to assume the position ‘above’ that would (ideally) give her an overview of corn nor did she adopt the elevated position of a judge. What Barbara

McClintock did do was to engage with her corn, and through this engagement something happened that produced laughter.

Can I say that what happened was an event? In hearing of Barbara McClintock's laughter have I now discovered something with respect to the question of what constitutes an event?

But wait, is it appropriate to speak of 'discovery'?

At school I was taught that the 'universal force of attraction' was a discovery made by Newton; and I was taught also that the 'double-helix', of what is now called DNA, was a discovery made by Watson and Crick. Yes, in the science lessons I heard talk of discoveries. Yes, when something in the world has been uncovered and made accessible — intelligible — it is (so I was told) appropriate to speak of a discovery. However, the science lessons stressed that what marks a discovery, such as Newton's force of attraction, is the finding of the access. Newton found the access, and it is this result that matters. Indeed, what leads to this result — the method of approach, the line of enquiry and questioning — is what can said to be responsible for the discovery. Moreover, to obtain the means of access and make the breakthrough is what makes a method or line of enquiry merit, be deserving of, the discovery that henceforth it can name.

Yes, in the science lessons at school I heard talk of discoveries; however, you, Isabelle Stengers, speak of these 'discoveries', which mark the histories of the sciences, as events.

Yes, events.

You speak of an event because a so-called discovery punctuates a history that it irremediably transforms; however, you do not hesitate to consider this event as a gift, unmerited. Yes, a gift rather than a deserved discovery for, as you say, '*no one has promised us anything*'.²⁸

—'As I have said, to speak about the sciences involves taking a stand. And it is on this point that I will situate my commitment. I will argue — contrary to the assumptions of the epistemologists who consider an objective statement as a right to which any rational scientist can lay claim — that the possibility for a science to attain the envied status of a "hard science" is of the order of an event, which happens but which is neither decreed nor merited.'²⁹

For you, Isabelle Stengers, a discovery brings with it more than what could have been rationally expected, and this is why, if I am hearing you correctly, you speak of an event. Was not Newton surprised by the discovery, the event, that bears his name? Were not Watson and Crick surprised

when faced with the double-helix and the unexpected possibilities of understanding that it offered them? For you, Isabelle Stengers, an event is when there is the creation of intelligibility, which is also the creation of interest and meaning — ‘a science that was in permanent turbulence, open and critical, would not be marked by an event’ — but what makes this event, this creation, an *event* is that it brings with it unexpected possibilities of understanding that no one deserved nor had the right to expect.³⁰

Yes, there is intelligibility but there is also wonder.

To be sure, theories created from ‘discoveries’ may harden and become unquestionable (a black box closes) but let us never forget that such theories have been born from the wonder of the event — ‘the wonder of Newton, the wonder of Jean Perrin counting atoms, the wonder of Rutherford and Soddy linking radioactivity with the disintegration of atoms, the wonder of Watson and Crick confronted with their model of the double-helix’.³¹

An event punctuates and irremediably transforms a history — there is no going back; an event also produces interest — *interesse* — and in so doing creates meaning; but an event also brings with it something that could not be predicted by the circumstances in which it happens, and of this event we may say that it nourishes the future. We may wonder before this event yet let us also learn to laugh, as Barbara McClintock did.

Yes, when we and our histories are surprised and punctuated by the unexpected let us be attentive to the humour of events. And if the rosy apple in the bowl turns out to be more an event than an object will I be surprised by the humour of events — will I laugh?

I’m listening out for the humour of events, but I am also hearing the silence of an unfathomable ocean of unborn laughter.

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The harping on had not finished — would it ever finish?

She said that perhaps the harping on that had been going on was more an occasion of the expression *twittering on*.

And that being said begged the question:

‘So, are we expressing *twittering on*?’

And that question begged another:

‘In expressing *twittering on*, what is being expressed?’

And without blinking an eye she said:

'Expression itself, perhaps.'

And then there was a pause. Soon, however, voices were heard and once again immanence was being voiced, and with this came speculation on the taking of, the *making* of, photographic images.

'With the coming about of the twittering-tree there came the question of the event, which is — let's admit — still going on; however, with the coming about of the twittering-tree there also came the question of — the event of — another coming about, which could have happened yet didn't happen.'

And she said:

'Yes, there was speculation.'

And I said:

'Tell me again'.

And again she spoke of how, in the making of a photographic image *with* the twittering-tree, there would have been yet another becoming, yet another 'conjugation'.

And I said:

'Yet another "transformation".'

And she said:

'A photographic transformation.'

And then with the speed of *presto* there came the question:

'And if a photographic image had been made, if indeed a photographic transformation had done its doing, could it be said — now — that there would have been a doer that remained separate from the doing?'

She then asked if we were to speak more of immanence.

And I said:

'Go on then.'

And she said:

'Let me risk simplification.'

And then she took the risk.

'Let me say that immanence becomes when the world is apprehended as consisting of nothing but processes that result of themselves. Which is to say, immanence becomes when processes in the world, which includes you and I, do not bow to the idea that the being of the world is governed by a transcendent order or plan. A waterfall teems with a varying multiplicity of processes; but how are we to apprehend these processes? As issuing from a higher source? Or are these processes, as unpredictable, irregular and

interlaced as they may be, to be apprehended for themselves, through themselves, in themselves? Yes, let me say that immanence becomes asserted when processes that act within the world, which includes thinking, are not made answerable to or brought under the yoke of a cause, creator or doer that stands external to and detached from the processes themselves. Immanence becomes affirmed when the cause or causes of processes are considered to be inherent within the processes themselves and there is no positing of a creator that stands apart from, over and above, its creations.'

—'And?'

'And without recourse to a separable creator, cause or doer, the processes that *do* within the world can be said to be, in their doing, making themselves and self-positing.'

—'And some would say that this is when *being* says itself.'

And then came a pitter-patter between us that sounded as light rain.

'Some would say that being can only be said when there is a saying — doing — of itself. And this would be to say that being cannot say itself without occurring. Which is to say that being can't express itself without practical constitution, even if this is thinking. And to say this is to say that being can't be found anywhere else but in the formative processes of it making and doing itself. Which is again to say there isn't a doer outside the doing that causes the doing. That being speaks of the practice of an internal causal dynamic means that being hasn't been determined *before* the practice comes about. Which is to say that there is a chance that the unforeseeable will come with it; it is also to say that the practice, the doing, has to keep moving, keep coming about.'

And then holding her head she said:

'Self-positing — is this such a Big Idea?'

And then I said:

'For musical being, which opens being to *being* affected by and inter-mixed with other beings, who can say where the self of self-positing begins and ends; indeed, who can say that this self can be counted as a complete self-contained One?'

And then she said:

'Listen to musical being. Yes, listen to the teeming waterfall. Listen to the movement and multiplicity that rushes and gushes. And what do you hear? Can you hear it sounded that being is not only self-positing but also comprised of nothing but multiplicity, which is, in itself, never complete?'

And then after a noisy silence rushed between us I took breath and said:

‘For immanence there is no creator that stands apart from its creations; equally, there is no detached position from which the processes that act within the world can be overviewed and judged.’

And then she asked:

‘And what of a practice of photography that places a camera before a teeming waterfall? Is this practice to assume such a detached position; or is it to plunge itself into the waterfall and immerse itself in immanence?’

And then I had to ask what would be happening if such an immersion were to happen.

—‘Yes, what would the photography be *doing* here?’

She said that it would be *doing* the making of a photographic image; however, she said quickly that this doing, as with the doing of the waterfall, wouldn’t be doing representation.

—‘Neither the waterfaling processes nor the photographic processes could be considered as performing as acts of representation of a subject or doer that stands *before* and *above* the doing.’

Then I said: ‘But ... it could be that something is happening between the photographic doing and the waterfall doing that is eventful.’ And she said: ‘Yes ... something surprising could be happening’; however, she added that if neither the photographic doing nor the waterfall doing were doing representation then a chance opens up for the doing of something that is self-positing, self-constituting. And what I said after this was almost a repetition, but not quite.

‘If there isn’t the doing of representation, if indeed there is what can be called an immanent doing, then a chance is opened up for a *doing* between the photographic doing and the teeming waterfall doing that is a self-positing process.’

And with boldness she said that considering the photographic *doing* here it would have to be said: there is no creator, doer, expressor or cause — mortal, immortal or otherwise — that is standing apart from its creations or effects.

—‘If there is no doer that stands apart from — or behind — the doing then what part would a human being be playing here?’

She said that a human being wouldn’t be playing the star-part. And then I said that the human being would be acting within the process, would

be playing a constituent part, but wouldn't be spot-lighted as having star-power.

—'And why it wouldn't have star-power is because star-power models itself upon a design that instates a ONE at the centre that deploys itself from a position above. Star-power polishes the idea that it is a cause that can remain shining above and separate from its effects below. And, yes, what emanates from star-power's bright idea is that the power of its power is already constituted before it acts. However, a self-constituting process doesn't involve star-power. To be sure, there is a power — to produce, make, exist — but a self-constituting process poses a power not separate from but internal to what it can do. The constitutive power of self-positing being in no way elevates itself to a star position and neither — to harp on — is it constituted before its doing.'

Oh no, the harping on had not yet finished and neither had the immanent making of a photographic image.

'If the photographic image that is in the process of being made is part of a self-positing process then there is the question of *being*.'

And then little bells started to ring.

'If a photographic image is being made as part of a self-positing process then can it be said that this image is making for the world a new expression of being? Can that be said? Yes, can that be said no matter what technologies, chemical or digital, are involved?'

—'If that can be said then it would have to be said that what is expressed doesn't remain external to its expression.'

And I said:

'To say that would be to say that the photographic image is expression itself with no strings attached.'

And she said:

'No strings attached, yes; but let's not forget that what is expressed never stops being inherent within, *immanent* within, enfolded within, the expression that, as it were, unfolds it.'

And I said:

'This process of enfolding and unfolding is continuous with the *life* of the photographic image in question; it isn't something that gets done and once done is done and that's that. Yes, let's say that the being that becomes with a photographic doing is continually making itself in what it makes in its making.'

And she said:

‘That’s to say that Being — with a Big B — is always, until the day I die, to be found incomplete and as such doesn’t come to make that which can be counted as one. No, not even the chemically fixed photographic image makes a complete one.’

‘... *ssh*, can you hear the multiplicity that is without a one.’

‘Some would say that with the fixing of the so-called chemical photograph the movement of the doing of expression becomes stopped, arrested. But this movement is only brought to a stop when the movement of *doing* becomes the act of a separable doer. When, that is to say, the movement of doing comes to perform as a representation that ineluctably refers to a prior transcendence. Isn’t it when the image becomes beholden to perform as a representation and transcendence steps in and puts a foot down that the movement of doing is, in effect, brought to a stand still?’

And I continued by saying:

‘The face of the photographic image, as an expression of being, perhaps is a face that wouldn’t be recognized as Being by those who answer the question of what constitutes Being — with a Big B — by drawing a distinction between the living and the non-living.’

And with yet another wry smile she said:

‘In not being a recognizable face of Being perhaps this photographic face would open up an unforeseeable future, a future yet unthought, unseen.’

And knowing full well that a leap was being taken I said:

‘To say that a still and silent photograph is an expression of Being does make the distinction between living and non-living come to quiver. Yet in so doing perhaps this quivering makes for a vibration that opens up a chance for musical being to continue in its making and make unheard-of beings come into existence. Although it must be said that some would think this ridiculous.’

—‘But is it so ridiculous to assert that being — with a Big B or not — is a continual process?’

And then I asked if the word *event* was going to be sounded here.

‘Yes, are we now to sound the word *event* with respect to a photographic image that is an expression of self-positing being, which makes no separation between what something is and what something does?’

In response she said that *event* could be uttered to sound self-positing being, which side-steps representation and the stopping power of transcendence.

And then came a little twist.

‘For self-positing being, what something *is* is what something does, but when transcendence takes over what something *is* is given priority over what something does and what results of this is that the something in question becomes separated from what it can do.’

And then came an interjection.

—‘When Being voices itself within and through self-positing processes it could indeed call for the word event to be uttered, but — let’s face it — some would insist that the word event shouldn’t be doing here at all.’

And in response I said that having event *do* here wouldn’t mean that incalculable and unforeseeable surprises couldn’t happen here.

Then, for a short while, we stared at each other.

Did we recognize what was happening here?

And then she started speaking of how the movement of doing can involve movement in space.

—‘But what is resoundingly in motion is the movement that comes with time.’

And then I had to ask:

‘What is the time that is resoundingly in motion?’

‘It isn’t,’ she said, ‘the time that clocks tell.’

And then, knowing only too well that questions are never quite appeased by answers, she turned to me and asked if we were about to raise time as a question.

—‘Are we?’

— 0 —

That I still can’t definitely say if an event has happened or if it is going to happen, and that I still can’t supply a definite answer to the question of what constitutes an event makes me ask — *have I missed the plot?*

But wait a moment, does this event, which I know not when it happens, if it has happened or if it is going to happen, have a plot?

Perish the thought, perhaps there is no plot.

No plot, so not missing the plot. Or perhaps, missing the presence of a plot.

Or?

Or perhaps, an entanglement of plots; not one plot but a confusion that needs careful unravelling.

Or?

Or maybe, yes maybe, a plot that is made up *en route* as things are going along.

How can I say?

But I can say a proposition has been put to me.

— *What is already known cannot be experienced as an event.*

But exactly who or what has proposed this proposition?

Is it the event in question?

Although at times it has seemed so, how can this be?

So?

It has seemed so but it can't be proved so. At least, it can't be proved by forcing the event in question to come forward and stand and testify and be judged.

Clueless?

Okay, perhaps I have been less of a detective than I should be.

But I have detected something.

Present tense: I am detecting something.

Asking what constitutes an event is to also ask *When does an event happen?* and to ask this is to take on board the questions *Has it happened? Is it going to happen?* And what I am detecting is that there is something here, with these questions, that sounds novelistic, that sounds like the sort of questions that propel novels — *What has happened? What is going to happen?*

And?

In wanting to do some 'theorizing' with respect to answering the question of what constitutes an event, I have also detected — although some, I'm sure, would say that it is no detection at all — that I cannot judge what is essential and what is 'only' irrelevant background noise.

And?

And in not being able to separate the essential from background noise, or the anecdotal, will I be judged weak? Yes, Isabelle Stengers, will I be judged weak in the same manner that you say 'Darwinian theory' — the science of evolution — has been judged weak? Yes, those who have made this judgement of weakness have asked of the Darwinians — 'Where is the power to judge a priori, to differentiate, in an episode of evolution, the essential from the anecdotal? ... where is the relationship of forces between

the scientist and his object that every theory claims?’³² However, Isabelle Stengers, you ask if Darwinian theory is really a theory in the same sense as, for example, Newtonian theory, and then you go on to say that the so-called weakness of the science of evolution is what, from your perspective, gives it strength and interest. Strength and interest because, for you, this science is not actually endowed with an object, with the power to judge.

—‘Quite the contrary, it has discovered the necessity of putting to work a more and more subtle practice of storytelling.’³³

The plot thickens.

The science of evolution is itself evolving, and contemporary Darwinian accounts of evolution no longer have, as you say, the moralizing monotony that destined the best to triumph.

And?

And the plot thickens because, so I hear, these Darwinian narrators continually make more heterogeneous elements intervene — ‘which never cease complicating and singularizing the plot that is recounted’.³⁴

And?

—‘Living beings are not *objects of Darwinian representation*, judged in the name of categories that separate the essential from “noise”. Each witness, each group of living beings, is now envisaged as having to recount a singular and local history. Here scientists are not judges but investigators; the fictions they propose have the style of detective stories and involve ever more unexpected plots.’³⁵

How are the entangled histories of continents, soils and living beings (worms included) to be recounted? Answer: what is required is the making of a narration that is imaginative and open to taking risks with respect to the story, the fiction, that it proposes. And such a fiction would not deny that it is one story risked amid a host of other possible stories.

You say, Isabelle Stengers, that Darwin is now recognized not only as the founder of the science of evolution but as the first Darwinian author. Wasn’t Darwin’s style more that of a novelist than that of a judge who assumes a seat on the raised platform of the tribunal? You speak of ‘Darwinian authors’ and say of them that they abandoned the risk of being judge for the risk of being narrator. Storytellers, yes; inventive novelists, yes; but not judges nor prophets, nor ‘poets’ who fabricate objects for theories. You say that the Darwinian style is an example but it is not a model. And of this style you say that it has similarities with that of ‘whodunits’. Yes, it is the

classic detective story that comes to life here. And as the stories evolve, ever more unexpected plots become involved.

Yes, the plot continually thickens.

The question of what constitutes an event is intriguing me; for sure, what is intriguing is also puzzling, but I am not completely clueless — lines of enquiry have been proposed and, yes, I'm trying to investigate these to see where they might take me. In order to investigate these lines of enquiry and, indeed, what makes the question of the event so intriguing, perhaps what is required is a 'novelistic' style of theorizing — a style of thinking — that doesn't shy away from producing a fiction that evolves ever more unexpected plots. Yes, perhaps here I should take a leaf out of the book of those Darwinian authors whose style has similarities with the classic detective story, the whodunit.

You say, Isabelle Stengers, that Darwinian authors are neither judges, poets, nor prophets because the history of life, as they have learned to read it, does not authorize any relationship of forces that would permit an object to be judged or a hierarchy of questions to be established.

—'But Darwinian authors nevertheless rely on a relationship of forces. Their questions presuppose and imply the stability of the difference between the present to which they address their questions and the past that they attempt to recount. This difference finds an analogue in fictional genres: for example, the distinctive characteristic of the classic detective story is that the difference between the police investigator and the suspects is stable. The crime, if it happened, took place *before* the intervention of the investigator. The rule of the genre in Darwinian narratives is of the same type: the traits that interest them are the product of a long history and thus have a stable identity in relation to the type of intervention that enables them to be studied.'³⁶

For the classic whodunit something has happened before the investigation starts; 'it' has been done and this offers a stability even if the perpetrator hasn't as yet been sniffed out, tracked down. But how would the investigation proceed with the more unstable position of not knowing if 'it' had happened or if 'it' was going to happen? Indeed, how would the investigation proceed if it found itself oscillating between the questions *Has it happened? Is it going to happen?* — would the suspense be killing?

Lines of enquiries are being followed with respect to the question of what constitutes an event; and, if my investigation (and narration) of these 'clues' were to follow the classic whodunit, it could indeed be presupposed

that the investigation commences *after* something has happened. Sure, there would be a stability in knowing this, but what would this lead to?

Wouldn't it lead to the assumption that the question — of what constitutes an event — has an answer even though it hasn't been sniffed out, tracked down? Indeed, wouldn't it lead to the assumption that the investigation is a matter of making a discovery?

And if it were a matter of a discovery what would this suggest?

Wouldn't it suggest, lead to the assumption, that 'it' — the answer — has already happened? Indeed, wouldn't it suggest that the answer has happened *before* the asking of the question and the commencement of the investigation?

And then what would the investigator be facing?

If the answer has already happened wouldn't she be facing the inference that the event in question had itself already happened? Moreover, wouldn't she be facing a future that comes *before* what comes after now? Yes, wouldn't she be facing a future that had happened in advance? But facing such a future is no future at all. Indeed, such a future denies the future its future and perhaps that denial is also, as has been suggested by the lines of enquiry I have been pursuing, a denial of the *event* of the event in question.

The classic whodunit offers the stability that 'it' has happened; however, I am detecting that my investigation of the question of what constitutes an event can't proceed with the stable position of knowing 'it' has happened. Indeed, facing the question, I'm detecting that there can be no hope that a 'discovery' will be made. Yes, I'm detecting that it can't be presumed that an answer — or the event — is there awaiting, or hiding from, its discovery, or revelation, as some would say. Yes, with the lines of enquiry that I am currently pursuing I am detecting that there is a radical insecurity at the heart of the question of what constitutes an event.

Yes, I am detecting the sort of radical insecurity that you, Isabelle Stengers, have spoken of the world and its genesis as having. Let me quote your words, which were spoken some time ago.

'This world that seems to have renounced the security of stable, permanent norms is clearly a dangerous and uncertain world. It can inspire no blind confidence in us, but perhaps the feeling of mitigated hope that certain Talmudic texts have, it seems, attributed to the God of Genesis:

Twenty-six attempts have preceded the present genesis, and all have been doomed to failure. The world of man has arisen out of the chaotic

womb of the preceding debris, but it has no guarantee certificate: it too is exposed to the risk of failure and the return to nothing. "Let's hope it works" (Halway Sheyaamod), exclaimed God as he created the world, and this hope accompanies the subsequent history of the world and humanity, emphasizing right from the start that this history is stamped with the mark of radical insecurity.³⁷

Perhaps the question of what constitutes an event is asking for a style of theorizing that is novelistic and — yes — perhaps this question is quietly asking that I do not interrogate like a judge but investigate like a detective. However, the stability of the classic whodunit is not there for my taking; I cannot presume that 'it' has happened. For sure, I can hope that 'it' is going to happen, but *nothing has been promised me.*

A passage of time and a present moment that doesn't easily slip by

We were waiting. There was no question about it, but in our waiting questions were coming to us, moving between us, hovering and, sometimes, dipping and diving. Questions had been asked about doing, about the doing that happens and the movement that happens when no separation is made between doer and deed. She had spoken of how the movement of doing resoundingly involves the movement that comes with time and I had asked the question of what is the time that is resoundingly in motion, and she had said that it is not the time that clocks claim to tell.

Yes, the question of doing and self-positing processes had moved between us, and this movement had brought to us the question of the movement of time. We felt compelled to speak of this movement; yet both of us wondered how we were going to speak of it.

—‘The movement of time?’

She asked if we were going to speak of this as a march along a measurable line and I asked if we were going to speak of this as a matter of a movement that goes — steps — from one present moment to another present moment. However, she knew as I knew that the question of the movement of time was asking us to go further than this.

‘Rather than a movement that goes from one present moment to another, I’m wondering if the movement we are trying to speak of has to do with a time that throws the present of itself into question.’

A time that throws the present of itself into question?

Time had become a pressing question; however, we both agreed that this pressing question had nothing whatsoever to do with knowing if there was going to be a sufficient amount of time in which to do something.

—‘Isn’t it the numbers of the clock that give rise to the belief that the doing of time can be divided into amounts?’

Although the words sounded a tad ambiguous to me, they nevertheless prompted me to ask if we were *now* going to harp on about there not being a subject called time that can be separated from its doings.

And as quick as lightning she said:

‘*Now?*’

And this question was followed by another.

‘Isn’t it the clock and the procession of its numbers that gives rise to the belief that time comprises a succession of instantaneous present moments?’

And after these two questions had been asked there came something of an outpouring that sounded as a crying out loud.

‘Questions. Vacillations. Oscillations. Is it this or is it that? Has an event happened? *Is an event going to happen?* When is it that the word event will do? Has the moment come? Is it happening? Is it already over or is it yet to come? ... living questions; breathing questions; yes; questions, questions, questions.’

— 0 —

Nothing has been promised me. Nothing. Nonetheless, before me now is a vision. Not a host of golden daffodils, nor a beam of light coming from the sky; rather, what is before me is a vision of a field of unborn laughter.

A vision is before me, but this vision is not just in front of me; it is beside me, behind me: I am surrounded. Yes, now I am in a field of corn that is ripe for the picking. Birds are flying overhead yet I cannot hear the flap, flap, flapping of their wings, but I can hear — see — the silence of unborn laughter and, moreover, I can hear the noise of a thousand and one aberrant grains of corn telling their stories. What is more, I can hear the thousand and one stories that each insect is yelling as it preys upon the corn that is surrounding me. And then there is also the stories that are being told by the soil and the atmosphere and that tree over there in which a mass of small brown birds are congregating and twittering like crazy.

What a cacophony.

Stories speaking of entangled histories and entangled stories speaking of histories that have been rendered possible. Stories and ever more stories that know only too well that each one uttered is but one possibility amongst a much vaster set of possibilities. How can I unravel and recount these entangled tales? Is there a principle of narration that will help me?

I wonder.

And still I am wondering about the question of what is an event. Oh yes, the field within which I am standing is reverberating with the question of the event. Echo, reverberation: vibration. Yes, the whole field is vibrating. And now I am dancing, even though my two feet are firmly on the ground. And what is the music to which I am dancing?

Answer: the echoing laughter of Barbara McClintock.

Laughter is reverberating in the field in which I am standing and a question is now coming to me: what can Barbara McClintock's laughter tell me with respect to the question of the when and wherefore of the constitution of an event?

Following the words of Isabelle Stengers, I could say that an event did happen when Barbara McClintock was surprised by her corn. Yes, an event in so far as unexpected possibilities of understanding were brought to Barbara McClintock: a history was irredeemably transformed. An event, for there was the creation of intelligibility: Barbara McClintock had learnt from a grain of corn which questions to ask it. And also an event for there was, eventually, the production of interest and meaning: it didn't happen in a flash, but nonetheless it came to happen.

Indeed, following the words of Isabelle Stengers I could say that between Barbara McClintock and those aberrant grains of corn an event happened. But now I am wondering about those grains of corn themselves, if indeed I can put it like that.

I am up to my neck in corn, Barbara McClintock's laughter is echoing, and I am wondering if there is a sense in which it can be said that all those grains of corn surrounding me are, in themselves, events.

I am standing within a multitude of events?

I so want to ask Barbara McClintock if she would agree that an event is happening with each and every one of those aberrant grains of corn, which have to be understood in themselves and not as representatives 'of' corn. Yes, I want to ask *if each grain of corn is, in its aberrance, more of an event than a recognizable object to which it can be said, 'Hello, hello, there you are again.'*

A question cries out; who or what will answer its call?

In the field, within which I am standing and listening, I am hearing echoes of laughter, yet I am also hearing echoes of voices; it is like being in one of those gardens where, even after the children have gone, their voices continue to reverberate, continue to be heard ...

As I turn my head to hear what one voice in particular is saying something catches my eye. Something is there on the ground, glinting. I look and there not far from my foot is a stone, silvered by sunlight.

My attention is caught by a stone, but at the same time I am hearing it being said that a stone is a field of activity. Is there something going on with the stone that is here, near to my foot? Well, something is going on with the stone in so far as there is, although I can't see it, a molecular dance taking place. A molecular dance is going on there, but — wait — I am hearing the word *event* being sounded here. Yes, I am hearing it being said that with what I have called 'a stone' an event is going on. Whose speech is echoing here? Whose words am I hearing? And then comes an answer: the words of Alfred North Whitehead.¹ He is long gone from the garden, but his eventful words are still reverberating.

And now, amid the thousand and one entangled tales that grains of corn are telling and preying insects are yelling, there are the thousand and one words of Alfred North Whitehead, which are voicing *event*.

There is so much to hear, so much to tell, but I can't say it all just as I can't know it all. To tell the truth, I am not wanting to speak about these words; rather, I am wanting to find a way to speak with them. And I know, only too well, that whatever becomes told — narrated — will be but one — short — story risked amongst a host of other possible stories. Whatever becomes told will be incomplete, as incomplete as the reality that is beside my feet and which I call stone, although to say 'stone' is perhaps to have already said too much.

There is a world in which it is assumed that the stone beside me has a simple location, but no such assumption can be made in this field within which I am standing. No simple location because, so I am hearing, what is fundamental for the stone on the ground is that it has extension. Indeed, what is fundamental for the stone and the thousand and one aberrant grains of corn and the preying insects and the tree that is twittering is that they all partake of the relation of extension. Yes, this is where the narrative starts: extension is a fundamental natural relation.² But wait, there is

something else I am hearing: extension is fundamental to events. I'll put it like this: extension is what defines the event.

The stone doesn't have a simple location, rather it has temporal and spatial extension. To put it another way, it is a chunk of space-time. A chunk; yes, this is the word that I am hearing.³

The stone is a chunk of space and time; however, to speak of space and time is perhaps already to have said too much, too little. Too much and too little for the words I am hearing are saying that they are endeavouring to show that space and time are abstractions.

But abstractions from what?

'... they are abstractions from more concrete elements of nature, namely, from events.'⁴

Space and time are partial expressions of one fundamental relation between events, and this relation is what Alfred North Whitehead's words are calling extension.⁵

In the beginning there is extension and in the end there is extension, and what extension fundamentally involves is multiple relations, entangled histories. I'll put it like this: an event is a relational entity; it is a vibration.

Perhaps we are not accustomed to calling a stone an event for, like Cleopatra's Needle on the Embankment or the Great Pyramid of Egypt, it seems to lack the element of transitoriness.⁶ We are accustomed to think that the assassination of Julius Caesar constitutes an event but not so when it comes to a stone. How can a stone be an event? Isn't an event when a man or woman is run over?

He is gone, long gone, but his words still can be heard replying:

'We are accustomed to associate an event with a certain melodramatic quality. If a man is run over, that is an event comprised within certain spatio-temporal limits. We are not accustomed to consider the endurance of the Great Pyramid throughout any definite day as an event. But the natural fact which is the Great Pyramid throughout a day, meaning thereby all nature within it, is an event of the same character as the man's accident, meaning thereby all nature with spatio-temporal limitations so as to include the man and the motor during the period when they were in contact.'⁷

The factor we perceive with the Great Pyramid is that something is going on there — then. What is going on is the Great Pyramid in its relations with the goings-on of surrounding Egyptian events.⁸ With the Great Pyramid, as with the stone here beside my feet, there are always relata: both pyramid and stone are going on amid a complex of relations, a stream

of events. The Great Pyramid, and the stone beside me, is for any day, any hour or any minute a chunk of that complex, that stream. And what is important here to stress is that, with this chunk, relations are in motion — vibrating, resonating, reverberating.

Things and bodies, be they of flesh and bone or stone, are always to be found amid *relata*, which are in motion and always moving on.⁹ That *relata* are always moving on is the factor that makes the chunk of relations happening now — with the stone here — a unique occurrence, an *event*.

For the stone beside me, along with the rosy red apple in the bowl on the kitchen table, as well as the framed photograph on the bedside table, there is no simple location, there are always *relata*. And *relata* are what give rise to extension.

‘... *relata* are events.’¹⁰

Relata make events relational entities and *relata* are what make stone, apple and photograph events. With events relations are entering into composition with each other and this is why chunk is said here, but in saying chunk what is being spoken of is a composition that is in motion; it is like when music is being made.

There are relations between events just as there are relations composing events. Every event is extending over other events.

‘... and every event is extended over by other events.’¹¹

There is no denying it, the event that is being sounded in the field within which I am standing is complex.

‘... and the relations between two events form an almost impenetrable maze.’¹²

Overlapping events; events that partially include other events; events that completely include other events; and events that in entering into composition with each other have parts that remain separate from one another. Events extending to become ever larger events and events extending to become ever smaller events. No ideal maximum limit. No ideal minimum limit. On and on the events go. And as they go on they are perpetually moving on, which is to say that all is transitive here.

There is the chunk of the life of nature that is the stone-corn-insects for an hour of a day, and there are other events that are not included in this event but which remain *relata* for it; although in some sense excluded from the event that is happening here, these events nevertheless continue to form *relata*.¹³ Here exclusion has nothing whatsoever to do with a separation of the essential from what is deemed — negated — as irrelevant background

noise. Here exclusion does not speak of a negative relation; rather, it signifies that for all the events included within the chunk of the life of nature that occurs, there and then, ever more events pertain ...

‘This fact, that every event is known as possessing the quality of exclusion, shows that exclusion is as positive a relation as inclusion.’¹⁴

Fundamental to the event is the relation of extension; for any event there is a coming together of events and this process of coming together, which is transitive, is what constitutes the event — the chunk — as a passage. Yes, in the field where I am standing, and in which a thousand and one histories are becoming interlaced, an intricate passage of nature is passing.

But wait, there is another event to be included here, and this is the event of me standing here up to my neck in corn. And what is also here is the state of my bodily life as it is within this passage of nature and my perception and observation of it. Indeed, what is happening here is what I hear called the ‘percipient event’.

‘This percipient event is roughly speaking the bodily life of the incarnate mind. But this identification is only a rough one. For the functions of the body shade off into those other events in nature; so that for some purposes the percipient event is to be reckoned as merely part of the bodily life and for other purposes it may be reckoned as more than bodily life.’¹⁵

Let me put it like this: the percipient event is not without extension — *relata*. There are events active in conditioning the percipient event and then there are also all the passive events, all the other relations that go into the spatio-temporal relations of the percipient event happening here — then.

The percipient event (and the act of observation that is occurring with this event) is inseparable from the event of the intricate passage of nature that is passing here with the stone and the corn and the insects and ... and ... What is characteristic of the percipient event is awareness of being *here*, and what is special for this event is that *here* has one unbroken meaning in relation to the passage of nature that is passing. And this unbrokenness is what I am hearing called a relation of ‘cogredience’.¹⁶

The perspective relative to the percipient event is neither outside nor transcendent of the passage of nature that is happening here; it is embedded within it. Or to put it another way, nature is always observed from within nature.

The percipient event comes together with the coming together that constitutes the passage of events that is happening here with the stone, the

corn, the insects; and the totality of this coming together is a process that is constitutive of a whole, which here is called a duration. And a duration is, so I hear, a definite entity. However, the word duration is perhaps unfortunate in so far as it suggests a mere abstract stretch of time.

‘This is not what I mean.’¹⁷

There is the chunk of the life of nature that is the Great Pyramid for, let’s say, a minute; however, a duration is not this minute, which is an abstract length of time. Rather, a duration is the passage of events that are, with the Great Pyramid, passing over each other whilst, as it were, passing, moving on ...

‘Time is known to me as abstraction from the passage of events. The fundamental fact which renders this abstraction possible is the passing of nature, its development, its creative advance, and combined with this fact is ... the extensive relation between events.’¹⁸

A duration is the temporal extension that pertains to the passage of events within which the percipient event is embedded; however, let’s not forget that, with the extensive relations between events, spatial extension occurs as much as temporal extension.

Every duration is composed of other durations; every duration is part of other durations and every duration has other durations as its parts; there are no maximum durations, no minimum durations; every duration has antecedents; every duration has consequence: all in all, a duration has temporal thickness.¹⁹

A duration becomes constituted as a whole by way of a certain quality of relatedness and this quality is what is possessed by the internal (I’ll say *immanent*) relation between the percipient event and, for want of a better term, the observed event — the passage of events that is happening and passing here with the stone, silvered by sunlight, beside my feet. What is more, this quality of relatedness also signifies that there is ...

‘... a beyond to whatever is observed.’²⁰

And this beyond is what gives a duration thickness, temporal thickness.

One duration passes into another, but blurred is the boundary between the two. How can it be told exactly when and where one duration ends and another begins? It can’t be told, exactly. No one can snap their fingers and say that now, at this very instant, one duration has ended and another has started. I’ll put it like this: the exact instant of a present moment wavers ...

‘The present is a wavering breadth of boundary ...’²¹

A duration forms a whole yet there is no perfect definition of a duration. A whole, yes; however, a duration cannot be completely distinguished from the durations over which it is passing or which are passing over it. Arriving at the perfect definition of a duration is an arbitrary postulate.

‘... an arbitrary postulate of thought.’²²

Exactness is an ideal of thought.

With the passage of a duration there comes past and future yet the passage leaves nothing between the past and the future.²³ I’ll put it like this: with events the present gapes. There is no well-defined present moment that would act as a demarcation point between past and future.

‘... past and future meet and mingle in the ill-defined present.’²⁴

Past and future mingle; or, to put it another way, what has happened and what is going to happen come to co-exist. With an event — extension — there is no instantaneous present, no moment in time.

‘There is no such thing to be found in nature.’²⁵

Here I am, standing on firm ground, but my two feet are not standing in a world where there is a present moment that is the outcome of the past.

‘... and the promise of the future.’²⁶

What is lost with the notion of a moment in time? Answer: the ultimate quality of passage.²⁷ A moment in time — an instant — is deprived of all temporal extension.

Moments in time and points in space are abstractions that can only be arrived at by progressively diminishing the extension of events; by so doing we approximate to simplicity. Where does the event or occurrence of Cleopatra’s Needle begin and where does it end? This question can only be answered by restricting the extent (both temporal and spatial) of the event considered. By diminishing the extent of an event we arrive at an ideal simplicity, an ideal event; however, in obtaining this ideal, an event is so restricted as to be without extension in time or in space. A moment in time as well as a point in space are ideals of events. Indeed, to locate an event in terms of a moment in time or a point in space is to abstract an ideal event.

‘I call such an ideal event an “event-particle”.’²⁸

Event-particles; yes, we can arrive at these ideals through a Method of Extensive Abstraction, which involves a technique of geometric measurement, but let’s not make the mistake of thinking that the world is ultimately built up of these particles. Event-particles are that by which the complexity of events are simplified; as such they express the demands of an ideal.

‘... the demands of an ideal accuracy, and of an ideal simplicity in the exposition of relations.’²⁹

Events — extensions, passages of nature — are forever moving on and going, going gone, and this factor is what, in this field, sounds an event as an unrepeatable unique occurrence. For an event such as this it can’t be said, ‘Hello, there it is again’. Events are perpetually moving on and to my ears this movement, which involves both temporal and spatial relations, speaks of a certain restlessness. Restlessness, yes; but from this restlessness permanences are born.

Events body forth permanences (... hello, is that laughter I’m hearing again?). Permanences can be recognized in events, and what can be *recognized* is what is here called an object. What defines an object, which may be a colour, is that it can ‘be again’. Objects, permanences, ‘ingress’ into events; however, they do not stand to events in an invariable two-termed relation that can be found in a certain subject–predicate distinction. Or to put this another way, objects involve multiple relations between all the active and passive events that come together in the becoming of an event.

Permanences are realized in events; however, you cannot wipe out the whole structure of events and yet retain the existence of that permanency, which is to say — and stress — that permanences, objects, are only to be found — recognized — *in* events. Permanences can be recognized in and abstracted from events; however, an event cannot be recognized ...

‘You cannot recognize an event; because when it is gone, it is gone.’³⁰

Events are unrecognizable, which is to say that an event comes — becomes — as a novel entity. Indeed, the event that is being made heard in the field within which I am standing sounds *event* as an unrepeatable unique occurrence; in so doing, it also sounds *event* as the production of novelty. Novelty is produced but let’s not forget that the event, as a vibration, is extending into other events in as much as other events are extending over it. Unrepeatable, yes; but, in a sense, every event is in every other event. The unique occurrence that is happening with stone, corn, insects, tree and me will perish, yet as a relational entity it will reverberate in and resonate with other events and so come to make other events, other histories, possible.

We can recognize objects in events, we can abstract permanences from events, but such objects or permanences cannot be really separated from their fields.³¹ Now, what becomes recognized or abstracted can receive a name, but in becoming a well-known name, such as The Great Pyramid, it

can so happen that both in language and in thought the event begins to sink behind the noun.³²

(... are the insects preying on the corn chuckling to themselves as they wonder at the abstract subtleties in which we indulge as we think of and name stones and bricks and drips of water and plants?)³³

In the field in which I am standing and narrating, the 'doing' of relational entities is speaking loudly. Yes, let's say that verbality is speaking loudly. And hearing this — noise? — I'm hearing also that there is no fundamental substance that is (ontologically) prior to events. Events are the fundamental constituents of nature. Events are ...

'... in some sense the ultimate substance of nature.'³⁴

Events are constitutive of the going on of nature, from which the human animal can never be separated. What makes an event is extensive relations and it is through this extensiveness that an event becomes a relational and vibratory entity that *sounds* becoming, transitoriness, unrepeatability and novelty. And what this event speaks out for is a fluent world, a restless world wherein there is relatedness yet wherein relations are perpetually in motion, in process. Yes, what this event speaks out for is an event that has an internal resonance with other events.

With the event that has been made heard, in the field in which I am standing, I have not heard talk of essential qualities that can be counted numerically as one. No, I have not heard talk of essences to which accidents happen. And I have not heard such talk because the event that has been making itself heard has been speaking out for, at least to my ears, a movement from essence to history.

And now the event that has been happening with stone, corn, insects, tree and me is perishing. Yes, the narrative will have closure. The event will have gone; but — this is my question — to what extent will it continue to reverberate in other events, other definitions of the event?

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... questions, questions, questions.

There had been an unexpected outpouring of words, which sounded as a crying out loud, but this was to stop as she turned and suddenly said:

‘With all those questions there is still yet another question, and this question is the question of the question, which it can be said turns, returns — moves — in each and every question voiced.’

She then asked if there was an answer that would satisfy this question, but she quickly followed this by saying that the question of the question is a question of the question as a question and not an answer. In response I said that the question of the question could be considered as raising the question of where does the inclination — the concern — to question come from.

And she responded by asking yet another question.

‘No answer, no matter how quick and clever, ever wholly satisfies a question — is that not the question of the question?’

I said that others before us have raised the question of the question and she said that it is being repeated again.

—‘Repeated?’

No answer.

Start again.

And start again the questions did.

‘Would it be a mistake to think that the concern to question has to do with a capacity that certain individuals have?’

And again.

‘Would it be a mistake to think that the inclination to question comes from a subject whose disposition is to doubt, query, quibble, be sceptical or be a nosy parker?’

And then came something of the order of an answer.

‘Some would say that it is the inordinate force of time that presses for questions to happen.’

‘Which is to say that in each and every question time is pressing, exerting a force.’

‘Time may well be exerting a force in each and every question, but if I am not to ignore what has been said before then I would have to say that behind the pressing — the doing — of this force there doesn’t stand a separable doer or subject that answers to the name Time.’

She took a short intake of breath and then said:

‘The press of time — and putting it like this suggests that a crowd or multitude is involved — pushes for questions to happen, yet, in the question, time is also turning and positing itself.

And how is time positing itself?

‘Answer: by turning the present of itself back into a question; in other words, by interrupting itself.’

Time posits itself whilst interrupting itself?

Again there was one of those split-second pauses that seems to last an aeon and open up a vast void.

And then, as if coming from the void, it could be heard said:

‘In the question time throws the present tense into question ... *Is* the sky blue? ... *Is* the rose red? ... What *is* writing? ... In throwing the present tense — the *is* — into question, time also throws the present of itself into question. And what this does is to open up the chance for the time-to-come to return again.

And then I said:

‘However, it has to be said that in returning, time doesn’t return as it was; on the contrary, there is a difference. What returns is that which has differed ...’

‘With itself.’

And that being said prompted me to think of thinking as a temporal process — *is the movement of my thinking continually differing with itself? — is it a continuous differing that keeps my thinking moving?*

No answer.

Keep going.

And I kept going by saying that in interrupting the present of itself in the question, time opens up the chance for invention — the production of novelty — to come again. And she kept going by saying that in interrupting the present of itself in the question, time opens up the chance for transformation, without which the world and thinking would stagnate, lie dormant and die.

‘By interrupting the present of itself, time makes an opening through which the future can intercede, which makes the past quiver.’

‘And some would say that this interruption, through which the future intercedes and the past comes to quiver, is what constitutes the event of time, the event of non-chronological time, which is — let’s face it — what we are trying to speak of.’

—‘Are we to say that the interrupting of time by itself is what constitutes the event of time?’

The question fell between us and there, between us, a silence spoke. Spoke loudly. She said that she could hardly bear to listen. Yet listen we did until I said:

‘Continuing in its formative process, time, as a force, repeatedly comes to differ with itself; however, it has got to be said that there isn’t a SOMETHING from which it is differing. In differing with itself time isn’t differing from an already-constituted self or subject; indeed, a foot hasn’t been put down that a proceeding step comes to differ *from*.’

And then we started talking of walking again.

‘It’s not so easy to visualize how time continues its formative process by interrupting itself and differing with itself. But when we cease reducing the movement — the time — of walking to the instances of a series of steps and look only to the movement, do we not see that the instance of a present moment can never quite be seen? When walking is coming about, when it is *en route* in its formative process, do we not see that a present moment can never quite be pinned down? And seeing this are we not seeing time throwing into question the present of itself? When we look only to the movement of walking perhaps it will be seen that a present moment can never quite be seen; however, it has to be added that the movement we are trying to speak of is asking us to go further than producing a representation of it as a traversal of space.’

Then I looked at her looking at me.

And looking, she said:

‘What are you seeing? Are you seeing time differing with itself?’

And looking, I said:

‘Are you seeing that a present moment of a face can’t quite be pinned down?’

And then in response she said:

‘How long can you wait for an answer?’

A silence fell between us and again it was as if a vast void had opened up and was pressing upon us, passing through us. She started humming and as she did I reiterated that the force — or forces — of the time that is exerted in the question isn’t the expression of an already-constituted self or subject.

Time to talk of expression yet again.

And talk we did.

She said the force of time is expressed in the question and I said that the happening of a question is an expression of time as a force. She said that it is only through expression that the expressed comes into existence and I said that in its expression the expressed has come to differ with itself.

—‘But it has to be added that the expression hasn’t differed from something to which it can be compared.’

And she responded by saying:

‘The expression hasn’t differed *from* the expressed in so far as the expressed doesn’t remain external to or transcendent of its expression; in its expression, the expressed has differed *with* itself. And what is in motion here is a power that isn’t separate from but internal to what it can do.’

And I responded by saying:

‘That the expressed has no existence outside its expression means that the expressed — time — has to immediately and continually turn and make an expression and so differ with itself. And it is this movement of turning and differing with itself that comes to make what can only be called the multiplicity of time.’

‘It is a dance,’ she said. ‘A dance that steps aside from taking and holding a place.’

And I said:

‘Musical being?’

The words had left my mouth yet the question continued to ring in my ear, and it continued to ring as I spoke again of the difficulty of visualizing time interrupting itself and differing with itself whilst positing itself. She said that it would be easy to see an interruption as a rupture and I said that with a rupture comes the image of a breach, a crack, a split, a fissure. She said that seeing an interruption as a rupture is to see a state of brokenness and I said that in seeing brokenness the *inter* of an interruption gets left behind.

—‘And the *inter* speaks not of a state of brokenness but rather, a state of being between.’

‘In other words, an interval.’

And once again there was a pause in which everything and nothing seemed to be happening. How long the pause lasted neither of us could say; however, in time I gathered up thoughts and said:

‘When the present is thrown into question an interval opens up in time, but this interval is not between times; it is not an interval that comes between two moments, two steps, two points, two instances. On the contrary, the interval we are trying to speak of is when the present of a moment or an instant splits open and gapes open; when, that’s to say, the present itself becomes an interval.’

And then came yet another question.

'How is this interval to be measured by the time that clocks tell? Answer: it can't. It can't because the time that clocks tell — measure — moves from one present point to another present point and here, in the interval, such presents have ceased to be points of certainty. A nano second, a split second, a minute, a hour — who can tell? However, what can be told is that inside the interval you will find yourself falling into non-chronological time. Through an interruption an interval opens up in time, yet this interval doesn't come between times; it doesn't come between, let's say, 3 p.m. and 3.15 p.m. On the contrary, something else is going on. In throwing the present of itself into question, time produces an interruption in which it comes to disjoin with itself; and in disjoining with itself an interval is opened up *between* time and itself. Yes, this is the *inter* of the interruption.'

Then she said:

'This is not easy going.'

And I said:

'No one promised it would be.'

And she said:

'It feels as if my thinking is being turned inside out.'

And I said:

'Perhaps that's it — yes, perhaps the interval we're trying to speak of is happening as your thinking turns inside out.'

And then, two smiles opening wide.

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The question of what constitutes an event is still making itself heard and still making me agitated. I can't deny that I am bothered, but I am curious to know if there is an answer, or theory, that will appease this insistent question. Appeasement may not be what this question is looking for; nevertheless, I am still listening out for theories of the event. Still searching. Still researching.

But wait, Alfred North Whitehead's event is continuing to make itself heard.

Yes, the event is reverberating.

Yes, I am continuing to hear an event that, again and again, speaks out for events as, in some sense, fundamental. Oh yes, I am continuing to hear

an event that is singing out to be heard in ways that are not dominated by the subject–predicate distinction, which has entrenched itself within many languages and much thought.

And now, once again, the words of Alfred North Whitehead are making themselves heard. And what these words are saying is that it is the Aristotelian ‘primary substance’ that is, in part, answerable for the notion that the subject–predicate form of statement conveys a truth that is metaphysically ultimate ...

‘Aristotle asked the fundamental question, What do we mean by “substance”? Here the reaction between his philosophy and his logic worked very unfortunately. In his logic, the fundamental type of affirmative proposition is the attribution of a predicate to a subject.’³⁵

The subject–predicate distinction distinguishes a primary position and this is where the subject — substance — is placed. Being placed in the primary position, the subject thus stands as what comes first, and standing as first readies the assumption that SOMETHING is standing there before the befalling that is, so the dictionary tells me, ‘the action of a verb; an occurrence, an event’.

The subject — a SOMETHING — is there before a befalling; yes, it could be said that it is this assumption that leads to the notion that the subject stands as a distinguishable object, an object separable from the goings-on that come with befallings. Moreover, it could be said that it is this notion that fuels the making of a distinction between the ‘category of objects’ and ‘the category of events’.

In giving the subject of a sentence a primary and distinct position, a logic takes hold: predicates and befallings are but secondary and, as such, without substance. (Would you consider verbs as having substance?) And what follows as a consequence of this is that ‘events’ are made conceptually dependent upon, and so tied to, that SOMETHING that is taken as being there before there is a befalling and what happens happens.

Events may be understood as changes, but the structure — logic — of the subject–predicate distinction would have us believe that with the change there is some substance, some SOMETHING, that is changing. (The apple, in the bowl on the kitchen table, is rotting.) Events may be understood as changes, but the category of a distinguishable SOMETHING so dominates that when it is an issue of the location of an event, the event in question is located by locating the SOMETHING that is, supposedly, undergoing the change. Yes, all too quickly events are fastened to and made conceptually

dependent upon a distinguishable subject — object — substance. (Locate the apple and then you will locate the event of rotting.) However, Alfred North Whitehead's event, which is still making itself heard, is asking us to think *event* otherwise than this and make the subject–predicate distinction quiver. Oh yes, for this event, which is itself a vibration, the subject–predicate distinction is an unfortunate historical accident.

With Alfred North Whitehead's event ringing in one ear, I am hearing, in the other ear, the words of Donald Davidson doubting P.F. Strawson's insistence that the 'category of events' is conceptually dependent on the 'category of objects'.³⁶ Oh yes, for the philosopher P.F. Strawson there fundamentally has to be, before events and the action of verbs, a subject — object — substance.

For Strawson, so I gather, the subject–predicate distinction has central importance; it is what offers support for the thesis that 'objects' are more fundamental than 'events'. According to Strawson, so I am hearing Davidson say, we could not have the idea of a birth or a death or a blow without the idea of an animal that is born or dies or of an agent who strikes a blow. I am hearing Davidson say that he does not doubt that Strawson is right in this: 'most events are understood as changes in a more or less permanent object or substance.'³⁷ However, I am hearing him say that what he does doubt is the contention (Strawson's thesis) that there is not a symmetrical dependence of the category of objects on the category of events.

I am hearing Davidson say that he doubts that 'object or substance' is more fundamental than 'event', and here — yes — I can hear echoes of Alfred North Whitehead's event; however, even though I am hearing Davidson express doubt, I am still hearing substance sounded as something that is distinct from events. For sure, I am not hearing words that are saying there is an ontological hierarchy between substance and event, which is what, so I gather, Strawson says; however, I am still hearing *event* as that which is otherwise than substance. And I am hearing this as I hear Davidson say:

'One important way to identify events without explicit reference to a substance is by demonstrative reference: "that shriek", "that dripping sound", "that next sonic boom".'³⁸

For sure, he is saying that it would be a mistake to suppose that, even for events that are described as changes in an object, we *must* describe them by referring to the object; nonetheless, even though 'that shriek' or 'that dripping sound' may have 'no explicit reference to a substance', the

category of substance still remains in a position that is distinguishable from the goings-on of a befalling. However, even though substance remains, as it were, in its old place — the place championed by the subject–predicate distinction — I am hearing a hint of quivering uncertainty with regards to ‘substance’. Yes, I am hearing this as I hear Donald Davidson say: ‘for some events it is not so easy to say what substance it is that undergoes the change.’³⁹ Moreover, I am hearing the subject–predicate distinction become twittery as I hear this philosopher say: ‘Neither the category of substance nor the category of change is conceivable apart from the other.’⁴⁰ But, with that being said, am I hearing of an event that sounds an event as, in some sense, the ultimate substance of nature?

(Is that what I want to hear?)

With ‘that shriek’, ‘that dripping sound’, ‘that next sonic boom’ events are being, as it were, sounded; but, even though sound comes with these ‘events’, I am not hearing *event* sounded as a vibratory entity that is constitutive of the going-on and ‘creative advance’ of nature. Oh no, I am not hearing echoes of an event that speaks out for a temporality where instantaneous points in time do not rule the day.

Yes, I am not hearing echoes of an event that speaks out for events as having an internal resonance with other events. But wait — listen up — that event is still ringing, still ringing out what I can only call a musical conception of the world. And with this conception before and beside me, I cannot help but yet again see a vision of an unfathomable ocean — field — of unborn laughter.

A vision is before me, yes; but what is there to see with this vision?

I’ll say: something unspeakable.

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An interval had opened up, had opened up between time and itself, and we were trying to speak of it. It wasn’t easy going — no promise that it would be — yet two smiles had opened wide, as wide as an ocean, as wide as a vast yawning void.

And the smiling went on until, once again, I gathered up thoughts and said:

‘Falling into the interior of the interval that opens up as time interrupts itself, you find that time becomes most paradoxical. You find that what has

just happened, which is becoming *no longer*, and what is just about to happen, which is *not yet*, come to co-exist. Indeed, within the *inter* of the interruption something peculiar happens to Chronos, the measured time that ticks, tocks or bleeps and divides our day into a number of hours, minutes and seconds.'

And she said:

'Tell me more.'

'Looking at a digital clock you see numbers flash fast before your eyes. There is just enough time to catch sight of a number that offers the belief that the present moment is — now — 30 seconds past 3 p.m. However, when time is in the process of interrupting and splitting open the present moment of itself you find time going — splitting — in two directions at once. Yes, it goes in the direction of the present-becoming-past and, simultaneously, it goes in the direction of the present-becoming-future. And it is this going in two directions at once, this splitting, that makes what has just happened and what is just about to happen come to co-exist.'

Then it was me who said:

'This isn't easy going.'

And her response was:

'Keep going.'

'The metric time that the clock speaks of adheres to an image of the present as a point that moves along a line and which, every step of the way, marks one present moment that has succeeded another present moment. Here the present is a point that comes to separate what comes before from what comes after. However, when no present moment can be distinguished from a present-becoming-past and a present-becoming-future — when, that's to say, the present is split open — you find that before and after are drawn together and become contemporaneous with each other. Paradoxical? Yes. But seeing this paradox, which isn't so easy to see, you see that the past is not constituted *after* the present it once was; rather, what you see is that the becoming of the past and the becoming of the future happen, as it were, at the same time. And it is this contemporaneous becoming of past and future that draws together before and after in the interval of the present moment split open. And this contemporaneity upsets the much-believed chronological story of a past that comes before a present after which comes a future.'

(Keep going, keep going.)

‘When the present is thrown into question and ceases to be a point that serves as a frontier between before and after, you find time simultaneously going in the direction of the present-becoming-past and the present-becoming-future. Now, these directions are distinct yet in the *inter* opened by the present splitting open there is a zone where you cannot tell where one direction ends and another begins.’

And then she piped up and said:

‘This sounds similar to the zone of indiscernability that opened up between small brown birds and small brown pine-cones in the making of the twittering-tree. Pine-cones had not been transformed into chirping birds, but in entering into composition with each other, and setting quivering in motion, there opened up a zone in which it couldn’t be told where one ended and the other began. In this zone both birds and pine-cones became something other than what they were, yet, at the same time, they both remained distinctly what they were.’

And after the merest hint of a hesitation I continued by reiterating:

‘When time splits open the present moment of itself and it is seen that the present is splitting in two directions at the same time, you can’t quite locate the exact point where the direction of the present-becoming-past splits from the direction of the present-becoming-future. To be sure, directions are coming about, but in the splitting of the present into the present-becoming-past and the present-becoming-future a zone of indiscernability has opened up. The future and the past are just arriving, just departing, and in the time span of the *just* a zone has opened up where it is impossible to tell which way things are going — everything is in question, up in the air, unfixd and uncertain. Indeed, in the zone of the just arriving-just departing of the past and future we can only oscillate between asking *Has it happened? Is it going to happen?*

‘In the zone where uncertainty hovers between the arrival and departure of past and future we are in the interior of the interval that opens up between time and itself as time interrupts itself, and here, in the interior of the *inter* of the interruption, time is both inside and outside itself.’

I wanted then to stop, to say *phew!* and say no more, but instead (keep going, keep going) I continued by saying:

‘In the zone where it can’t be told exactly where the present-becoming-past ends and the present-becoming-future begins it can indeed be said that a peculiar interval has opened up in time. And *peculiar* because this interval doesn’t have definite edges or borders. I can’t say where this interval begins

and ends just as I can't say how long it lasts — the time that clocks tell has stopped working. I can't say, but I'll risk saying that in this peculiar interval both silence and noise can be heard at the same time.'

And with that being said I knew I had to venture to say more, to ask ever more questions.

'When the present is split open, and we find ourselves in that zone where the becoming of the past and the becoming of the future are undecided and uncertain, isn't irresolution hanging in the air? And when irresolution is hanging in the air isn't it as if hesitation is hovering? And with such hovering isn't it as if time is held in a state of suspension? *Has it happened? Is it going to happen?* Has time come to a stand still and become frozen through indecision?'

No answer.

Keep going.

And I kept going by saying:

'In that zone of uncertainty where you can't quite tell where the present-becoming-past and the present-becoming-future begins and ends what can be said to have begun and what can be said to have ended? Answer: it can't be said. And it can't be said for nothing has begun — *is it going to happen?* And where there is no beginning there can be no end — *has it happened?* In other words, the interval in which past and future are up in the air is endless, limitless. In other words, the period of hesitation is interminable.'

And then a pause lingered until it was said:

'With neither beginning nor end it can seem that in the interval of the present split open, time has become suspended, stopped. It may seem so yet is this so? For sure, there is suspense but there isn't a cessation or freezing of time, rather there is a stretching of time. An endless — timeless — stretching of time. Indeed, in the interval time is stretching to infinity, stretching indefinitely. And on and on and on for aeons it goes.

'So, there isn't a cessation of time; rather, there is a stretching of time. However, when the present is thrown into question and ceases to be a point that separates before and after, when, that is to say, before and after are drawn together in the interval of the present split open, it as if the whole of time has been sucked up into that interval and, as it were, emptied out.

'It can be said that time is stretching to infinity, yet when there comes the paradoxical co-existence of that which is only just *not yet* and that which is only just on its way to becoming *no longer* what can be said to be

actually existing? Sure, there is the becoming of the past and the future, yet with the paradoxical co-existence of *not yet* and *no longer* nothing is, as it were, present.’

Then in the air she drew the sign for zero. And her making that sign, which was disappearing as it was appearing, prompted me to say:

‘The time that clocks tell most certainly has stopped working in that peculiar interval where *not yet* and *no longer* co-exist. Indeed, the interval of the *just* of the past and future just arriving, just departing is, in terms of the time that clocks tell, zero time, a nothing time, a no time at all time. However, this zero time is also the opening up of an immense time. Nothing is taking place, yet what is taking place is the opening up of a vast empty time that is stretching to infinity. Frozen, no; but empty, yes. Yes, when we enter the realm of the up-in-the-air it is as if we have entered an empty period of time. Empty, just like the interior of the sign for zero.’

And as quick as lightning she said:

‘Void.’

And I said:

‘*Sunya*, Sanskrit for empty.’

And then, at the same time, we both said:

‘Empty void.’

Then I said:

‘And this empty void is opaque.’

Then, out of the blue, she said:

‘*Mur*, the French word for wall.’

And she followed this by saying:

‘Blank wall.’

Then I said:

‘Wall of silence.’

And then there was a hush, yet all too quickly the soft silence became a profound silence, as deep and as terrifying as the deepest, deepest ocean. We both wanted to scarper, but something was compelling us to stay still and attempt to make a sounding of the depths of that silence. And stay still we did, although it took all of our might to do so. However, the more we stayed, still the more it seemed that we were hitting our heads against a blank wall of silence. Yet, hitting our heads, we discovered that there wasn’t anything at all flimsy about that wall: it was dense.

—‘The silent blank wall is empty like a blank page before a word is written upon it, but the blankness is thick with possibilities. Unfathomable

perhaps but, nonetheless, dense with possibilities. Infinite possibilities. A vast bottomless ocean.'

'The empty time of the interval of the present moment split open is full of possibilities. The *open* is possibility itself. And with possibility itself anything could happen. And isn't that what could happen when both past and future are up in the air in the interval of the *just* of the past and future just arriving, just departing? Oh yes, anything could happen. The void is empty, yet with that emptiness there is the virtuality of unlimited possibilities, and this is what makes the profound silence noisy. Exceedingly noisy.'

'In the realm of the up-in-the-air a choice is yet to be determined; it is undecided as to exactly which past and future will become. A foot hasn't been set down, nothing has taken place, yet pure possibility is there, gaping. But is this gaping the yawning of the sleepy? Or to put it another way, is the up-in-the-air waiting to receive a determination and in so waiting slumbering? With the up-in-the-air there comes the indeterminate, the undetermined, the undecided; for sure, anything could happen but what could happen seems dormant — is it awaiting a kiss to make it wakeful?'

And then she delved deeper into her question.

'Although there is a period of hesitation in which nothing seems to be doing, this isn't a period of waiting to receive a determination. There is indecision — no doubt about it — yet what is undecided isn't slumbering in an awaiting for a princely doer to come along and get the deed of a decision done. There is indecision, all is up in the air and no choices have been made, but let's not forget that with this up-in-the-air the becoming of directions and the becoming of decisions are in the process of coming about. With these becomings no definite determinations have been made; nonetheless, directions and decisions are murmuring. Okay, it is still a blank ocean/dense wall of possibilities where everything is still vague and opaque, but there are inklings of decisions being made, there are tinklings of directions being taken. Which is to say, this realm of indetermination isn't lacking in determination; rather, it is the realm of the under-determined. Choices haven't quite yet happened. But there are inklings and tinklings, there are little whispers, little cries, little sighs that die and fade away. And these inklings and tinklings of directions and decisions being made are *immanent* to the process of determination, which is here murmuring. No need for a prince to come along and deliver that kiss, immanence is wakeful.

‘In the interval of time interrupting itself it can be said that time is outside itself, yet in this outside, this vast outside, internal forces are at play. Okay, in this vast outside — immense inside — we are close to gaping, yawning chaos, but chaos is not without directional components.

‘Immanence is wakeful and internal forces are at play, and what comes of this will have come through an internal process of doing, rather than being the deed of a princely transcendent doer. And what this means is that what comes out of the interval of time disjoining with itself will not have been pre-determined, planned in advance of the process of determination itself.’

—‘And what this means is that the future is freed from prior determination.’

—‘And what this means is that the futurity of the future — the *not yet* that can’t be known in advance and which, as such, always comes unforeseen — is preserved, cared for and nourished. And with such preservation the past is given a chance to participate within the time of becoming and doing rather than being set down, done already and that’s that. And here history ceases to be the preservation of the values and powers of princes and place-takers; yes, history ceases to be the domain of those thesis-makers who have put a foot down.’

‘Listen now to the moon laughing with joy, and look — see that huge smile, that vast smile broadening endlessly ... The future is interceding, the past is quivering, and the new is just about to come out of the blue ... And then a leap, and in a time that is no time at all we’re back from the void. And from the sea of possibilities something new is arriving, a little unsteady, a little unsure.’

‘And so now the narrative can say that time has differed with itself, has returned anew, has returned the new. But how is the new to be encountered? Will it be met as an unknown — panic — that is forced back into the mould of the already known, or will it be greeted as something genuinely unfamiliar, something that makes us wobble a little and ask: *is it happening?*’

And then again thoughts were collected.

‘In the empty time of the interval of the present moment split open what opens up is a vast virtual reservoir — incalculable multiplicity — of possibilities and what, in actuality, comes of this is not the expression of a world where deeds are pre-determined to happen. Rather, what comes of this is the expression of a possible world, which might not have happened.

What actually comes to happen might not have happened since it wasn't destined to happen, and it wasn't destined to happen in so far as there was no plan or *doer* saying, dictating, that it should and shall happen.'

'By turning itself back into a question, and throwing open the present moment of itself, time gives us, gives itself, an uncontrolled time in which a breath can be drawn. And without this breath the world and thinking would suffocate from banality. Yes, throwing itself into question and splitting open the present moment is what marks time's resistance to banality; it is also what produces the movement — dance — of time.'

'Over and over again time turns the present of itself back into a question. Yes, time repeatedly interrupts the present moment of itself, and the recurrence of this interruption, and the interval that opens up with it, is what can be called time's refrain. Indeed, the recurrence of the interruption and the interval is what makes the being of time — dare I say? — musical.'

'Through throwing itself into question, time comes to differ with itself, and in differing with itself time comes to continue again and again. Time continues, yet each time sets out anew. And isn't this what a process of self-positing being continually does? Never done and that's that, self-positing being is continually constituting — and interrupting — itself at each and every moment. And continually constituting itself, it can be said that self-positing being is continually interrupting the present of itself. Yes, it can be said that self-positing being is involved in a process that is repeatedly interrupting itself whilst positing itself.'

'The time of the question — the interval — is a most peculiar time, yet it is this time that summons forth new horizons, without which self-positing processes — Being — would suffocate; indeed, it can be said that the return of the question is Being's refrain. How to keep the question going: is that the real question?'

'There is a question in each and everything; in me and in you. What am I? — what are you? — *is it happening?* — and, for the hell of it, let's ask: what is art?'

And we took this question seriously.

'To ask what is art is not to seek an essence or identity that would enable what is not art to be excluded from what is art; rather, it is to summon forth new horizons, new futures, and perhaps new pasts, for art.'

'To throw the present — the *is* — of art into question is to bring art into intimacy with the empty time — the void — of the interval of the present gaping open; it is also to have art, for an indefinite moment,

transformed into pure possibility. Moreover, it is to allow art to participate in the time of becoming.'

'The question that is in each and everything allows each and everything to participate in the time of becoming; indeed, when the present is splitting and becoming the present-becoming-past and the present-becoming-future there is nothing but becoming, stretching to infinity. Endless becoming, nothing but becoming; but this time of becoming is most peculiar. In the middle of this time change is taking place, yet in the middle of this time there is also an immense empty period of time where nothing is taking place.'

'It is an immense empty — still — period of time, but this emptiness is full of possibilities. What the time of becoming opens up is a vast realm where everything and nothing is taking place. Nothing is moving yet there is infinite movement, although it must be said that this movement has nothing whatsoever to do with putting a foot down and traversing space.'

She said that such goings-on are hard to visualize. And then, as if musing to herself, she said:

'It can be said that time's interruption of itself in the question is time's refrain, but what is occurring to me now is that the occurrence of this event is immanent to each and every moment.'

I was about to ask if the still photographic image could be regarded as splitting open the present moment and stretching time, but her having dared to say *event* prompted me to say:

'So, are we to say that the act of time disjoining with itself and splitting open the present moment is what constitutes the event of time?'

Her response was to ask yet one more question:

'If we say that this act does constitute the event of time are we then to forward the proposition that paradoxical time — the time that opens up in the interval where past and future co-exist — is the time peculiar to the *event* of events?'

And just when I thought that an answer was about to arrive she turned to me and said:

'Is this temporality accompanying us now — *is it happening?*'

Listening to it happen

And what now?

I ask this but in asking this am I expectantly waiting?

Well, there is hope yet I don't know exactly what am I waiting for. My investigation into — and listening out for — theories of the event knows only too well that nothing has been promised it. Nothing has been promised me and nothing has been promised 'theory'. I am asking, *And what now?* and hope does warble in the question, but nothing might happen — no promise that the endeavour of the investigation and listening will attain a result, bear fruits, ripe and plump. Nothing has been promised. Nothing.

But wait, what's that I am hearing?

What is that sound?

Is it a wail?

Is it a sob?

How can I tell if it is a sob of laughter or the sob of a cry? I can't tell. I can't say it is a sob at all.

A call?

Perhaps, but I can't say definitely.

My attention is being grabbed, yet I can't locate or situate this sound that I am hearing. I don't know from what or where it comes: it is indescribable. Well, I have said 'sound' and that is to say something, to recognize something; however, the sound I am hearing bears no resemblance to anything I've heard before — I can't link it to what I think I already know. That shriek? No. That sonic boom? No. No, not that. The sound I am

hearing is almost inaudible, and this is not so because it is faint but rather because its indescribability makes it hard to hear, hard to bear. I can hear it but I can hardly bear to listen. This is no sweet sound, no harmonious sound, no angelic choir. There is something singular about the sound yet it could be a multiplicity of sounds that have collapsed into each other. It could be. And it could be that this noise is frightening the gods. But then, I am not sure if they are listening.

—*Noise?*

Well, I could say that, but in doing so I would have to add that there is something strangely silent about what I am hearing. Silent in so far as this sound is telling me nothing. Nonetheless, it is affecting me; every hair on my body — and there are a million and one of them — is standing up on end, quivering.

I wasn't prepared for this.

How could I be?

This sound is making skin and bone quiver and shiver and I have to admit that there is agitation. Although there is agitation — *what the hell is going on?* — there is also the feeling of an intensification of my being. But having said that I have to say also that this feeling is bringing with it the sensation that my self is passing out of step with itself.

What can I say?

I can't account for this feeling I am feeling in as much as I can't account for this sound I am hearing. I can't say that I know what it is that is happening.

What can I say?

I can say that I have the feeling that something is trying to be said but as yet can't be put into sentences. Yes, I can say that, but I can't say that I know what the sound I am hearing means. Is it announcing something? It sounds so but I can't say that this is definitely so.

And?

And what now?

But the *And* here has barely anything to grab on to.

With the sound I am hearing, I can't say what it is that is happening; all that I can say is that it is happening *now*. Indeed, all I can speak of is the sensation of an occurrence, the sensation of *there is ...* But now, at this moment, I can't fill in the dotted line.

And as quick as I can say the word *now*, questions, more questions, begin to arrive and make themselves heard.

—Have you been hearing the sound of the event that the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard asks us to become sensitive to and listen out for underneath the silence and noise of everyday occurrences?¹ Have you been hearing the event that, time and time again, this philosopher's sentences sound?

Well, the questions have arrived and I am listening to them, but as I do so I realize that the sound that has been grabbing my attention is no more. And something in my belly tells me that it will never return again, at least never return the same again.

Questions have arrived, the indescribable sound is no longer, and now something else is being heard. Now I am hearing the sentences of Jean-François Lyotard sounding the event. And again it is like being in one of those gardens where even after the children have gone their voices continue to be heard.

And what is it that I am hearing this philosopher's sentences say? Yes, what is the event that this man wants me and you to become competent in listening out for? Well it is, simply, an occurrence. Not a major event in the media sense, not even a small event. Just an occurrence.

Just an occurrence; yes, this is what I am hearing him say.²

Just an occurrence, as simple as that.

But wait, it is not quite as simple as that.

And it is not quite as simple as that because what matters with an occurrence is that I don't know or recognize what is going on. Just an occurrence, yet not knowing what it is that happens makes the experience of this occurrence an event. His sentence rings out loud and clear:

'What is already known cannot, in principle, be experienced as an event.'³

He is asking me and you to become competent in listening out for the occurrence-event; but what is it exactly that he wants us to hear? What he wants us to hear is the eventhood — the *It happens* — of the occurrence.

Listen:

'Occurrence is the instant which "happens", which "comes" unexpectedly but which, once it is there, take its place in the network of what happens ... It happens here and now. What (*quid*) happens comes later. The beginning is that there is ... (*quod*) ...'⁴

And again:

'But *It happens* is not what happens, in the sense that *quod* is not *quid* (in the sense that presentation is not the situation) ... In sum, there are

events: something happens which is not tautological with what has happened.’⁵

What he wants us to listen out for and become sensitive to is the sound of the happening, the pure happening, the sheer happening of *It happens*.

It happens sounds the eventhood of the occurrence, and with this comes a presentation. But — listen — this presentation doesn’t present or announce anything. For sure, this presentation announces the eventhood of the occurrence but as such it announces nothing; it is annunciation in itself. What comes to us, if we have an ear for it, is pure presentation. That is to say, presentation in itself.

Do you have any sort of ear for hearing that sort of thing?

What I am hearing this philosopher ask is that we become attentive to the eventhood of the occurrence and in so doing not rush to determine what *it* might mean. To let the occurrence be, to let it be before determining what it is that happens — let me put like this: what is being asked of me and you is that we risk making a distinction between *It happens* and *What happens*.

What happens is the ‘situation’ of the event; it is the meaning or content that can be linked to, assigned to, the occurrence itself. And — and this is crucial — once the event is placed and situated the *It happens* becomes glossed over, forgotten. Forgotten, yes; but wait, the *It happens* has no proper place, it can’t be placed. And it can’t be placed for as soon as it is placed it is a matter of the situation.

... *presentation is not the situation* ...

The words ring in my ear as I hear Jean-François Lyotard saying:

‘An event, an occurrence — what Martin Heidegger called *ein Ereignis* — is infinitely simple, but this simplicity can only be approached through a state of privation. That which we call thought must be disarmed.’⁶

Time and time again I hear this man questioning himself. I hear him saying that to think is to question everything, including thought.⁷

When an event or occurrence happens I do not know how to grasp it; my attention is grabbed but with the arrival of the event something is happening that reason has not yet known. And what arrives with the ‘not yet known’ is a question. This question, however, isn’t a matter of what bears upon *what* it is that happens and what this might mean; rather, the question that matters and which arrives with the ‘not yet known’ is: *Arrive-t-il?*

And as that question becomes pronounced I hear him saying:

'Before asking questions about what it is and about its significance, before the *quid*, it must "first", so to speak, "happen", *quod*. That it happens "precedes", so to speak, the question pertaining to what happens. Or rather, the question precedes itself, because "that it happens" is the question relevant as event, and it "then" pertains to the event that has just happened. The event happens as a question mark "before" happening as a question. *It happens* is rather "in the first place" *is it happening, is this it, is it possible?* Only "then" is any mark determined by the questioning: is this or that happening, is it this or something else, is it possible that this or that?'⁸

If the eventhood of an occurrence-event makes my powers of recognition go on the blink and unsettles the knowledge that has settled in my bones then the arrival of *It happens* becomes the question: *Is it happening?*

Arrive-t-il?

Is it arriving, is it happening?

How can I say?

What can I say?

Must I say something?

Stay silent?

But that's saying something.

An event-occurrence drops, falls, arises, arrives — *arrive-t-il?* — and with this comes a presentation, yet this presentation doesn't present anything; it is presentation in itself.

And linking on to that sentence I hear him saying:

'With respect to presentation, we must imagine the time of an occurrence as — and only as — present. This present cannot be grasped as such, it is absolute. It cannot be synthesized *directly* with other presents. The other presents with which it can be placed in relation are necessarily and immediately changed into presented presents, i.e. past.'⁹

The time of presentation, the presenting time implied in 'each' occurrence, cannot be grasped as such and, moreover, doesn't pertain to what is called diachronic time. Indeed, the time of presentation can't be placed upon the line that diachronic time draws.

Diachronic time — I expect you know this already — readily speaks of moments in time.

How often do I speak of a moment in time?

Many times.

Diachronic time sees time as a single line along which moves a present moment — the now — that every step of the way serves to distinguish *what*

has been, which is no longer, and *what is going to be*, which is not yet. To put this another way, diachronic time is what makes (historical) time a line along which moves a point that serves to bound past and future and distribute the positions of before and after. A present moment moves along the line, one moment in time is succeeded by another, and all the while we are led to believe that, every step of the way, points are being made, placed — marked — along the line.

(Think of a piece of string upon which have been tied knots. Think of how the spaces between the knots can get smaller and smaller such that, in time, the string begins to look like a beaded necklace.)

Diachronic time situates moments *in* time and what we are asked to believe is that the moment, the now point (the knot or bead), provides chronology with a unit for counting and measuring. Yes, that's the thing with moments in time (knots and beads), they can be counted: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 ... And in time there is an adding up that makes time (seem) something reckonable, measurable, accountable, quantifiable. And when this takes place, the question of *How much time? (How much time has been gained, saved?)* finds an answer.

Through (seemingly) bounding the past and future, the moment of diachronic time comes to situate the positions of before and after such that each position can be related to another and cross-referencing can happen. In situating its moment (tying the knot on the line), diachronic time grants its moment a situating function and, moreover, grants that this function, in demarcating a before and after, is a temporalizing function.

Let me put it like this: the moment in time of diachronic time is a matter of situation, not of presentation.

I hear you, Jean-François Lyotard, I hear you.

The presentation-event, or occurrence, happens *now* but this *now* is not 'the now', the present moment in time, of diachronic time.

I hear you, Jean-François Lyotard, quoting Aristotle as saying 'For what is bounded by the "now" is thought to be time.' I hear you saying that the formula appears to grant the temporalizing function to the present instance, the now in time, but then I hear you saying that with the words 'is thought to be' you hear Aristotle hesitating over the status of the now.¹⁰ The present moment in time hardly suffices to bound past and future and situate the positions of before and after. And it hardly suffices for the now is not now, it is continually not yet or already no longer. The now is not a separating

boundary or limit but a zone of contact where *what has been* and *what is going to be* incessantly encroach upon each other.¹¹

I hear you say, Jean-François Lyotard, that Aristotle, in his enquiries, considered (a) *now* that continually differs from 'itself' and, also, the now moment that diachronic time returns, the same, time and time again. Aristotle, so I hear, considered now as 'being what it is this time' or 'what turns out to be each time', and this each time, this 'being what it is this time' is considered by you, if indeed I am hearing you correctly, to be *now* taken as a presentation-event or occurrence. It happens *now* and this now is incommensurable with any now that has come 'before' or may come 'after'. Aristotle, so I hear, distinguishes time that situates (the moment in time, before/after) from the presentation-event, which as such is absolute *now*. Yes, what I am hearing you say is that Aristotle disconnected the 'diachronic operators' — as you put it — from the occurrence, the incommensurable now.¹²

It happens now, but all that I can say now is that it will have happened. I can't grasp the presentation-event *now*, I can only grasp it by situating it, by determining what has happened; but, in the making of that determination *later*, the presentation time of the event will have been glossed, lost.

For sure, by situating the event I can speak of before and after, but as soon as I situate the event its happening becomes yet another moment that can be placed alongside all the other moments that are strung along and situated upon the diachronic line. For sure, by situating the occurrence I can present the presentation; I can say 'it' is now presented, but what all too easily gets forgotten here is that with a presented presentation the occurrence's *now* has been turned into yet another moment in time. Yes, what all too easily gets forgotten is that the event's time is *now*, is absolute *now*, and as such is not yet one of the times that diachronic time presents along its (knotted) line.¹³

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She had asked a question, but it was side-stepped by both of us.

'Whatever next?' I thought.

I waited for her to say something as she waited for me to say something, but no words came.

— 0 —

Jean-François Lyotard asks us to become sensitive to and listen out for the occurrence of what he calls the presentation-event, the pure happening, the sheer happening of *It happens*. But becoming sensitive to this event, listening out for it, what do we have to hold on to?

An event is just an occurrence, as simple as that; however, this occurrence offers no security, with it comes a question mark: ? *Is it happening?* Oh yes, with the occurrence-event there comes a throwing-into-question that exposes me and you to an unaccountable time.

And with this unaccountable time is time both inside and outside itself? Is this unaccountable time a full time? Is it an empty time?

No answers come.

No answers come; all that I can hear is the sound of the question, the sound of the question mark. I can't say what this unaccountable time *is*. I can't account for it and this makes me feel a little unsteady, giddy. I can't account for it, but I can say that the unaccountable time of the presentation-event disconnects the line of diachronic time and in so doing shows just how unsteady its moment is in bounding past and future.

Okay, it may be almost four o'clock in the afternoon, but with the time of *Is it happening?* I have the sensation of a temporality that can't be numbered, counted, accounted; that's to say, controlled.

I hear you, Jean-François Lyotard, I hear you.

And now I hear your sentences saying:

'Because it is absolute, the presenting moment cannot be grasped; it is *not yet* or *no longer* present. It is always too soon or too late to grasp presentation itself and present it. Such is the specific and paradoxical constitution of the event. That something happens, the occurrence, means that the mind is disappropriated. The expression "it happens that ..." is the formula of non-mastery of self over self.'¹⁴

The presentation-event makes my powers of recognition go on the blink and unsettles the knowledge that has settled in my bones, and as this blinking and unsettling happens I have to say: I don't understand. Yes, the eventhood of the event is always too soon to be understood, and when understanding does begin, as I deal with the question of what it is that has happened, it will be too late. Too late, for by then 'situating' will be happening and, as I hear time and time again, presentation is not the situation.

The eventhood of an event always arrives prematurely and is insubstantial; it is like air, I cannot grasp it. No matter how hard I try, no matter what qualifications I have been awarded, I cannot gain mastery over the presentation-event.

Disappointed?

Disappointed that the presentation-event makes the self incapable of mastering itself?

Relieved?

The presentation time of the occurrence disappropriates the mind, disarms thought and disarranges patterns of knowledge, yet for all the 'dis' this brings, the event gives us the precious experience of uncontrolled time and saves us from banality. I say 'gives' but, as you are quick to say, Jean-François Lyotard, presentation is not an act of giving, to me or any other human being.¹⁵ A presentation is not a somebody and, moreover, it doesn't wait for us to arrive to give what, in effect, comes to be given.

Yes, Jean-François Lyotard, I hear you saying:

'The occurrence is not the Lord.'¹⁶

The presentation-event disarms thought and undoes prejudgement but, perhaps, it is such an event that makes us think.

Yes, Jean-François Lyotard, I hear you saying:

'Being prepared to receive what thought is not prepared to think is what deserves the name of thinking.'¹⁷

An event speaks to no one, but in listening out for the *It happens* perhaps we will accept the occurrence for what it is: the 'not yet' determined. No one is the addressee of an event, but in receiving the 'not yet' determined perhaps you and I will think and write in ways that we have never thought or written before.

And saying this leads me to ask if the sentences so far said and the sentences so far heard have but situated the presentation-event.

—'Is the *Ereignis* in effect the lightning flash that makes something ... appear, but blinds as it blinds itself through what it illuminates?'¹⁸

How can we speak of (a) presentation without situating it?

—'But the lightning flash takes place — it flashes and bursts out of the nothingness of the night, of clouds, or of the clear blue sky.'¹⁹

The sentences heard and the sentences said have been speaking of the presentation-event and I must say that in doing so they have been 'situating' the occurrence-presentation-event, yet there has been — *there is* — with each sentence the *It happens*, even though it may not be heard. I may not

be hearing it loud and clear, but I am hearing you, Jean-François Lyotard, sounding the event as that which comes out of the blue.

Blue nothingness ...

Cloudy white nothingness ...

Black nothingness.

—‘But the occurrence doesn’t make a story, does it? — Indeed, it’s not a sign. But it is to be judged, all the way through to its incomparability.’²⁰

That which is already known cannot be experienced as an event; but how can I judge that which isn’t already known? How can I judge that which blows out my powers of cognition, recognition? For sure, I can’t prejudge the occurrence-event but I must judge it, that’s to say, I must say/do something. I must say/do something that links on to that indescribable sound. And as you say, Jean-François Lyotard, this is not an obligation, not a duty, but a necessity. I must and I must not confuse this *must* with *you ought to*.²¹ I must say or do something that follows on from the occurrence. It is necessity; time, that is.²²

The event happens.

And?

And what can I say?

But the *And* has barely anything to link on to. Or if there is something, I don’t know what it is. Yet there is the feeling, the sensation of, *It happens* ...

It is impossible for me not to say or do something. If I say or do nothing that is still saying or doing something. I can’t escape following on from the *It happens*; silence is still saying something in as much as inaction is still an action.

I can’t account for the happening of the event; it doesn’t offer a story and neither is it a sign — it tells me sweet nothing. Indeed, the paradoxical constitution of the event means that what is initially said following the event will not be based on understanding. Whatever I say, whatever story I hazard to tell, will be based on almost nothing. Yes, whatever I say — and say something I must — will be somewhat of an invention.

The presentation-event of *It happens* can only be grasped — and then only partially, never completely — by situating it, by dealing with its effects and hazarding to answer *What is it that happens?* And to do this it is necessary that other sayings and doings are linked on to what initially is said or done. Yes, the event can only be situated and placed when other ‘phrases’ — as you would say, Jean-François Lyotard — follow on from the

initial phrase and in so doing effect a linkage where one phrase becomes related to another.²³ But, it has to be said, what follows on from what initially is said has barely anything to link itself on to. And it has barely anything to hold on to for the initial phrase arises out of nothing; it does not offer a representation of the event — it can't; nor does it express understanding — it can't. It is itself, as it were, next to nothing.

For sure, the presentation-event of the *It happens* is implied by what initially is said or done, but other sayings and doings are needed for this presentation to be presented, in other words, situated.²⁴ But what follows will not be based on an initial understanding; indeed, no one will ever know if what follows offers a correct understanding.

But wait, there is something to be said here.

The phrase that follows on from what is initially said or done has hardly anything to grab on to and is itself based on little in the way of understanding, and this makes the status of what is initially put into words, or action, something of an event. Yes, an event; yet, all too soon, this occurrence, this presentation-event, is forgotten. And so it goes on with all the phrases that venture to link up to situate an event: each phrase entails a presentation-occurrence that is forgotten by it and plunged into oblivion.

—'Another phrase pulls it back out and presents it, oblivious to the presentation that it itself entails.'²⁵

To my ears, what is being said here is that all the phrases that follow on from an event and seek to link up to it are in themselves also events. And they are events in so far as each phrase itself entails a presentation and arises from, dare I say, next to nothing.

Nothing.

Why else would a link be necessary if there were not something of an abyss to be crossed between each and every phrase? A phrase may repeat another phrase, word for word or deed for deed, yet this repetition still involves an occurrence-event albeit forgotten by it and plunged into oblivion.

And what now?

Well, you could say that events make us inventive, creative. An event, the *It happens*, tells us nothing and this means that we have to invent ways of understanding. Indeed, with almost nothing to hang our sayings and doings upon do we not have to use imagination? Yes, it could be said that events, for all the threat or marvel they bring, make us — and politics and

theory and philosophy as well — inventive and creative, but this is where the trouble starts.

I'm hearing him put it like this:

'A phrase, which links and which is to be linked on, is always a *pagus*, a border zone where genres of discourse enter into conflict over the mode of linking.'²⁶

It is necessary to link on to an occurrence, there is no possibility of not doing so, yet how to link is contingent. To link is necessary, but how to link is not.²⁷ How the linkage is made and performed will determine the situation of the *It happens*, and moreover it will bring stakes with it.²⁸ And it is here that conflict arises between, as he puts it, 'genres of discourse'. Conflict happens, one mode (genre) of linking disputes another, yet such dispute or conflict cannot be resolved by appealing to a common measure. There is no common measure. No one mode of linking can claim that their determination of what it is that happens is the right one. No one genre can say its mode of understanding justifies its linkage. Any understanding is based on almost nothing; it is contingent. But dispute does happen, yet the understanding in dispute has nothing to which to appeal, and a dispute such as this is what I am hearing called a *differend*.

Listen:

'As distinguished from a litigation, a *differend* would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy.'²⁹

The conflict can't be equitably resolved, and the entering into conflict over the mode of linking is what I'm hearing him call the political. Yes, I'm hearing him say that politics is, par excellence, the question of linkage. Yes, I'm hearing him say that politics plunges into the emptiness where 'it happens that ...'³⁰

Politics, as well as philosophy, can't appeal to 'understanding' as a basis for what becomes said or done. Any understanding is contingent, and the same goes for these sentences that are linking on to the sentences of — the event of — Jean-François Lyotard. Whatever is said or done, which is in one sense always political, has no solid indisputable ground upon which to stand. There is no solid ground, but there is fighting. The event may make politics inventive (do politicians want to hear this?); yes, it may make the political a creative site but there are modes of linking, genres of discourse, that will seek to gain hegemony — rule — over others. And — and I hear

him say this loud and clear — capitalism gives political hegemony to the economic genre.³¹

Let me put it like this: the capitalist economic system presumes itself to be the way, the only way, over and above all other ways. And what this system — or genre — wants us to buy into is countable time. Oh yes, what the capitalist economic genre wants to know is *How much time?* It wants to know this, it wants answers and in wanting answers it wants to make time something quantifiable. Oh yes, capitalism wants to make time countable, accountable. Oh yes, capitalism is obsessed with controlling time, saving time. And the best way of controlling and saving time is to have the future happen before it happens.

I'm hearing you, Jean-François Lyotard.

Yes, I'm hearing you say:

'In the economic genre, the rule is that what happens can happen only if it has already been paid back, and therefore has already happened.'³²

And in conditions such as these the future is predetermined, in other words neutralized, in other words controlled. And it is exchange, daily exchange, that provides the model for such a neutralization of the future and control of time.

Listen:

'Someone (X) gives someone (Y) an object *a* at time *t*. This giving has as its condition that Y will give X an object *b* at time *t'*. I leave to one side here the classical question of knowing how *a* and *b* can be made equivalent. What is not irrelevant for us here is the fact that the first phase of the exchange takes place if and only if the second is perfectly guaranteed, to the point that it can be considered to have already happened.'³³

This exchange model requires the future to have arrived before the now that distributes the position of before and after, and it is in this way that time can be saved and incoming events forestalled. And in order to ensure this, it is best that there be no gap between time *t* and time *t'*: the wider the gap becomes between these two moments, the more the chances increase that something unexpected will happen.

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A voiceless silence prevailed between her and myself. Had the cat got our tongues? No cat in sight, but seeing us at this time could have made an

onlooker say that absolutely nothing was happening and what was needed was a third-person narrator to come along and provide a bit of action.

—‘Are we waiting for a third-person narrator to arrive to get a narrative going? Indeed, will nothing happen until such a narrator arrives and says: “There was a knock at the door and although neither of them jumped at the sound its insistence did make her stop talking and think of walking into the hallway.”’

‘Who could be at the door?’

‘Could be anyone.’

‘Could be a third-person narrator.’

‘You could be that third person, as so could I. It could be you who says “They both sat motionless as an insistent knocking could be heard”, or it could be me.’

‘It could be you or it could be me but, either way, would this mean that what happens can only be spoken of retrospectively; that’s to say, in the past?’

‘But we can be in the present. Oh yes, as there is an insistent knocking and someone or something announces its arrival we can say: “We are happening.”’

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Each day something unexpected happens, yet each day we are hounded by the obsession of controlling time — I still hear you, Jean-François Lyotard, I still hear you.

To have it happen before it happens: is this how we are enjoined to live our lives? But the occurrence-event does happen, the lightning does burst out in the nothingness of the night, of the clouds, or of the clear blue sky. And there is no one to thank or cuss for this.

An occurrence, just an occurrence, as simple as that. And, so I hear Jean-François Lyotard say, the *It happens*, the *Is it happening?* is invincible to that ‘will’ of the capitalist economic system to control and save time.³⁴

What the hegemony of the capitalist economic genre can’t surmount is the occurrence of an absolutely unaccountable time; it can’t surmount the occurrence of the presentation-event and, moreover, it can’t get on top of the ignorance this brings.

The presentation-event is just an occurrence and he says that he must never know this event. He must never know it for, so I hear, he knows only that this ignorance is the ultimate resistance that the event can oppose to the accountable or countable use of time today.³⁵ Resistance to countable time — the time which the capitalist economic genre wants us to buy into — lies in the time of the event; resistance lies in maintaining a mind open to the event. Keeping a mind open to the event is not about — be warned — closing oneself off from the daily use of countable time. A resistance that sets itself apart, in opposition, only but contributes to making ever more ruling the rule of making time accountable.³⁶

Writing might be a line of resistance, might be if in writing — for the love of writing — one wants language to say something other than what it knows how to say and, in so doing, extends a welcome to what is, almost, unspeakable. But this doesn't mean we are to shut ourselves away in ivory towers or turn our backs upon the new forms of expression that contemporary science and technology bestow upon us.

—'It means that we use these forms in an attempt to bear witness to what really matters: the childhood of an encounter, the welcome extended to the marvel that (something) is happening, the respect for the event.'³⁷

What really matters is the eventhood, the uncapturable 'childhood', of the event.³⁸

The occurrence doesn't make a story, there is nothing to tell. Yet, with each thing we say or write (or do) you can detect, if you have an ear for it, the sound of the *It happens*. For sure, the *It happens* offers little for a classic whodunit to be written — we can't assume that *it* has happened. Yet in writing no one can eliminate the *Is it happening?* as one sentence or phrase has just about ended and another is just about beginning.

—'One cannot write without bearing witness to the abyss of time in its coming.'³⁹

Can we photograph occurrences?

Does a photographic image only ever present presentation and as such plunge the presentation into oblivion? But wait, doesn't a photographic image in its coming to be involve an *It happens?*

A photograph arises and I look, and in my looking I realize that I am no more than an ear open to the sound that comes out of the silence; the photograph is that sound and that sound is the sound of the *It happens*. And whilst the photograph continues to rise up, this sound, this silence, never stops.

The *It happens* exposes me and you to a time that can't be grasped, yet I hear you say, Jean-François Lyotard, that the occurrence is not a question of time but a question of being.

Arrive-t-il?

It is a question of being.

Is it arriving?

Yes, it is a question of being.

And what I hear constitutes evil for you, Jean-François Lyotard, is a defiance of the occurrence, that's to say, as you would say, the contempt for Being.⁴⁰

And a contempt for Being is that which turns its back upon the question:

Is it happening?

Is it *beginning*?

And for Jean-François Lyotard this question is a matter of initiation in itself, a matter of Being before the arrival of the question of what it is that happens.

Listen:

'What makes an encounter with a word, smell, place, book or face into an event is not its newness when compared to other "events".'

And again.

'It is its very value as initiation. You only learn this later.'

And again.

'It cut open a wound in the sensibility.'

And again.

'You know this because it has reopened since and will reopen again, marking out the rhythm of a secret and perhaps unnoticed temporality.'

And again.

'This wound ushered you into an unknown world, but without ever making it known to you.'

And again.

'Such initiation initiates nothing.'

And again.

'It just begins.'⁴¹

Encountering her face — no, not 'her' face, just face — there is initiation, but nothing is initiated. It just begins. And this beginning, this coming to be, is green and, out of the blue, makes me go green. And green because this beginning is unripe, unseasoned. And green because it is inexperienced.

And green I become as I greet this greenness. And green because it makes me inexperienced.

(Does it make you sick to hear this?)

Some would say of you, Jean-François Lyotard, that you always remained a child with respect to the event. Accusations of childishness there may have been, yet your words have maintained that childhood tells us that the mind is not given. Childhood tells us that the mind is possible. And a (adult) mind open to the event renews ties with the season of childhood, the season of the mind's possibilities, the season of the inexperienced, the season of unseasoned when nothing as yet is ripe and plump for the picking.

Okay, he may have left the garden, but his voice continues to be heard:

'Any instant can be the beginning, provided that it is grasped in terms of its *quod* rather than its *quid*. Without this flash, there would be nothing ... The flash ... is always there, and never there. The world never stops beginning.'⁴²

The flash strikes; there is illumination, but nothing is illuminated.

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'Is it happening?' Her words, urgent and ebullient, break a silence.

I do not know what the 'it' in question could be but I do hear something in her voice that brings the image of something standing out like a beacon against a fog. I want to ask her 'What is it?' (Is a queen having her head cut off? Is a door being opened to a long-lost friend?) but the image of a beacon holds my tongue, beckons my thoughts. I speak of a beacon but that is not really what beckons. What beckons is not a glimmering or guiding light; what beckons is the cry in her voice. The cry that has separated itself from the noise that occupies silence.

It's the cry in the voice; but to whom or what does this cry belong?

She says that perhaps it belongs to the event.

And then she says:

'But if this is so then this event doesn't make much of a tale to tell. It doesn't tell of dragons or dungeons. It doesn't tell of pillage and drunken bullying.'

And just as the words 'monster' and 'demon' fall from her lips an interruption befalls.

An impossible refrain

The event of *It happens* is still ringing in my ears. It happens — *is it happening?*

With the happening of the event that Jean-François Lyotard sounds and wishes us to listen out for, do I hear reverberations of Alfred North Whitehead's event? For sure, listening to the event that Jean-François Lyotard sounds I don't hear of an event that is fastened to and made conceptually dependent upon a distinguishable subject-object-substance. But then, neither do I hear unison between these conceptions of the event. I don't hear unison but, on the other hand, I don't hear an incompatibility that could lead to a dispute. And hearing neither harmony nor incompatibility makes me wonder.

So, yet again I am wondering, but — wait — what's that I'm now hearing? What is that sound that is just within earshot?

Sounds like mumbling.

Listen harder.

Sounds like two old windbags in conversation.

Listen again.

Doesn't sound as if there is an argument taking place between these interlocutors. Doesn't sound as if they are opposing each other. Doesn't sound as if they are struggling together, on the same side, against a common enemy. Doesn't sound as if one is trying to have the last word so as to bring the conversation to an end. Sounds like it could go on and on and on.

Listen again.

Two people speaking together.

Two?

Could be more, I can't say. But I can say that when two, or more, people speak together they don't actually speak together.

Hey, what's that they are saying?

Too late to grasp it, the chatter has moved on, and it seems like, sounds like, it could just go on and on.

Listen again, be quick.

Too early to grasp it.

Listen again.

I hear chatter, indefatigable chatter, natter that could go on and on, but I do hear pauses, the pauses by which discourse becomes dialogue. I hear breath taking pause. I hear little gasps. I hear hesitation. And yes, I hear those pauses — intervals — where silence takes place and, perhaps, reflection happens. Perhaps what I am hearing is no more than idle talk, the talk where the talkers don't care to save time, don't care if they waste time.

Listen again.

It does sound like idle talk, but listening again I hear interruptions. As each one speaks it sounds as if they are interrupting the other, and listening to this it seems that each utterance, as an interruption, opens up an interval.

And now I can't stop hearing the speaking as an interval; each turn or twist the conversation takes I hear an interruption — interval — that seems to be stopping an ending happening. And now I can't stop hearing this conversation, in itself, as an interruption that could interminably (impossibly) go on.

Who are they that are speaking?

The words between them sound like everyday speech, and everyday speech belongs to no one; it can't be credited to some author who takes all the credit and all the glory. Everyday speech is no one's words, but — I have to say this — Maurice Blanchot can be named here.

Oh the brilliance of a name.

Maurice Blanchot, like Frederick Nietzsche, is a great name, a name to be proud of, but this writer, this Maurice Blanchot, doesn't write under a pre-eminent — star — name.¹ He writes without a star. He writes without a guiding star. He writes: 'Disaster: break with the star'.² Perhaps he would prefer the anonymity of speaking in voices that are no one's voices, but a name can be spoken and I'll speak it knowing full well that with the arrival of this name something does not arrive.

I listen to the interminable conversation, the conversation that interrupts any end from happening. I listen to him say: *L'Entretien infini*.³ I listen to the infinite conversation and hear thousands of words spoken, but there is one word that is a word too many. Nothing but a word, but a word in excess. Yes, a surplus word, a word too many.⁴ Oh yes, from all the words there is one word that echoes as a long endless echo that does not die away to silence.

And what is this word that continues to be heard?

Yes, I'll say it, I'll pronounce it; it is, 'until'.

Until is an everyday word, a word that announces a between time. Until: it is one of those between words.

She sat down until the sparrows sang.

In the meantime of her having sat down and the sparrows singing there is until.

Until: an in-between time; until: an interim time; until: a meanwhile; until: an intervening time; until: an interval.

I can pronounce the word over and over again but no matter how many times I say this word it will never announce the beginning of something.

Until: the sparrows are yet to sing.

Within the interval of until there is the murmuring of something that does not yet occur. Yes, it can be said that until is the advent of what does not yet happen. In the interval of until, something does not yet attain: the present does not come to pass.

You could say that in the interval of until we are in the split where the present divides into past and future. The split where the present is itself not present. You could say a dead time. You could say a lapse of time. A wait? Perhaps. Perhaps a painful wait — until the sparrows sing.

Until exists but not as a given existence; it happens but nothing in the present happens. Throughout the interval of until, what exists is that which is no longer and that which is yet to come. I'll say it again: until is an in-between time in which, meanwhile, the present is hollowed out.

Until: the occurrence of no occurrence, the non-arrival of what comes about.

Until the sparrows sing. I say the word calmly but this does not alleviate the empty time that falls and in which nothing befalls.

No event?

No answer.

Until.

What happens here to language? The word does not name a something. It says barely anything. It designates something that is neither this nor that, neither here nor there. Uttering 'until' it seems that language is held back, restrained, impeded, interrupted, rendered — almost — powerless. A strange silence blows as I utter the word.

Until: neither this nor that, neither here nor there; until: neither, nor. Oh yes, it can be said that the meanwhile of until interrupts contrariness, suspends the taking up of positions and halts the work of binary, or dialectical, oppositions. Neither positive nor negative. Neither one side nor the other. Without uproar or spectacle, until destroys — silently, invisibly — surface and depth, real and possible, above and below, manifest and hidden.⁵

Neuter, he says. He says it time and time again.

Until: nothing is negated here but nothing is present here.

In the interval of until, nothing comes to pass, there is not a step beyond.⁶ In the interval nothing has begun and without beginning there is no end, and this makes the interval limitless. You could say, one long immeasurable, endless, interruption. Yes, the interval, as interval, is interminable, infinite. As you would say, Maurice Blanchot, the endless interval is terrifyingly ancient. The terrifyingly ancient where nothing was ever present.⁷

How can this be possible?

It is impossible.

Impossibility itself?

No answer comes to pass. The question echoes, repeatedly, in a space infinitely empty.

Until: a space but not a place. Nothing takes place here. Until: nothing is placed here. Nothing is to be counted or measured here. Until: a space terrifyingly ancient yet not horrible.

'... a space infinitely empty, like a garden where, even after the children have disappeared, their joyful cries continue to be heard ...'⁸

Until the sparrows sang. This in-between time cannot be made into a story — what can be told? I can tell you nothing of what happened in the interval of that until. No whodunit can be written. All in all, the time of until is not the time of narrative, is it?

(Had enough of this until?)

Until: time lapses, slips, but does it cease to exist? There is an absence of time but time does not cease to exist. A hiatus? Perhaps you would say that. An arrest? Perhaps you would say that, perhaps you would say something different from that. How are we to speak of that temporality in which the present does not come to pass? Indeed, what becomes of time when the present is hollowed out, taken out or, to put it another way, infinitely distended?

I'm hearing Maurice Blanchot say that we are delivered over to an outside of time. An outside of time, but not a timeless time.

The temporality of the interval of until is, as a meanwhile, not a time of accomplishment; it is, rather, the time of incompleteness — the interval can never be completed. The interval can never complete itself but, again, this does not mean that time becomes timeless. Until — meanwhile — delivers us over to an outside of time without this outside being intemporal. Until is where time would fall (a fragile fall) according to the 'outside of time in time'.⁹

Maurice Blanchot:

'Time's absence is not a purely negative mode. It is the time when nothing begins, when initiative is not possible ... Rather than a purely negative mode, it is, on the contrary, a time without negation, without decision, when here is nowhere as well ...'¹⁰

And again:

'... we are delivered over to another time — to time as other, as absence and neutrality; precisely to a time that can no longer redeem us, that constitutes no recourse. A time without event, without project, without possibility; not that pure immobile instant, the spark of the mystics, but an unstable perpetuity in which we are arrested and incapable of permanence, a time neither abiding nor granting the simplicity of a dwelling place.'¹¹

The outside of time in time — have you experienced this?

But what is there to experience here?

I cannot answer.

He cannot answer.

—*'Oh void in me, into which, in a time more ancient than all ancient times, I threw this self and which, during this time without duration, falls into itself.'*¹²

Until, this word that is barely a word, when will it be over?

Maurice Blanchot (1935):

'At some intersections the earth trembled, and it seemed that the people were walking over the void, crossing it on a footbridge of cries. The great consecration of *until* took place around noon. Using only little scraps of words, as if all that remained of language were the forms of long sentences crushed by the crowd's trampling feet, they sang the song of a single word that could still be made out, no matter how loud the shouting. This word was *until*.'¹³

When oh when will *until* be over? (Sing, sparrows, sing.)

Maurice Blanchot (1969):

'Let it be over. But it is without end.'¹⁴

The interminable interval is without end; it begins over and over again, but there is no sequence here. Nothing comes to pass, day does not follow night. And without anything coming to pass there is, meanwhile, only the peculiar movement — non-movement — of repeatedly starting. And what repeatedly starts, in the intervening time that is between 'no longer' and 'not yet', is that which never yet takes place.

He says:

'... something which never yet takes place happens nonetheless, as long since already happened.'¹⁵

In the empty dead time of *l'entre-temps* the never yet happening never stops happening — it is interminably repeated. The never yet happening is endlessly repeated and thus, as incessant repetition, comes as having already happened. Terrifyingly ancient, more ancient than all ancient times. The peculiar 'now' of the interval of until, meanwhile, is renewed again and again, and this repetition renders this 'now' as more immediate and, finally, as very old, frightfully ancient.¹⁶

He says:

'The new, because it cannot take place in history, is also that which is most ancient ...'¹⁷

The interval that is limitless and in which nothing actually begins endlessly repeats itself; however, this incessant returning is not the return of something, it repeats but it repeats not something. It is, dare I say, repetition — return — in itself.

Until: a taking place in which something never yet takes place, but, meanwhile, there is murmuring. The murmuring of something still to come. But listen, the mur-muring is already an interminable echo; the echo of something long since happened that never yet has taken place.

Maurice Blanchot:

‘The irremediable character of what has no present, of what is not even there as having once been there, says: it never happened, never for a first time, and yet it starts over, again and again, infinitely ... It comes already and forever past, so that my relation to it is not one of cognition, but of recognition, and this recognition ruins in me the power of knowing, the right to grasp. It makes what is ungraspable inescapable; it never lets me cease reaching what I cannot attain. And that which I cannot take, I must take up again, never to let go.’¹⁸

(The strange interval of the in-between time humbles those grasping theories, those proud theories whose right is to know — who wants to hear this?)

In the meantime of the interval of until there is no passing from past to future or future to past. I’ll put it like this: the intervening time of until, meanwhile, interrupts the transition from beginning to end.

And how would you describe this interruption? As a discontinuity?

The temporality of until separates time between past and future; it is neither one nor the other.

A rift?

You could say that.

An unbridgeable rift?

You could say that.

And unbridgeable because of the impossibility of crossing that infinite interval where nothing yet begins?

The interval of until is an impossible time.

The interval of until interrupts any passage or transition from beginning to end, and through this interruption past and future become irrevocably separated: yes, you can say discontinuity takes place here, and in taking place halts anything from taking up a place, in space, in time, in history.

Doesn’t this constitute an event?

With the impossible ‘now’ of until — the now that stretches to infinity and in which there is no present — there is a falling apart of the succession of past and future. Let me put it like this: history is irrevocably interrupted.

And is this not something of the advent of an event?

History is interrupted, but isn’t this what makes history and stops it from ending?

In this interruption perhaps something — a way of being, a society, a law — is irrevocably halted from continuing.

And that would mark an event, surely.

Interruption of a transition from beginning to end: this, so I am hearing, is the event that Maurice Blanchot takes up, time and time again. Indeed, the impossible interval of this interruption is the (ungraspable) event that Maurice Blanchot never lets go of and infinitely maintains. Saving myself from too long a speech, let me put it like this: the event that Maurice Blanchot prolongs is the non-arrival of what comes about. In other words, the non-event in which nothing takes up a place.

So, at last, I come to the event that Maurice Blanchot writes, in different ways, over and over again. I come to a non-grasping 'theory' of the event, a theory that humbles me, humbles language and theory as well. But wait, in this non-event event the sparrows will never yet sing.

An event: that which comes in-between, separating past and future; an in-between wherein the world would fall silent; an in-between wherein there is not yet world.

The event: the non-arrival of what comes about; the advent of what does not yet happen in the interval of the interruption that separates past and future; a non-event where something is still to happen. Something held back. A reserve. Yes, a reserve but a dead time. A dead time that is, nonetheless, a real time.¹⁹

Is it going to happen?

For such a long time they had been preparing themselves to celebrate the event which, now that it was coming, there was no longer time for, so that they were not yet ready and so that it was not coming anyway.²⁰

Has it happened?

Maurice Blanchot: 'the event that we thought we had lived was itself never in a relation of presence to us nor to anything whatsoever.'²¹

Arrive-t-il?

Weary old man in conversation: 'An event: what nevertheless does not arrive, the field of non-arrival and, at the same time, that which, arriving, arrives without gathering itself in some definite or determinable point ...'²²

An impossible event.

I'll put it like this: all that which happens in the event, all that which doesn't happen, happens in the impossible temporality of *l'entre-temps*. The meanwhile until the sparrows sing.

And now I am hearing an echo.

Emmanuel Levinas: 'The eternal duration of the interval in which a statue is immobilized differs radically from the eternity of a concept; it is

the meanwhile, never finished, still enduring — something inhuman and monstrous.²³

And yet another echo (in brackets).

Edmond Jabès: ‘*(The event will never take place. It is the tenant of this “place never taken”.)*’²⁴

In the event, the birds’ song is still yet to happen, and what happens in not yet happening is that the (non)event preserves, holds back, the singing that is not yet. I’ll say this: the non-event event preserves the future of bird song, the singing that is ever still to come; it preserves the newness of bird song, which cannot take place in history. The non-event event holds ‘it’ in reserve, in innocence, without principles and schemas that would order it and demand it to be this or that. However, this that is held back is not held in reserve as an ideal awaiting realization, a promised future; rather, it is held back as an unknown. An absolute unknown. An absolute unknown in the peculiar presence of which I would have to say: I don’t know.

And he says: ‘I don’t know.’

He says:

‘There is an “I don’t know” that is at the limit of knowledge, but that belongs to knowledge. Always, we pronounce it too early, still knowing everything — or too late, when I no longer know that I don’t know, saying nothing and thus saying it.’

And he continues:

‘I know less about it than I know about it; it is over this being behind itself of knowledge that I must leap to reach — not attaining it, or ruining myself in it — unknowledge.’²⁵

Leap: let the birds sing.

And the sparrows do sing. And they sing like they have never sung before. They sing their hearts out, twittering like crazy.

The sparrows sing but in this event — yes, event — there is a meanwhile; a meanwhile that is still enduring unfinished. The sparrows sing but in this event there is, still, the non-event that never takes place, never takes up a place.

A place never taken: a place — territory — never quarrelled over.

Let the birds twitter, let them sing; but, as Maurice Blanchot would say, this event will be lived twice.

She hears the birds twitter and I hear that we ‘live’ each of the events that is ours by way of a double relation.

Maurice Blanchot:

'We live it one time as something we comprehend, grasp, bear and master (even if we do so painfully and with difficulty) by relating it to some good or some value, that is to say, finally, by relating it to Unity; we live it another time as something that escapes all employ and all end, and more, as that which escapes our very capacity to undergo it, but whose trial we cannot escape.'²⁶

At times, he calls this other time by which we live the event the 'other history'; but what can be said about this history wherein nothing of the present ever happens? He says that this history is foreign to the succession of moments in time. He says that it is not of the world of numbers.

He says:

'It is a history in excess, a "secret", separate history, which presupposes the end of visible history, though it denies itself the very idea of beginning and of end.'²⁷

In this other time by which we live the event that is ours, we are delivered over to, as he would say, a wild unnarratable history.²⁸ Wild, but not the irrational of reason.

And what became of her, she who sat until the sparrows sang? What became of her in the meantime?

She says, 'It is a secret.' She says, 'I cannot tell.' She says, 'I cannot tell for there is nothing to tell.'

And then she says calmly:

'That "secret" history, that reserve, infinite reserve, of the event in which nothing of the present happens, does not belong to the time of possibility.'

And she continues:

'There is in the event that which belongs to the time of possibility, the time of advent where things do come to pass and accomplishment is, or at least potentially, achieved. This is what I comprehend, grasp of the event, even if I do so painfully and with difficulty. But then there is that other time, the impossible time between what is no longer and what is not yet.'

And he continues by saying that Georges Bataille said — and this must be rigorously understood — that possibility is not the sole dimension to our existence.²⁹ Impossibility is that by which we are no longer able to be able; it is when you and I experience the experience of what in the event doesn't take place — that strange surplus or excess that makes the conclusion ever and always unfinished. It is when we experience non-experience.

And she says:

‘The time of the impossible pierces the self.’

And he says:

‘Even at the innermost heart of interiority, it is always irruption of the outside, exteriority shaking everything.’³⁰

The outside of time — the time when there is a throwing into question — but also, perhaps, the very interior of time.

And what becomes of thought in the time of the impossible, which pierces, shakes, both world and self?

She responds with a twinkle in her eye:

‘Perhaps there is thought thinking that which will not let itself be thought.’³¹

And as I hear her say this, I hear Maurice Blanchot uttering words that sound like *thought of the outside*.

And then much to my surprise she says:

‘Perhaps laughter held back.’

I look at the expression on her face — what is expressed here? And as I ask the question there comes to me, again, a vision of a field of unborn — unthinkable — laughter. And this field, which is not locatable, brings wind of something most ancient, terrifyingly ancient. I want to scarper, to run like hell; yes, I want to escape this which escapes my power to grasp and comprehend, but something halts me, holds me back. That which escapes my grasp halts me from running from the ungraspable. I don’t scarper but I do find myself asking: what does that impossible non-event event, which is the outside of time in time, give?

I’ll ask it again: what does the strange temporality of Maurice Blanchot’s interruption event, which irrevocably separates, *give*?

Well, it would be too easy to say it gives absolutely nothing, but in a sense it does give nothing. Nothing is given. To ask what the impossible temporality of the non-event event gives is perhaps to ask the wrong question (there is no subject here who would, generously or not, perform the act of giving). But the in-between time of the event does, in effect, give; it gives, in being neither this nor that, a time of grace where positions and binary/dialectical oppositions don’t take place. A moment of grace in which complementary or antagonistic poles are quietly halted from taking up a place (dizzying displacement).

The non-event that Maurice Blanchot maintains and never brings to completion sounds the murmuring and moaning of the terrifyingly ancient of that which is ever yet still to come. If you made a sounding of this event

you would hear the unfathomable, which is to say that no sounding as such can be made: the non-event is, frightfully, bottomless. In a sense, the 'terrifyingly ancient' keeps secret (and perhaps sacred) that wild unnarratable history in which something never yet takes place. Indeed, the impossible event does not give anything yet its peculiar impossible existence maintains, albeit painfully for me, the irreducibility of that which is not yet. Moreover, it gives hesitation to my impatient desire to have it all, to have it now and to know it all before it happens. Yes, I'll put it like this: it safeguards the new, the new that cannot take place in history. Yes, this non-event, which barely produces itself, safeguards the freshness of every dawn, and it safeguards in so far as this event offers no horizon.³² You could say that this event is the realm of the 'up-in-the-air' but in saying that you would have to stress that this realm is without initiative: possibilities are not being developed here. What comes about here, here that is nowhere as well, is an infinite and discontinuous pause. Perhaps this pause is what comes about before a mur-muring that some would speak of as a blank sea/dense wall of possibilities; perhaps this pause is what is between the two murs; perhaps we can call it the 'open'; and, perhaps, this open is thick with possibilities by virtue of there being no possibility as yet. Perhaps we could say that we are in the realm of the under-determined, but I can't say, definitely, yes or no. Have I arrived too early to hear inklings and tinklings of choices in the making? Or, is this peculiar pause — interval — somehow involved in that making? To that question I would have to say: I don't know. And I would have to say this because the event that Maurice Blanchot prolongs maintains the unknown as absolutely unknown. That is what the event *gives*. And what this tells me, in a voice inhuman and monstrous, is that the world, for all the accomplishment, is ever yet incomplete.

And now I hear the rustling of more questions.

Is the (non)event that Maurice Blanchot prolongs, the event that is the recurrence of no occurrence, the hither side of the occurrence-event that Jean-François Lyotard wishes us to listen out for? Is the non-event event, which in interrupting being is in no way a negation of being (the sharp edge of negation dulls within the meanwhile of the interruption), anterior to the occurrence of the flash of *It happens*? Is the splendid sterility of the non-event event anterior to beginning?

What are these questions asking of me? That I contrast? That I compare?

For sure, there is the marvel that something happens (*quod*); but, for sure, there is no occurrence of the lightning flash of *It happens (arrive-t-il?)* in the in-between time where there is the non-arrival of what comes about; for sure, for both these ‘theories’ of the event there is an unaccountable time, an uncontrolled time, a ‘secret’ temporality and, for sure, there is something that can’t be placed, that doesn’t take up a place, that tells, almost, sweet nothing and doesn’t make a story; and — yes — there is, for both, privation; but — I have to ask myself this — is to compare and contrast what I want to rush to do?

Okay, I find myself hesitating before performing the exercise of comparing and contrasting, but what I can’t deny is that in listening out for theories of the event I am hearing, time and time again, the sound of the ungraspable. Okay, some may want to kick up a ruckus and have theories fighting each other so as to drown out this sound, but hearing it, having one’s ears open to it, one knows that no one can have the last word.

It is not last words yet; there is still more to come.

But hey, what’s that I’m hearing now. Sounds like insects rustling, scratching, clicking. Sounds like body sounds.

Dancing to the tune of the infinitive

And there he is listening to the sounds that bodies make. He is listening to the noise, but that is not all he is listening to; he is also listening to the philosophies of the Stoics, Leibniz and Alfred North Whitehead, to name but a few. He is listening assiduously yet he is also speaking, speaking volumes. Thousands of words are uttered but I don't see him before my eyes. I say 'there he is' but before me there is no body of flesh and bone; however, there is a corpus. It may not be made of flesh and bone but, nonetheless, there is a body before me, and this body is nothing but a compound of bodies.

He? Who is *he*?

He is a philosopher and his name is Gilles Deleuze, and I am listening to what he says as he listens to those philosophies that beckon his thought in relation to the question of the nature of events.

And what do I hear?

What I hear is this philosopher, this Gilles Deleuze, speaking in the manner of free indirect discourse.¹ And hearing him speak in this manner I cannot tell exactly who is speaking. Is it the Stoics or is it Gilles Deleuze? Is it Gilles Deleuze or is it Leibniz? What can I say? At times I cannot say who is the reporter and who is the reported.

What can I say?

What I can say is that what I am about to say results from what I hear him say; but what results is not the same as that from which it results.

Let me start with bodies. Bodies in the widest sense of the term. And in many respects all bodies are wide; wide because a body is nothing but a compound of bodies. Bodies are, in themselves, mixtures of bodies. Bodies intermingle with each other, insinuate themselves into each other, reinforce or destroy each other. Although there is corporeality, bodies are not necessarily made of flesh and bone. There are organic bodies, there are inorganic bodies, and there are mixtures of both. There is flesh in bread, and bread in flesh, and these bodies and many other bodies enter into all bodies.²

A mist is also a body.

A body: any formed content.

Bodies do not wait to receive the action of an idea; bodies get on with it amongst themselves, which is to say that bodies are causes for each other. Other bodies are continually mixing with my body and co-existing with its parts. A plant spreading through my body can provide nourishment, but it can also make me sick. Yes, a body is nothing but a mix of forces, and forces are always acting even if being acted upon, which is to say that bodies are determined — limited — by mixtures, by mixing.

Bodies mix and in mixing there comes about *states of affairs*: one body eats another and there comes about the state of being sick. And here there is a definitive present: the moment has come to vomit. Bodies are causes in relation to each other and for each, and the things — or states of affairs — that occur in the mixing of bodies are caught in the particularity of a limited present.

(I hear you, Gilles Deleuze. I hear you, Stoics, I hear you.)³

All bodies are conjunctive: a mixture, albeit limited, of this and that. However, there is also disjunction and decomposition. And from this conjunction and disjunction there come sounds. Cries, chuckles, groans, moans, squeaks. Oh yes, the mixing of bodies is sonorous, clamorous.

Let me put it like this: sonority and noise bear witness to the mixing of bodies.

There are bodies and their actions and passions, and then there are also the things that happen and the sounds that happen, which are determined by the mixtures that bodies make. And what happens in the mixture happens in the time of the present, the time of devouring Chronos; but wait, what can be said of what happens?

Well, what can be *said* is the predicate, and what can be said of the predicate is that it voices an event. The predicate is a relation or an event;

and, what is more, this event is not conceptually dependent upon a subject or object.

Listen: 'If I say, "Water boils at 100°C", the subject is clearly a *thing*, water, but the predicate is a vaporization curve that enters into relation with a fusion curve and the sublimation curve at a triple point.'⁴

The predicate sounds a relation or an event and what is heard with this sound is the verb. Yes, I hear you, Leibniz: the predicate is a verb.⁵

The predicate is a verb and, moreover, the verb and what it makes heard — the event — has something incorporeal about it ...

There are bodies dancing; they bump, they grind and at times gracefully intermingle as the music mixes with them and they mix with the music; but where exactly is the *event* that the verb speaks?

For sure, there is on the dance-floor the embodiment of the event of dancing; yes, with the bodies involved, and there could be a lot of them, there is the spatio-temporal manifestation, the 'actualization', of dancing. They are dancing and this is what can be said of what is happening, what was happening; but, again, where exactly is that which the verb makes heard? Where exactly is the verb? Is not the verb and the event it expresses like an extra-being that haunts the dance-floor?

On the dance-floor there is something that is eluding embodiment, actualization ...

All bodies are causes in relation to each other and for each other. Causes, nothing but causes, yet among bodies there is (at least for the Stoics) no cause *and* effect; nevertheless, causal bodies do produce, in the middle of the mixture, effects. These effects are not in themselves bodies, they are quite different in nature from the corporeal bodies from which they result; indeed, these effects are 'incorporeal entities'.⁶

On the dance-floor there is something side-stepping embodiment, and this is the effect that results from those corporeal bodies that, in the living present, albeit spoken of in the past, bump, grind or gracefully intermingle. The incorporeal effect does not occupy the dance-floor, but it does haunt it. Yes, we can say that on the dance-floor there is an extra-being.

And of such 'extra-being' we cannot say that it is a noun or adjective; we cannot say that it exists; however, we can say that it 'subsists'.⁷

The effect, or extra-being, produced by mixing bodies doesn't take up a place; it is something without a home: it is a 'incorporeal vapour' that frolics, perhaps like a lighting effect, on the surface of corporeal mixing bodies. It can be said that this extra-being is a non-being, but it must be

stressed that it is not the being of the negative; perhaps we should write it as '(non)being or ? being'.⁸ This extra-being can be called meta-physical; however, this incorporeal entity is not a lofty idea. The incorporeal is not high above but rather at the surface: it is a superficial effect. And this effect is what the verb voices.

That there is no cause and effect between corporeal bodies means that the effects produced in the mixing of bodies enjoy an independence in relation to their physical causes. Indeed, the effects may be incorporeal entities but their causes are in no way superior beings in relation to them. In the production of effects a difference comes about that is not the difference of a different *degree* of being; rather, what comes about is a difference *in kind*, a different sort of being, but not a lesser being. For sure, effects inherit their causes but this inherence (immanent relation) in no way makes effects subservient to a superior being's master plan.

Effects are not lesser than their causes; indeed, effects are not sent out to represent a cause, which would make them degraded beings in relation to their causes. No, it is not a matter of representation; rather, it is a matter of expression.

I hear you, Gilles Deleuze, I hear you: the relation between cause and effect is a relation of expression.⁹

We can put it like this: the effect born from mixing bodies enjoys an independence but is nonetheless created in a history that produces it as the *expressed* and the *expression* of dancing-time.¹⁰

And then, just as these words finish, she, she who sat until the sparrows sang, interjects and says, 'It is happening, but *it* is going in two directions at once.'

I am taken aback and I cannot hide it, and perhaps it is the sheer look of gaping astonishment on my face that makes her surmise that I am aghast with dismay and thinking we are not going to get off to a good start.

I look at her looking at me and after a short while, which also could be the longest of times in which a thousand and one words interrupt an end from happening, she says, 'But it has already started; however, there is the question of the end.'

She is still looking at me and I am still looking at her, and both of us can tell that at this present conjuncture neither one of us is going to stop talking.

And the speaking — and listening — continues, and it continues by it being said that what has been said so far could be said in another way.

Go on.

In everything that happens there is the coming about of what happens. Compound bodies mix and, as causes for each other, things happen — a body lacerates another and, perhaps, causes a wound. But in what happens there is the *becoming* of the laceration, the *becoming* of the wounding.

Go on.

Becoming is what is produced in the mixing of corporeal bodies; it is what comes into effect at the same time that a dance or laceration actually happens. And what is more, this becoming is what eludes embodiment; indeed, it is that extra-being that haunts the dance-floor.

Go on.

Becoming is never what is, it is always that which has just happened and that which is going to happen. Yes, you can say that with becoming there is a continual side-stepping of the present. What *is* is what actually takes place in the present; it is what *is* actualized or embodied on the dance-floor. However, in continually side-stepping the present, becoming comes to elude embodiment. Becoming is never what *is* actualized in the present; if it were then it would cease to be becoming.

Go on.

Becoming is the effect produced by the mixing of mixed bodies and — yes — eluding embodiment it is the incorporeal effect that frolics on the surface of dancing bodies. Yes, becoming is the event that the verb voices.

Let's not beat about the bush: the event, for Gilles Deleuze (or is it the Stoics?) is an incorporeal entity.

The event — becoming — is an incorporeal entity; but, nonetheless, becoming is what is *produced* in the dancing time; indeed, it is what is produced as the *expressed* and the *expression* of that physical time.

Yes, it is a matter of expression.

A pause falls, but it is not long before there is speaking again.

To express is what corporeal bodies do in producing effects, and to express also means to put into words. That corporeal causal bodies do express means that the expressed of what happens in a time and state of affairs of dancing can be said, and it is the verb that says it. Indeed, the 'metaphysical' event that is produced as the *expressed* of what happens in the physical mixing of bodies is what finds *expression* in the verb.

The event-becoming finds expression; but, as an incorporeal entity, it does not exist outside its expression. Yes, we hear you, Gilles Deleuze: the

event that is the expressed of what happens with mixing bodies does not exist outside the verb that gives it expression.¹¹

The event does not exist outside its expression, but it does not merge with its expression; rather, it *inheres* in its expression. It is a matter of folding: inhering in its expression the incorporeal event enfolds itself within the verb, which as an expression unfolds it. Let's say, the verb is the 'face' of the incorporeal event.¹²

Go on.

The verb-predicate is what can be said of the event of the becoming that is expressed in the mixing bodies on the dance-floor; however, the verb-predicate is not attributable to the subject of a proposition such as the 'He' of 'He is dancing'.

(She hears you, Gilles Deleuze. She hears you, Stoics. She hears you, Leibniz. She hears you, Alfred North Whitehead.)¹³

The verb and the event it makes heard aren't to be ascribed to the subject of a proposition; what they are to be ascribed to is the mixture of bodies and states of affairs that are, in themselves, compounds or assemblages.¹⁴

Although the incorporeal event does not exist outside the face-verb that expresses it, it is nevertheless attributable to mixing bodies and their states of affairs. And this is to say that the event subsists *between* body compounds and voicing verbs. And what I picture here is a Janus-like entity: one side turned toward things, bodies and states of affairs and one side turned towards verbs and language.

And then grimacing in jest she says: 'That is the thing with becoming, it never faces you; but the verb does give the event-becoming a face.'

And then again I look at her looking at me.

What are we looking for?

A speechless silence falls, but it is not long before words are off again.

The dancing on the dance-floor happens and the verb can indicate the present, albeit past, of that dancing-time, yet the verb can also indicate something else and this is the infinitive 'mood'.¹⁵ The verb can say 'They are dancing', yet in saying that it can also say 'to dance'. The verb doesn't represent an action, it expresses an event, and 'to dance' (infinitive mood) is what you can hear expressed, if you have an ear for it, in a proposition such as 'They are dancing'. 'To dance' is the event; it is — let's sound it — the *event* of the event.

And then his words butt in: 'The verb has two poles: the present, which indicates its relation to a denotable state of affairs in view of a physical time characterized by succession; and the infinitive, which indicates its relation to ... the event in view of the internal time it envelops. The entire verb oscillates between the infinitive "mood" ... and the present "time" ...'¹⁶

What is 'to dance'? Answer: it is the unlimited becoming of dancing, and unlimited because the unlimited, and the indefinite, is what defines the verb in the infinitive. Coiled up and enveloped in every verb is the infinitive and as the verb unrolls the infinitive it also expresses and unfolds the unlimited becoming of, the pure event of, 'to dance'.

However, let us not forget that it is the corporeal physical mixing of bodies that produce, as the expressed of what happens in a mixing time, the unlimited becoming that becomes the impersonal song of the verb, and the event, in the infinitive.¹⁷

And the song is impersonal because verbs in the infinitive have no particular subject; they refer only to an 'it' or the fourth person singular, the impersonal 'they'.

The unlimited becoming of 'to dance' is the event that is the *expressed* of what happens with those bodies that collide or gracefully intermingle on the dance-floor; and it is also, if you can hear it, the expressed of statements such as 'They are dancing', 'She is dancing' or, indeed, 'He is dancing'.

And she says in response that what dances in the event of dancing are two sorts of dancing: there is the dancing that becomes embodied in the mixture, which is the state of dancing on the dance-floor, and then there is what flees this state, the effect through which corporeal dancing is transformed into a pure becoming *event*.

Oh yes, the event has a 'double structure'.¹⁸

With every event there is what comes about, and perishes, in history; but, on the other hand, there is what escapes actualization and historical time: the *event* of the event, the becoming that enjoys a virtual existence. For sure, this event is born from history, but it is not of it.

The pure event: think of how a piece of music exceeds the circumstances of its performance and the execution given to it.¹⁹

And then there is talk of two sorts of fields.

Mixing and mingling bodies exist in an empirical field, as it were, the dance-floor; and then resulting from this field there is the field of pure unlimited becoming, which is 'pure' because it is free from a subject or *cause* who would see it, possessively, as its domain. For sure, in this (dare I

say ‘transcendental’) field you will not find a body of corn growing, but you will find the unlimited becoming of the event of ‘to grow’ or, moreover, ‘to find’. And you may also find these two becomings overlapping. But wait, finding these events you will not find something occupying a place. If you were to think of the unlimited field of becoming as a place then this place would be without an occupant; or, if you were to think of the event as an occupant then it would be an occupant without a place.²⁰

You cannot say that the infinitive event of ‘to grow’ exists in the manner that growing corn exists, but you can say that it subsists or inheres in the verb in the infinitive mood. And when the verb unrolls an infinitive such as ‘to grow’ we can go — grow — further than believed possible. And we can go further than believed possible because as the infinitive unrolls itself it unfolds a time and an entity — a becoming — that is going in two directions at once and incessantly widening. Widening is happening on the left side and, at the same time, it is happening on the right side, and with this lateral widening the time of ‘to grow’ is lengthening and becoming longer and longer in both directions.

Oh yes, it is characteristic of the pure event to grow from the sides: we hear you, Gilles Deleuze; yes, we hear you.²¹

The event is splitting and widening in two directions at once; everything is going sideways, and with this movement there comes a pure horizontality — a ‘merciless’ straight line. This line is not the line of the time of Chronos; rather, it is the line of Aion.

Aion’s line unremittingly grows from the sides and it widens thus because in the event Aion repeatedly side-steps a present moment; and it is this repeated side-stepping that makes Aion, and the event-becoming, go in two directions at once and divide endlessly into *already past* and *still to come*.

(Are we hearing echoes here?)

Side-stepping the present makes the line of Aion ‘a long way before, a long way behind’; it also makes Aion ‘the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened?’²² Oh yes, the time unfolded by the verb in the infinitive is the paradoxical time of Aion, the time where past and future exist side by side.

(We are hearing echoes here.)

And then a question that had been side-stepped returns.

Is that temporality accompanying us now?

Now?

The living present in which the definitive *now* of vomiting happens is what brings about the pure event, but Aion is the time of the event. Which is to say (and hear something of words repeated): ‘One lives in two times, at two moments at once ...’²³

He says: ‘In accordance with Aion, only the past and future inhere or subsist in time. Instead of a present which absorbs the past and future, a future and past divide the present at the very instant and subdivide it ad infinitum into past and future, in both directions at once. Or rather, it is the instant without thickness and without extension, which subdivides each present into past and future ...’²⁴

And she says, reiterating: ‘There is what happens in the now of the living present and then, produced by this now, there is the instant of Aion, which immediately and eternally splits into unlimited past and unlimited future.’

And I say: ‘The instant of Aion is a paradoxical element in so far as it is missing from its own identity.’

Oh yes, on the line of Aion you will not find an instant that would serve to delimit before and after, left and right or, indeed, beginning and end. Which is to say that there is nothing to stop Aion’s line from widening and stretching ever still further.

Aion: a stretching machine that lengthens songs.²⁵

With Aionic time a present moment in time never returns, but what does return — eternally — is unlimited becoming. What returns incessantly is a wide event where you can go further than believed possible.

And you can go further than believed possible because with the line of Aion there is nothing to prevent the left side and the right side from reversing. Indeed, with Aion’s continual side-stepping of the present there is nothing to stop a lateral sliding from left to right and right to left.²⁶ The left side can become the right side and vice versa; and such reversals, along with the paradoxes they bring, are characteristic of the pure event.

With an event that is side-stepping the present and extending in both directions at once, what is there to stop ‘growing larger’ from becoming, at the same time, ‘growing smaller’? With the unlimited becoming of the event of growing we never come to rest upon a fixed point; getting larger, as with becoming more, never stops where it is but always goes further. Becoming larger is always becoming less small and more large and, equally, becoming smaller is always becoming less large and more small, and the consequence of never resting upon a fixed point is that the larger can become smaller —

less — than the smaller whilst, also, the smaller can become larger — *more* — than the larger.

To put this another way, we can say that on the line of Aion there is nothing but infinite movements, unstoppable movements. The line of Aion is traversed by infinite movements that do not rely upon nor refer to a starting point or a stopping point. Yes, we can say that on the line of Aion there are many infinite movements caught within each other: to dance — to weep — to grow — to cut.

Aion: the boundless.

Chaos?

Almost.

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She is smiling and I am smiling: two cats with grins widening wide on their faces. Okay, the event of grinning could go on and on but she pipes up and says that she has to say that paradox is characteristic of the pure event that results from mixed corporeal bodies.

She says paradox, and he says that it pertains to the essence of pure becoming to move and pull in both directions at once.²⁷

And pulling in two directions at once means that future and past, active and passive, too much and not enough, sadness and happiness, already and not yet, come to exist side by side and have between them a zone of indiscernability. Call it nonsense; yes, call it nonsense, but in the event nonsense is not the opposite of sense. In the event we find the 'logic of And': sense and nonsense.

In the pure event, nonsense is not a deficiency of sense; it is neither a lack nor negation of sense; rather, nonsense and sense have a specific relation, which doesn't copy the relation of the true and the false, which is a relation based upon exclusion (the false is to be excluded from the true, the false is the absence of the true). In the realm of unlimited becoming, nonsense and sense enjoy a relation of co-existence; nonsense does not have a particular sense, but this does not mean it is the absence of sense, rather it is the production of too much sense. Oh yes, the nonsense that grows in the event of 'to grow' produces an excess of sense.²⁸

In the metaphysical field of pure becoming oppositions don't work; indeed, what is found is a neutrality — an 'impassability' — towards opposites. Indifferent to all opposites, the event has a neutral splendour.²⁹

And in response she asks if she is hearing an echo here.

And her asking this prompts me to ask if Maurice Blanchot's non-event is echoing here. And then she says that although the event remains unperturbed by all opposites this is not to say it doesn't resonate or vibrate.

Don't the to-ings and fro-ings of the event — the paradoxical going in two directions at once — make the event vibrate?

And then, without fanfare, she says that the line of Aion silently vibrates with infinite movements ... 'to dance' is silently vibrating with 'to weep' and 'to weep' is resonating with 'to twitter'. And, and, and: it is pure multiplicity itself.

Perhaps we can say that the line of Aion silently vibrates; however, with this line nothing of the present happens.

She says she has heard it before and I say he says it time and time again: 'The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening.'³⁰

With every event there is the time of its actualization or embodiment in a state of affairs. This is the time of mixtures, the very process of blending; it is the time when we can say 'The birds and tree are mixing and twittering.'³¹ The moment of actualization pertains, temporally, to the present, but this is not so with the event that is the *effect* of intermingling bodies. With this event nothing in the present happens, although it is the living historical present of mixed bodies that brings it about.

So, perhaps we can say that what makes an event an *event* — what *defines* an event — is that nothing of the present happens.

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Again my thoughts ponder a present that never happens. And what are the thoughts she is thinking? She says that again she has the feeling of wanting to scarper.

—'But how can I scarper from the time the verb in the infinitive unfolds, which is, so I hear, the "unfolded form of time"?'³²

She goes to put her fingers in her ears but instead says the huge expanse of time that is unfolded in the time of Aion is the empty form of time.

And then I say that — for sure — nothing of the present happens in that time, but we can say that ‘everything is becoming’. It is a terror, but it is also a great joy.³³

Nothing of the present happens in the unfolded form of time and perhaps the very thought of this makes you shudder, but the unlimited and undetermined becoming that defines the event is a diffuse potentiality.

Oh yes, Gilles Deleuze, we hear you: ‘Potential energy is the energy of the pure event ...’³⁴

Mixed bodies are actual but the effects they produce are virtual potentialities that always takes things further than believed possible; in other words, the incorporeal event is potentiality itself. Defined as unlimited becoming, the incorporeal event is pure potentiality; and pure potentiality, as boundless, abounds with paradox.

Pure potentiality is infested with paradox, but can I say the reverse and say that paradox is infested with potentiality? What I can say is that potentiality is not only the expressed — effect — of what happens in the time of mixing corporeal bodies but also that which finds expression in the verb as the infinitive is heard. For potentiality to be considered for itself it needs expression, but not actualization. In sounding the infinitive, the verb gives the potentiality of unlimited becoming — and indeed the paradoxes that there abound — a reality. For sure, this reality is not that of the actual, but it is the reality of the virtual.

And then she says that in making the infinitive heard the verb becomes a megaphone for the effect — becoming — that results from the passions and actions of mixed bodies. In becoming a megaphone for the expressed effect, the verb brings becoming and its paradoxes to language.

—‘Let’s say it makes the characteristics of the pure event heard within the word and within the world.’

And then I say that what prevents the ‘potential’ energy of the pure event from collapsing back into the noisy mixture of bodies from whence it comes is the horizontal line of Aion.

For sure, the line of Aion, which widens and prolongs the pure event as there is a side-stepping of the present, is an abstract line; but, nonetheless, it traces a frontier that stops the event from being exhausted by its embodiment in a state of affairs.³⁵ That exhaustion does not happen gives the

incorporeal event the chance to go on and indefatigably return the potentiality of becoming where things are continually and impossibly going further than believed possible or imaginable.

Aion is a metaphysical line, but doesn't this line make us become visionaries? For sure, we don't see with our eyes, but we do see with our mind's eye: by prolonging the event, Aion's line allows the mind's eye to see — think — the unimaginable, the unthinkable. The line of Aion, and the pure events that move infinitely thereupon, gives thinking the chance to go further than believed possible; it gives thinking the chance to think the possibility of the impossible.

Okay, Aion's line prolongs the agony of the event, but in tracing a frontier it makes it possible for the verb to speak. If the event of what happens on the dance-floor did not become separated from its corporeal causes, and were to fall back into or become exhausted by them, then verbalization couldn't become possible. The metaphysical line-frontier of Aion prevents the expressed effect from being confused with the clamour of mixing bodies and in so doing renders verbalization possible. Aion makes it possible for the verb to express and become a megaphone for the expressed that does not exist outside its expression.

Oh yes, it is the immaterial world of incorporeal effects that makes language possible.

Listen: '... it is this world which draws the sounds from their simple state of corporeal actions and passions. It is this new world which distinguishes language, prevents it from being confused with the sound-effects of bodies ...'³⁶

And again: 'To render language possible thus signifies assuring that sounds are not confused with the sonorous qualities of things ... What renders language possible is that which separates sounds from bodies ... freeing them for the expressive function.'³⁷

Events make language possible, but 'making possible does not mean causing to begin'.³⁸

Aion's line and the events that are prolonged thereupon make it possible for the twittering sounds of sonorous bodies to be transformed into words that say 'Twittering is happening on this warm evening.' Indeed, it is the frontier-line of Aion that enables the verb to unroll the infinitive and sound the event of, the pure unlimited becoming of, 'to twitter'.

And as we listened to the sounding of this event we both felt the hairs on the back of our necks stand up and quiver.

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The verb is rolling out the infinitive and sounding the pure event of 'to twitter'; hairs on the back of human heads are quivering; and she is saying that the frontier Aion's line traces separates but in so doing enables connection.

Go on, say more.

Aion's line-frontier separates incorporeal events from corporeal bodies and their states of affairs, and this separation is what makes the sound of words possible, but what Aion separates it also links. Aion's line links the incorporeal and the corporeal but they do not mingle; rather it is something along the line of an articulation of their difference.

And more?

The border that Aion's line traces has one side turned toward bodies and states of affairs and one side turned toward verbalization, in all senses of the word. Aion separates the two sides but in separating them it also connects 'the interiority of language to the exteriority of being'.³⁹ Moreover, Aion's line can make what is inside become outside without either side becoming confused with the other. Aion's line is like a Möbius strip: it affords a continuity of reverse and right sides, it makes an outer surface continuous with an inner surface, and it also makes that which is inside be on the outside and vice versa.⁴⁰

If Aion's line were not to trace a frontier then there would be nothing stopping language sounds from collapsing into the noise that bodies make in mixing.

And listen to how language sounds: '... the straight line which extends simultaneously in two directions traces the frontier between bodies and language, states of affairs and propositions. Language, or the system of propositions, would not exist without this frontier which renders it possible. Language therefore is endlessly born, in the future direction of the Aion where it is established and, somehow, anticipated; and although it must also say the past, it says it as the past of states of affairs which go on appearing and disappearing in the other direction. In short, the straight line is now related to its two environs; and while it separates them, it also articulates the one and the other as two series which are capable of being developed.'⁴¹

The paradoxical instant of Aion comes about as a definitive *now* takes place, but it is the elongation of Aion's instant that allows a bit of verbal to

happen in the future. Yes, it can be said that language goes in two directions at once: it goes in the future direction of Aion, which is the direction of an unlimited time in which there is nothing stopping endless development; and, at the same time, it goes in the other direction, toward a past that is the past of corporeal bodies, which are compounds that are forever, in the living present, coming about and perishing in the mixture.

And then she says somewhat cheekily:

'Is this making sense?'

Is this making sense?

This is what Gilles Deleuze says as he listens to the Stoics: 'sense is an "event": *on condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs.*'⁴²

Go on.

In their mixing, corporeal bodies do not wait to have sense bestowed upon them from 'above'; and nor do they wait for the sense — or idea — of what happens in the mixing-time to be discovered 'below' as if it were already there in hiding. On the contrary, bodies produce sense as their incorporeal effects. And this sense partakes of the characteristics that define the pure event.

Let's not beat about the bush: sense partakes of unlimited becoming, which is always going in two directions at once. God is and god is not: both these propositions make sense, and they make sense because sense is always established in both directions at once.⁴³

We hear you, Gilles Deleuze, although what we hear is an affront to good sense, which demands that things only go in one direction, in one *sens*.

Okay, I may be mishearing but this is how I hear the 'sense' of sense — in everything that happens there is the coming about of what happens and this coming about, this becoming produced as the (incorporeal) effect of mixing bodies, is the *sense* of what happens.

And she continues:

'The "logic" of sense and indeed the making of sense involves nonsense, which produces sense in excess. Sense — and event — can be said by the verb and in that saying you will hear, if you have an ear for it, something excessive: the noisy silence of becoming.'

And then questions come.

Exactly what do you mean when you say you are aware of the 'sense' of something? Do you mean that you have become aware of, or discovered, a

meaning that was there all along; or, do you mean that you have become aware of something that is felt, perhaps fleetingly, as the quality of becoming, of potentiality? I wonder: isn't this the immaterial effect that is produced in and by those mixed bodies that are called art? Indeed, isn't this immaterial effect the 'sense' that hovers or frolics on the surface of art-bodies?

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And what are the thoughts she ponders now? That still photographic images are not without becoming; that the event is not at all what a photographic image captures or manipulates but rather something incorporeal that is produced in the mixing that makes a corporeal image; that the event (or sense) of a photographic image is what results from the actions and passions of mixed bodies, and that this can involve mathematical bodies as well as chemical bodies; that the event of a photographic image is an incorporeal vapour that frolics on the surface of the image; that the event is not so much what you see with your eyes but rather that which makes all of us become visionaries in front of photographic images; that the event of a photographic image is what carries us in the future direction of Aion; that a definitive present hasn't been frozen in the making of a photographic image but rather has brought about the paradoxical time of Aion, which is always already past and still yet to come but never what is happening; that the time of Aion and the pure event can be mistaken for a frozen moment; that the assumed frozen moment of a still photographic image is nothing other than the paradoxical instant of Aion, which is a point missing from its own place; that whilst the event or time of Aion can't be grasped in the hand it does expose us to becoming and the potentiality that there gapes. My thoughts remark as well that exposure to the perverse and peculiar time of Aion is what gives me the precious experience of a time that remains uncontrolled; that without this time my life and thinking would die and lie dormant or suffocate from banality; my thoughts remark also that the theories of the event so far heard have, although in different ways, sounded the event as that which rings out and brings out a time, perhaps an impossible time, that differs from the living present or indeed the succession of moments that measure the day and do not sleep through the night.

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And then ever more questions. (Will they ever stop?)

‘Why should we care for the pure event that Gilles Deleuze sounds time and time again? Why should we bother with the time of Aion and its merciless straight line? Aion’s line may make language possible and it may also give us the chance to think the unthinkable and become visionaries, but how is it to light fires in our world?’

‘It may indeed be such that we live in two times, two moments at once (only two?), and it may also be such that it is the living present that brings about the paradoxical time of Aion, but how am I to understand this time such that I would say: I cannot live without this time?’

‘Aionic time is born from historical time but its mode of existence — if I can say that — is not of that time, although it does haunt it. And saying this begs me to ask again if I can live without this time. Can I live without the event whose time is not that of the present? Can flowers grow without this time? Can fires burn?’

And with a voice straining, near to exhaustion, and the eyes of her mind bloodshot, she then asks:

‘What if it were my will to grasp the instant of Aion at the point it divides into *what has already happened* and *what is going to happen*? Would grasping the paradoxical instant of Aion — the point missing from its own place — come to make the living present *now* something of a question?’

—‘And if the living present were to become something of a question would this make the present, and presence, of myself also of the order of a question, a query?’

‘And if this present and presence becomes a query would I, yes would I, ask of myself: *Is* she an event?’

‘Indeed, if the present of myself were open to question and query, would that opening cause me to understand, give me the opportunity to understand, that I am an “offspring” of the event that is in the process of actualizing itself within my corporeal existence? And if I were to grasp myself as the offspring of this event would I thereby have “one more birth”; yes, would I have another birth (albeit not a carnal birth) that makes me come to differ with myself?⁴⁴ Would it make a self disjoin with itself and become something else and so have another mode of existence?’

‘Would it?’

‘And would there be an instance of freedom in that?’

‘And moreover, in coming to myself as the offspring of the event that is in the process of being actualized with my mixed — wide — body, would I have broken or transcended the syntactical link with the world that the subject–predicate structure articulates and wishes to maintain?’

The questions run through our veins and, although near to exhaustion, they bring fire (and becoming) into our bellies and we become hot.

‘To grasp myself as an offspring of the event that is actualizing itself within my mixed body, I would disembody the event from a state of affairs. In doing that I would be extracting the pure event — the becoming — of what happens, and extracting that would be to have *becoming* pass through me. Aionic time would pass through me. A current, perhaps. A flash of lightning, perhaps.’

‘With becoming passing through me it may seem that nothing changes; for sure, nothing of the present happens, but in the “time” of becoming everything changes. And everything changes because in the Aionic time of becoming the living present — of myself and history — comes to differ from itself. But this difference is not the difference between x and y , which invites the act of comparing and contrasting, which in the end becomes a matter of a difference of degree; rather, this difference is the difference of y from itself, from herself.’

‘The event may be set to start at 5.15 p.m, and who knows it may actually start on time, but the living present of mixing bodies will repeatedly open up and bring about a time (its becoming time) different to this. And this opening — which here we can call the paradoxical instant of Aion, which is an instant missing from its own place — could be understood as the instant when the time of the living present comes to differ with itself.’

And then, fired up, she says:

‘The event forces us to think time.’

And equally fired up I say:

‘The event Gilles Deleuze follows forces us to think the peculiar (non)time of becoming.’

And in response she says:

‘That time is almost unthinkable.’

And I say:

‘Gilles Deleuze once said that he tried in all his books to discover the nature of events, and, listening to his words, what I hear — could be

mishearing — is that the becoming-event brings something indefinite to thinking.¹⁴⁵

Holding to what we cannot know for sure, not being certain and not running from vagueness is what, at least for this philosopher, defines thinking; and the pure event, which continually goes in two directions at once, is what brings the unthinkable into thinking, which is what keeps the flames of thinking moving. This thinking is not that of contemplation, rather it is the thinking that moves when the event becomes 'it' that forces us to think and in so doing makes thinking itself a force, dare I say, an event.

The pure event that Gilles Deleuze sounds time and time again affirms the expressivity of bodies and being, but of this event we cannot say that it comes out of the blue. It is the corporeal world of mixing compound bodies that brings about the pure event, and although there is separation, which enables the event 'to live', the event remains continuous with the world of grinding, bumping or gracefully intermingling bodies. The event comes into being from the world and, yes, everything can become an event, but this is not to say that the event makes no difference in the world.

And then, before another word can be said, she asks:

'Does the material world of mixing bodies produce incorporeal events so as to keep the fires of thinking burning?'

And then I ask:

'Does it produce incorporeal events so that thinking can think a difference that is the difference of y from itself, from herself?'

She says:

'These are cool questions.'

And I say:

'They are hot questions.'

And neither of us can deny that at this moment things are going in two directions at once.

—'That, perhaps, is the humour of events.'

Echoes

And still things are going in two directions at once. Hot and cold. Heaven and Hell. Right and left.

'If you have a cane,' says the Zen master, 'I am giving you one; if you do not have one, I am taking it away.'¹

Oh, the humour of events.

Okay, she isn't rolling on the floor with laughter but there is a hint of a hoot as she says:

'The humour of events could be that of making things go, sideways, in two directions at once, but it could also be when a grain of corn brings unexpected possibilities to a woman.'

And again a vision of an unfathomable ocean of unborn laughter comes but, as before, there is nothing to see or, at least, what is seen is something unspeakable.

Must we say something?

Staying silent is saying something.

And then, just as something is about to be said, we hear two men, for whom old age has arrived and of which one once said that they don't work together but work between the two, asking *What is Philosophy?*² The answer doesn't fuss them: it is the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts. Now it is Gilles Deleuze *and* Félix Guattari, and again there is talk of the event.

Can you bear to listen?

But what will I hear?

What you will hear again is that the event in its becoming (pure event) escapes history. Yes, what you will hear again (echo) is that there are two ways of considering the event: one way is going over the event as it is effectuated in history (the bloody revolution turned out badly as despotism set in); and the other way is to reassemble the event and install oneself in it as in a becoming (becoming young again and ageing in it, both at the same time).³ You won't hear of the pure horizontal — merciless — line of Aion but you will hear of a *plane* of immanence that comprises infinite movements and the movement of the infinite. You won't hear talk of the verb in the infinitive but you will hear of two sorts of multiplicities: one that pertains to the actual — the measurable mixes of compound bodies and states of affairs; and one that pertains to the virtual — the unstoppable varying that frolics and fuses within pure becoming, which is without measure and does not belong to the time of the present. You won't hear talk of winged horses and dragons breathing fire (disappointed?) but you will hear of the meanwhile. Oh yes, you will hear again (echo) that the event is the meanwhile (*l'entre-temps*), a dead time in which nothing of the present takes place. You will hear that the meanwhile belongs to becoming, which is no more what ends than what begins.⁴

And then it sounds as if she is almost hollering.

The meanwhile to which becoming belongs is, at least to my ears, resistance to the present, to what *is*. Nothing of the present happens in the meanwhile, yet what the meanwhile does is to keep becoming from never ending. In the meanwhile, becoming is perpetually renewed.

And then I say:

'What you will hear these two say is that the event is immaterial, incorporeal, unliveable: pure *reserve*.⁵ And what the meanwhile of the event reserves is an incalculable future that is never ending. For sure, it doesn't hold in reserve a future that is a historical future or a prefiguration of what is to come; rather, it holds in reserve what is an oceanic and unfathomable future. An unfathomable ocean of unborn laughter, but in this ocean you will not find future laughter prefigured.'

Nothing happens in the meanwhile, nothing befalls but all is becoming and never ceases to become. It is unliveable, but it is like being at the edge of something coming about. It is like the edgy time when something is not quite there as yet. It is like being at the edge of the void. It is like being at the beginning of the world before the world *is*. It is like hearing the silent calls of a people who do not yet exist.

Intolerable?

Almost.

The silent calls may be unbearable to hear yet it is the meanwhile that keeps a new world — a new people, a new earth — from never ending.

They say that the meanwhile, as the unhistorical, is like a moment of grace.⁶ Nothing of the present happens yet the meanwhile's resistance to the present means that the meanwhile can restore what is actualized elsewhere, in a different time. Nothing in history changes, but in the meanwhile becoming never ceases, which means that the event has the privilege of beginning again when time is past. Yes, they say that when time passes and takes the instant away there is always a meanwhile to restore the event.⁷

In everything that happens there is the coming about of what happens and the meanwhile holds in reserve this coming about, which has been actualized in a state of affairs or in a lived experience. And this means that thinking can go back into the event, take up with the components of the becoming — a hot summer's evening, a sharp knife, a grasping hand — and conceptualize, and come up with a concept perhaps such as 'shame'. Yes, the meanwhile of an event means that the agony of a flower can remain in thought.

She doesn't follow her words with a two-minute silence, but there is less hollering. She is speaking more quietly, and then, in her voice, I hear that cry again. It sounds so inhuman. But then it's gone as quickly as it came and I listen to her — or is it them? — continuing.

In resisting the present, the meanwhile prevents becoming from being exhausted in actualization. Yes, the meanwhile of the event provides something like a moment of grace where thinking can go back into the event and take a place in becoming, which offers no place at all. This is not thinking 'recalling', rather this is becoming returning. And there in the event-becoming (which is not only a no-where but also a no-here) thinking can go with and become the ceaseless movement, the infinite movement, the interminable that neither stops nor starts, which is pure becoming, which is without object or subject. And having no place in which to settle or to hold on to or to fight for, thought becomes a vagabond — a nomad.

The meanwhile is the virtual; it is the 'pure immanence' of what is not, in becoming, actualized. And in the meanwhile there is no room for principled theories to set up a place — put a foot down — and halt the movement so to make it fit into a preconceived model or idea. You will hear them say that thought demands 'only' movement that can be carried to infinity.⁸

Entering into the meanwhile of becoming, thinking experiences infinite movement, but in experiencing this it also confronts the unthinkable, and the possibility of the impossible. Taking up with becoming, thinking confronts what it cannot know and this confrontation — *I don't know!* — is what makes thinking have to become inventive in its conceptualizations. You will hear them say that it is what must be thought and that which cannot be thought.⁹ Thinking has to experiment; indeed, that the unthinkable cannot be thought yet must be thought is what makes thinking have to fabulate, fabricate. But this thinking is not Thought-for-the-market-place. Concepts, they say, speak the event, and what is so shameful in our times is that the only events are trade-fair exhibitions, and the only concepts are products that can be sold.

Now it is them who are almost hollering:

'Marketing has preserved the idea of a certain relationship between the concept and the event. But here the concept has become the set of product displays (historical, scientific, artistic, sexual, pragmatic), and the event has become the exhibition that sets up various displays and the "exchange of ideas" it is supposed to promote.'¹⁰

Thinking, at least for these two old men, is not Thought-for-the-market-place and neither has it anything to do with expressing an opinion or having a bit of a discussion.

Again almost hollering:

'The idea of a Western democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single concept.'¹¹

And then it is hard to tell exactly who is speaking.

Plunging into the pure immanence of what is not actualized, thinking plunges into meanwhiles superimposed on one another; and, what is more, these meanwhiles communicate through *zones of indiscernability*. In these zones, where we cannot discern where things begin and end, something passes and is exchanged between becomings. And when something of one becoming passes into another, something in both becomings becomes, as it were, something else. In event-thinking all sorts of becomings can be entered into, and in so doing the thinker in us becomes something else. One cannot think without becoming something else. A bird-becoming or perhaps a rat-becoming, and then there is the smile without a cat, or there may be, who knows, a cat-becoming. And there can be the agony of the slaughter of a calf.

They say it calmly:

'We become animal so that the animal also becomes something else. The agony of a rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something passes into the other.'¹²

And then it is hard to tell exactly *what* is speaking.

In the meanwhile of the event, thought gains the means to become an act of resistance to what *is*. In event-thinking thought can go further than believed possible, it can go all the way to the impossible, and going there, which is no-where, thought confronts the wall of the unthinkable. We can knock at the wall to make a sounding of what lies beyond but any such sounding will always sound what is unfathomable. A barrier, yes; a point of impasse, yes; but the unthinkable is all that which resists what *is* in our times.

The wall may be a virtual wall, it may indeed be the virtual itself, but it is this wall, this *mur*, that provides something like a moment of grace in which something unknown passes through us and makes us become a stranger to ourselves and to our times. And while this can be divine (or not), it is not the divine passing through us, rather it is more like the witch's flight. Following this flight and becoming strangers to ourselves we can, as thinkers, be as those old witches who have the means to make soundings and diagnose. Following the witch's flight, the thinker — stranger — in us gains the means to diagnose what *is* and what *is* intolerable within our times. Yes, they say that to think is always to follow the witch's flight.¹³

And then I say that you could put it like this:

'The point of impasse that is the wall of impossibility can be thought of as that which is declared impossible from within the present situation of our times; and going all the way to this point of impasse is what, perhaps, makes it possible for the thinker in us to turn around and think our times according to this impasse.'

Becoming strangers to our selves and our times, we become something other than what *is*, and becoming this we can conjure up new modes of existence. Having the unthinkable pass through us — which is the virtuality of pure potentiality — is when the thinker in her experiences Aionic time at the instant that it splits and the present gapes wide. And she does not experience this, does not think this (unthought) without herself 'seeing' a new mode of existence and herself becoming something else. Oh yes, we cannot think the becoming of the event without becoming something else.

—‘It may be that nothing changes or seems to change in history, but everything changes, and we change, in the event ...’¹⁴

She opens herself to the unthinkable within becoming and as this passes through her — as she grasps herself as an event — she differs with herself and becomes involved in a new mode of existence, and this is what offers the most effective resistance to and critique of the present. Resistance to what *is* and what *is* intolerable or shameful within our times is not about setting oneself up as an opposition and hurling denunciations and criticism. Those who criticize without creating are, so you will hear them say, inspired by *ressentiment*.¹⁵ And you will also hear them say that to create is to resist.¹⁶ To create concepts that speak the event is what matters.

Going back into the event-becoming, and going all the way to the unthinkable so that ‘strangers’ and new modes of existence can be created (experiment), is what constitutes the most effective (total) critique of the present. For sure, this critique is not about standing back and gaining a safe distance so that you will not be affected; rather, it is about plunging into becoming and making immanent conceptualization. There are no promises here, but this doesn’t mean that anything goes. In the event, the thinker goes all the way to what is unthinkable within dancing, within servitude, within shame, within laughing, within growing; she goes all the way to what is unbearable in the cry of a cat being slaughtered or the silent agony of a flower.

She doesn’t put her fingers in her ears — it wouldn’t stop her hearing anyway — but turns and says that perhaps she has been mishearing what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say. However, she follows this by saying that what she can’t stop hearing is that everything that happens in the world produces an event.

And just as she says this an insistent knocking can be heard.

Fortuity

An insistent knocking is still being heard and she is asking if this is the end saying ‘time’s up’.

—‘But the end hasn’t happened yet; it hasn’t been there all along waiting to happen. However, there is the question of how we two are going to disappear and end.’

And in rapid response she says:

‘I think *not* by becoming one.’

And still knocking can be heard. Who can it be that knocks so insistently? Who — what — arrives?

Answer: Yet one more, yes one more, event-thinker.

And will this *arrivant* be named? Will there be an introduction?

Answer: Alain Badiou; philosopher, mathematician, playwright, political activist. And Alain Badiou is most insistent: events are rare; not everything that happens can be called an event.¹

Alain Badiou writes volumes. There is a magnum opus, *L’Etre et l’événement* — a big book that is big on Being and the Event and in which mathematics abound. But there are smaller books that are easier to handle and wherein you can hear him also sound a theory of the event.² However, it has to be said that there is nothing easy with respect to what is involved with Alain Badiou’s event, which is to say the theorization involved is intricate and requires us to take it easy, to be in no hurry.

But wait, brevity is knocking at the door, and it is most insistent. And for the sake of this insistence, let’s risk saying straightaway that what echoes

in Alain Badiou's theory of the event is *subtraction*. Cutting to the quick, although not wanting to be too quick, let's say that Alain Badiou's event-thinking requires the event to be thought of as that which subtracts itself from the known, from what *is*.

Oh yes, you can hear subtraction echoing in his lexicon of the event, which goes like this: break, radical break, disjunctive separation, interruption, rupture. Oh yes, you can hear subtraction sounded as he defines the event as:

1) The *evanescent*, which is something that vanishes from being as soon as it appears.

Alain Badiou: 'The event has posed formidable problems for me, and still does. Here, following both Mallarmé and Lacan, I have recourse to the logic of the term "evanescent" — something whose very being is to disappear.'³

And she says: 'Of an event we cannot say that it *is*, and we cannot say this because, as evanescent, the event *is-not* as soon as it appears. Disappearing as soon as it appears, we cannot say of an event *there is* ... The event borders on being, is at the very edge of being, but the event never quite obtains, in the present, the presence of being. And here we can speak of a surging forth of that which subtracts itself from being. A surging forth and, at the same time, a subtraction: yes, this is what demonstrates the evanescent, and his event-thinking insists upon this.'

We cannot say that the event *is*, but he insists that in its befalling, which is hardly a befalling at all, the event ruptures, produces a breach within, what is. And what *is* is pure multiplicity. Differences are what there is.⁴

His words: 'Being is essentially multiple ... God is truly dead, as are all the categories that used to depend on it in the order of the thinking of being.'⁵

To be is to be a multiple.

A multiple is not a multiple of something, rather its entire being is a multiple of multiples. And a being whose entire being is multiple is, as such, a multiple-without-one (his term). Yes, in a world where the multiple becomes the general mode of being, the *One is not* or, in other words, the One is what is subtracted from Being with a Big B. To count as One is no longer what constitutes Being; however, this isn't to say that in our world counting-as-one simply does not happen.

(Do you count yourself as One?)

A multiple is composed of an infinity of elements and this is what we can call the pure multiple, whose only stopping point is the void.⁶ However, multiplicity is not free from the rule that represses it in subjecting it to what he calls the count-as-one, which entails elements being ‘counted-for-one’ in a multiple that becomes ‘counted-as-one’.⁷ But in essence, the pure multiple can never be counted as One and it can never be counted accordingly because the pure multiple is without contours, unbounded or, in other words, *inconsistent*.

He says: ‘... it is strictly *impossible* to think the quantitative relation between the “number” of members of an infinite multiplicity and the number of its parts. This relation has the form only of a *wandering excess*: it is known that the parts are more numerous than the members (Cantor’s Theorem), but no measure of this “more” can be established.’⁸

And he also says that the wandering excess is the real of being, the *being* of being. For this event-thinker, there is no transcendent plan that governs the world or being; what we must deal with today is an *immanent* conceptualization of the multiple.⁹

Multiplicity is the banal reality of every situation, and Alain Badiou is most insistent: it is mathematics that can take on the multiple as multiple. Being is essentially multiple and the question of being *as* being is what, ontologically speaking, mathematics can speak of.

Alain Badiou: ‘If we take “ontology”, as we must, literally or etymologically, that is, as what can be said about being *qua* being, then we ought to say it’s mathematics.’¹⁰

And to be more precise, we ought to say that it is the mathematical activity that, since Cantor, goes under the name of set theory.

There is much that can be added here but it is too much to add here; however, what she can add is that the subtraction of the one from the multiple, from *being*, is what gives rise to thought of a foundational void.

Alain Badiou: ‘I established, in *L’Etre et l’événement*, the essential bond that exists between the void and being *qua* being.’¹¹

The void, where no one *is*, is not whimsical (his word) chaos; and although we may think the void implies the existence of something inconceivable, something unthinkable, he insists that it is — only — the mathematicians’ empty set that can present it to thought.¹²

2) A *supplement*, which is something extra to what *is* and can be instanced as following.

Alain Badiou: 'Take a simple event like the encounter of love ... The event itself is the encounter. The encounter does not constitute the situation, it supplements it: there is what there was before, and then there's the encounter.'¹³

By definition a supplement supplies something extra, but what the evanescent supplies hardly adds up to anything. You can say that what the event — encounter — supplies is a break or rupture in what *is*. Which is to say, a break that gives a chance for love to be declared. However, a break, *in itself*, supplies almost next to nothing.

For Alain Badiou the event is supplementary but in his thinking it is absolutely (his word) detached from the situation for which it is a supplement. Yes, it is a disconnected supplement or, in other words, the event is an event by *not being attached* to the world, to what *is*.¹⁴

'Event' signifies for him: an edge, or border, of Being.¹⁵

Her words: 'As an edge, or border, of Being, the event is supplementary to what *is*; however, in its evanescent befalling the event doesn't supply what can be called extra-Being; on the contrary, it supplies something extra to Being. And what is extra to Being is something, as it were, outside of Being. Yes, something subtracted from Being.'

His words for the event: 'subtracted part'.¹⁶

Her words: 'As a supplement, the event supplies almost next to nothing — in its most literal sense, the event has no objectivity. No object for thought: no object for a theory.'

The supplement may supply what counts as, almost, nothing, but this isn't to say that nothing is to come from this. It is possible that the impossible may happen; for, as he says, the subtracted part is 'an infinity *to come*'.¹⁷

The evanescent event supplies a subtraction and this supplement is not without effects, far from it; it can have, in the fields of love, politics, science and art, effects beyond calculation — multiple effects. And, for Alain Badiou, these aforementioned fields are the domains of the event (only four?) and these because this philosopher is most insistent that philosophy (re)turns to the four Platonic conditions of philosophy.

Alain Badiou: 'These conditions are: the matheme, the poem, political invention and love.'¹⁸

3) A *chance*, which happens strictly by chance. The event opens a chance, a possibility that it is a real possibility in so far as the possibility has been hitherto unknown. And in respect of this it can be said that the chance event is a creative force (his words); but, it has to be said, this force belongs to no one.¹⁹ The chance an event creates has not been designed and, moreover, there is no one gambling. Which is to say, the advent of a possibility, whereupon something new begins, is hazardous, fortuitous. No one can predict it. No one can bet on it. It comes by pure chance.

Alain Badiou: ‘... there is a multiplicity (and rarity) of chances, such that the chance of an event happens to us already by chance ...’²⁰

Chance is not the affirmation of all chances in a single chance; such an affirmation inscribes, by way of the *all*, a whole that harks of a One. Chance is not, for this event-thinker, the play of the All.²¹

And she says: ‘From what I hear him say he would have the “All” subtracted from the Chance of chance.’

Putting words into his mouth?

She’ll take the risk.

Every chance is strictly contingent. An event always happens in a situation but the chance it brings comes from a place where there is no All at all.

Blue place?

Cold place?

Perhaps. Perhaps if you listen to the poet Mallarmé. Perhaps if you hear the absolute singularity of every event. Perhaps if you hear a void between each and every event, which is what Alain Badiou hears. And what she hears is that his is a stellar (Mallarmé’s word) conception of chance. Stellar; or in other words: chance has no relation. Indeed, with a stellar conception of chance there isn’t a correlation with the world — chance does not depend in order to happen. What is more, there are no relations between chances — each chance, each event, remains absolutely separate from any other chance.²²

The chance by which an event irrupts (his word) is unconditional. Indeed, he says that chance is the ‘*autoaccomplishment* of its Idea’.²³ Which is to say, chance is self-constituent: chance constitutes itself in the act and this is what makes the (chance) event conditioned by nothing other than itself.

It is by chance that an event breaks and, as it were, gives us a break, and you could say that this break, this chance, is what comes to us by grace.

Yes, you could say that with the chance we are given by chance 'All is grace'; but, wait, you can hear Alain Badiou say that if 'All is grace' then we are never accorded any grace.

—'But this is not correct. It does *occur*, by interruption or by supplement, and however rare or transitory it may be, we are forced to be *lastingly* faithful to it.'²⁴

You speak of grace, Alain Badiou, but your idea of a 'laicized grace' is one that doesn't accord with the religious understanding of grace as a divine gift. By grace we are given a chance, by grace events happen; however, there is no Divine One giving the gift; moreover, it comes undeserved, which is to say, once again, *no one has promised us anything*.

—'At bottom, what I call a laicized grace describes the fact that, to the degree that we are given a chance of truth, a chance of being a little bit more than living individuals, pursuing our ordinary interests, this chance is always given to us through an event. This eventmental giving, based absolutely on chance, and beyond any principle of the management or calculation of existence — why not call it a grace?'²⁵

We are given a *chance of truth*?

Oh yes, you will hear him say: 'chance is the very matter of a truth'.²⁶

And truth, as you will hear him say time and time again, is a subtraction in the field of the nameable of a situation.

4) The *incalculable*, which is always particular to the situation in which the event happens. An event is what cannot be accounted for by the resources available to the situation for which it is an event. And that the event escapes reckoning means that, for the situation, the event (and the chance it opens up) is, almost, an impossibility.

The totally chance breaking of an event may indeed be incalculable with respect to the situation in which it irrupts, but this is not to say that such incalculability gives reason to reckon the event as having irrational characteristics.

Alain Badiou: 'I've never argued that the event, when we examine it in its facticity, presents irrational characteristics. I simply think that none of the calculations internal to the situation can account for its irruption ...'²⁷

And talk of a situation begs the question: what is a situation?

His words: 'In the interests of brevity, let us call "situation", a state of things, any presented multiple whatsoever.'²⁸

Her words: 'A presented multiple — a situation — is that which undergoes an internal operation whereby a structuring gathers together elements and counts them and names them as belonging to it. Each element gathered and included in a presented multiple or situation (which could be the situation "England") is counted as one of its *own* elements (which as such is what distinguishes the national multiple of English citizens).'

His words: 'The situation is what presents the elements that constitute it ...'²⁹

Let's not beat about the bush: a situation is a 'set' and as such it can be historical, political, artistic or mathematical. He also says that it can even be a subjective situation.³⁰

Her words: 'A presented multiple — call it set or situation — undergoes an operation that structures it and makes it hold together such that it gains consistency, and resulting from this there is, in the very appearing of a *presented* multiple, a making-one of everything included. Everything included is fixed as one-of-the-multiple. Which is to say that everything included in a situation is subjected to the "count-for-one", the "count-as-one". However, no structure of a presented multiple is in a position to make-one of everything it includes; there will always be an uncountable infinity. Indeed, for the English situation, for whatever situation, there will always be a wandering excess.'

And with every situation there is what he calls the 'state' of the situation.

Alain Badiou: '... the state of the situation is what presents, not the situation's elements, but its subsets ... the situation is a form of presentation, the state of the situation is a form of representation.'³¹

And she puts it like this: 'The situation reckons and presents the elements belonging to it, and this is indeed how the situation gathers itself. However, there is another sense in which the situation gathers itself and this is to do with how it represents itself through ordering the elements reckoned as belonging to it. Now the state of the situation speaks of an existing state of affairs, but the more political sense of "state" can be emphasized. And if this is emphasized then it can be said that: the state of the situation is that which imposes places and laws in an attempt to hold at bay the wandering of an excess.'

And he posits that every situation is accompanied by a language, and by language he means a capacity to 'name' elements and their relations, qualities and properties. Indeed, the language of the situation is the prag-

matic (his word) possibility of naming the elements that compose a situation.³²

Alain Badiou: 'In *L'Être et l'événement*, I suggest that in every situation, there is an encyclopaedia of knowledges, linked to a language of the situation.'³³

The event, however, is a matter of something else with respect to the situation's encyclopaedia. And it is a matter of something else because the event is that which can't be calculated or named by the situation's language. It is a matter of something else, but in being 'unnameable' the event is what, for the situation, counts as nothing. And he says that this is why he has always said that an event was a breakdown of the count.

Alain Badiou: 'It's also why ... we can equally say, of an event, that it is what demonstrates what is impossible for the count ...'³⁴

An event befalls but in its befalling it greets no name, which means it falls outside of what can be recognized and ordered by the state of the situation. For sure, an event is always immanent to a situation — yes, an event has a site — but does not belong to it. An event has a site but this site is never quite brought within the shelter of a presented multiple. Now, a presented multiple — a situation — can be thought of as a sheltered set, which implies doors can be closed and windows shut; but a set never obtains complete and utter closure. There will always be a 'somewhere' where the set remains open, minimally protected. Yes, there will always be a somewhere that is least covered by the shelter that the general regime of the situations offers. The least covered: a *dis-sheltering* we might say.³⁵ And this somewhere, which is indeed the beyond-the-law of the state of a situation, is the event site.

Alain Badiou: 'In a situation (in a set), it is like a point of exile where *it is possible* that something, finally, might happen.'³⁶

An event befalls and, for the situation in which it happens, it is unnameable; however, he insists that it is not so in itself. That an event greets no name does not mean it is something whereof we must remain silent. For sure, the event demonstrates that something is exhausted in the protocol of nomination of the situation for which it is an event. But he insists that the unnameable is not to be kept at arm's length from thought. A name has to be invented, which is to say we must not be content to say of the event that it is ineffable, enigmatic or, indeed, a horror.³⁷

And then she says: 'When something properly incalculable happens to me will I be moved to invent a name? Will I hear an insistence?'

And then quickly: 'But a name is not going to fall from the sky.'

To invent a name requires a labour, a perseverance, a sustained investigation of the situation in which the event befalls. And this labour, this perseverance, is what speaks of a fidelity (his word) to the event.³⁸ And the labour of naming the event is what Alain Badiou calls *intervention on* the event, and he says that this intervention is what calls for, in the widest sense of the term, a militant thinking.³⁹ Oh yes, a militant thinking is what demonstrates a fidelity to the vanished event.

To name an event requires invention, and invention because the naming of an event is subtracted from all the forms of naming that prevail within the situation for which an event happens.⁴⁰ And that an event can neither be named nor represented means that naming the event will bring into play an additional name and, moreover, this will not lack consequence with respect to the situation it supplements.

It is in an aftermath that nomination of an event takes place. Perhaps it will never take place; or, perhaps it will take a long time to take place. Oh yes, the naming of an event can remain undecided for a long time; indeed, for a long time the only name an event may receive is that of 'event'.

Alain Badiou: 'I'm very struck by the fact that today everyone says "the events of May 1968", but if we say that the event has "event" as its name, it means we haven't yet found its name.'⁴¹

And is there an event that you are holding out for? Is there an event that you are trying to name?

Is there?

Will there be?

But wait, no one can say that an event is going to happen. But then, even when it happens the evanescent event makes it hard to say that it is happening, makes it hard to ask *Is it happening?* Subtracting itself from *being* as it happens, all that can be said of the event is that it will have happened. It is only by remaining faithful to the vanished event and intervening to name it that the event can be declared to have existed at all.

The evanescent event disappears as it appears, and in that disappearance there is a sounding for the intervention of naming. Perhaps they do not hear. Perhaps they don't care to listen. Maybe she hears. Maybe he hears. Maybe they both hear an insistence. And if naming is risked then — at least for Alain Badiou — this intervention will be what serves as: 'the point of departure for truth procedures'.⁴²

5) The *origination of truth*, which means that if there is no event then there can be no truth.

Alain Badiou: ‘... in the beginning, in the situation, if no event supplements it there is no truth.’⁴³

Truth comes about only by way of an event, and having such an eventful origin means that truth’s occasion is, as with the event itself, a singularity. Every truth is singular, which is to say that truths are plural, heterogeneous, multiple.

The event gives beginning to truth but, categorically speaking, truth is a subtraction of presence. With a truth, as well as with the Truth of truth, there isn’t a Something. No dazzling, blinding, sun. No one sun. No presence. No absence of presence. No presence of absence. Oh yes, the truth that Alain Badiou sounds is a truth, a category of truth, that is subtracted from all that which is presumed under the name of substance.⁴⁴ The truth that eventfully begins isn’t a Something and it isn’t such a thing because this event-thinker thinks of truth — *a* truth — as: (chance) trajectory, (risky) path, (hazardous) passage, (random) course, (a) process, (an) advent, (an) operation, (an) activity.

Alain Badiou: ‘A truth is action and not presence.’⁴⁵

By grace — the event — we are given a chance of truth and a chance of truth is the chance of being a little bit more than living individuals pursuing our ordinary interests. A truth comes about, advances, when that little bit more happens. And the happening of that little bit more is what makes the more-than-ordinary, the out-of-the-ordinary. In short, the extraordinary. Truth is the commencement of a break from the ordinary and the encyclopaedia of knowledges linked to a situation.

And he says: ‘... every truth is the end of memory, the unfolding of a commencement.’⁴⁶

Not a recommencement but a commencement, and commencement is when there is beginning, absolutely new. And his want is to conceptualize such beginning — and this is where his notion of truth blossoms.⁴⁷

He says that truth is the unfolding of a commencement, but he also says that truth is not a revelation.⁴⁸ No revelation: no veiling, no withdrawal, no concealment. Which is to say that the unfolding of a commencement is not the unfolding of a Something that has been waiting, in hiding, to shine. Or, if there is to be talk of unveiling this can only be in so far as the unveiling would be that of truth itself and not of anything else.

You say, Alain Badiou, that the idea of truth is central. You haven't given up on truth although, as you readily admit, yours is a reformulated notion.⁴⁹

—'I would add that, personally, I have always conceived truth as a random course or as a kind of escapade, posterior to the event and free of any external law ...'⁵⁰

And with his reformulated notion of truth you can hear it said that truth is *without an object*. The object is a category of knowledge, but — he insists — truth is not knowledge. Truth is without an object and, what is more, there is no objective truth.⁵¹

His words: '... the lack of object is a result of truth's being a process of making holes in what constitutes knowledge, rather than a process of unfolding.'⁵²

A process of making holes in knowledge; or, in other words, a process of subtraction. Truth makes holes in knowledge because a truth is, in his words: subtracted from all exact designations.⁵³

And when subtraction advances will you run?

For the moment, she's not running.

Her words: 'By grace the event breaks and although it *is* to disappear this chance opens the break for the new to run its precarious course of emergence. And this is the chance of a break from the ordinary. A real break is that from which there is commencement — that is to say, beginning, beginning of the new, a flower to bloom. And commencement is where truth's process of making a hole begins. What is the new if not the commencement of that which makes a hole in the known? Oh yes, the emergence of the new, the absolutely new is, equally, the emergence of a breach in the field of the known. Yes, the hole-making process of truth's path is a break coursing through the known of a situation. For the new to proceed in a given situation — and the new is only so with respect to the situation — there is also for the situation — even though it may not clock it at the time — the coming of the not-known. Every truth, every truth-process, is this advent.'

When there is commencement within a situation it is hard to say exactly what it *is* that is commencing, and it is hard to say because a breach or hole is being made in the known and cognition is being obliterated (his word).⁵⁴ Indeed, when novelty is *en route* who can tell exactly what is *en route*? Hard to say, yes; but what she can say is that the *is* that is emerging

will be, like everything else that *is*, multiple. Moreover, what she can say is that this multiple will be indiscernible for the situation.

(And what she can add here — although she readily admits she is risking a huge simplification and that much can be added here — is that the indiscernible, which has no definable qualities, is what defines, for Alain Badiou, following the mathematician Paul Cohen, the generic.)⁵⁵

We can speak of a truth's path as a break coursing through the known of a given situation, but what must be continually stressed is that this break is always *immanent* to the situation.

Alain Badiou: 'Now I am absolutely an immanentist — I am convinced that if there is truth, it isn't something transcendent, it's *in* the situation ...'⁵⁶

A truth is an immanent break *in* a given situation and the course or trajectory of this break is the emergence of possibilities hitherto unknown. You could say that this is the emergence of what you thought yourself incapable of. What the immanent break opens — dare she say emancipates? — is the possibility of an impossibility or, to be more precise, what the situation doesn't reckon and dismisses as an impossibility. For sure, not everything is possible — dream on — but in the course of an *immanent break* the possibility of the 'impossible' can come.

Is this not what came to Barbara McClintock as a single grain of corn made her laugh?

And she says: 'Give me a break.'

By chance it may come, and if it does come there will arrive the not-known. And the advent of the not-known is what comes with a real creation, and this is what a truth is — it really is a creation. But it must be said, again, that with the coming of this creation nobody can say exactly what it *is*. And this, for him, is an essential point. Nobody is in a position to say that they know the truth. And nobody can say that they know the truth because there can be no knowledge of truth.⁵⁷ In the becoming of a truth nobody knows how it is to be discerned and known.

Alain Badiou: 'And if a truth is indiscernible, it is not at all so with respect to other truths ... but with respect to the resources of discernment proper to the situation in which it originates. For were a truth discernible by the means of these resources, then, in this situation, it would be neither a creation nor a chance.'⁵⁸

When the passage of a truth is *en route* and a (chance) break is traversing the situation nobody can say for certain what it will be — it will

be indiscernible. Or more correctly put: *it will have been* indiscernible (his words).⁵⁹ And this is so because what is happening here is a passage into the future, and those who remain faithful to this passage — those who maintain a fidelity to the event and the real break it instigates — are those who support the future anterior of the situation. The evanescent event is what gives the (empty?) basis for a truth, for a new beginning, and such a beginning — which he insists does require a theory of the void — can be known neither in advance nor while it is happening. Only retrospectively can it be said to have happened.

It will have been indiscernible: perhaps this is what he calls ‘a duration peculiar to the not-known’.⁶⁰ Which begs the question: what happens to time with Alain Badiou’s notion of truth?

Time, as you would expect him to say, is not One. Time is multiple, and with a situation it is always a matter of *this* time. A situation exerts a measure and reckons its elements and so doing measures and makes its time, but this time is not the truth of the situation.

He insists: ‘A truth is what within time exceeds time.’⁶¹

Originating in an evanescent event, a truth-process is the commencement of a subtraction from the known of a given situation. The commencement of this subtraction is the advent of the not-known, which is what exceeds the known and cognitive abilities of a situation, of a *time*. And what within time exceeds time is the course of this subtraction, this immanent break. Yes, this course, passage or path, is what constitutes a breach in the time of a situation. And as this breaching takes place and traverses — remember it is a process — there comes the duration peculiar to the not-known.

And what are we exposed to in this duration?

He doesn’t beat about the bush: an interruption.

He doesn’t agree that time has always put the notion of truth into crisis. He doesn’t think time is truth itself. Oh no, he thinks — and insists — that a truth is always the undoing of time.

His words: ‘A truth is always the undoing of time, just as a revolution is the end of an epoch. It is therefore essential for me that truth be thought, not as time or as the intemporal being of time, but as *interruption*.’⁶²

And this interruption is the interval (dare she say void?) wherein truth has forgotten time. Oh yes, he says that truth is forgetful; and he also says it is even the forgetting of forgetting, which is what makes the interruption, in his words, *radical*.

He says: 'And this forgetting is not the simple forgetting of this or that, but the forgetting of time itself: the moment when we live as if time (*this* time) had never existed, or, in conformity with the profound maxim of Aristotle, as if we were immortal — for the common being of all time is death. This, to my mind, is the real experience of (political) revolutions, (amorous) passions, (scientific) inventions and (artistic) creations. It is in this abolition of time that is engendered the eternity of truth.'⁶³

A truth is the undoing of time and this undoing or interruption is what you and I can experience in those chance breaks whereby there breaks, in a situation, a commencement with which comes the effects of the not-known. And this is when she would say, 'It takes my breath away.' Yes, a truth's undoing of time is the instant of her breath being taken away and her saying, 'I am blown away.'

The first time ever I saw your face ... and even still, now.

Her breath may be taken away, she may be blown away, but she does not mortally die. She does not die even if she is saying she will die from this feeling of love. And she does not die because she is given, by truth's undoing of time, an instant of eternity (his words). And this instant, which truly is immeasurable, is when she exists as if she were immortal.

She is no god; she never will be. But existing as if *this* time never existed perhaps she is given the chance to think.

And she says: 'The immortal is when we are given that chance of being a little bit more than living, mortal individuals pursuing our ordinary interests. This little bit more is an excess beyond our lives and living situations: it is what exceeds us and that which, perhaps, we think ourselves incapable of. This little bit more is what gives us the chance to exceed ourselves. Yes, it is what gives us the chance to become new compositions, which everyone can become but which will only be utterable in some future time. The immortal is, in a sense, that little bit more passing through us. But it has to be said that with this little bit there isn't something as such.'

And I say: 'It would seem that the immortal is unlawful in that the interruption that it *is* is also the interruption and suspension of the laws of ordering that the state of a situation imposes upon a situation.'

And she says: 'You could say that the immortal, as unlawful, is the limitless horizon of possibilities.'

And he says: '... the path of a truth is not constrained, but risky.'⁶⁴

And I say: 'Truth will be the undoing of me.'

And all this, the distant effects of an evanescent event.

But wait, it needs to be added here that what is integral to a truth-process is a fidelity. Oh yes, what in fact enables a truth-process to pass along its course is the faithfulness of those — militant thinkers and lovers — who persevere in the naming of the vanished event. Indeed, it is only by remaining faithful to the vanished event and intervening to name it that an evanescent event can be said to have existed at all. And intervening to name an event, which may not happen overnight, is what for Alain Badiou serves as point of departure for a truth-process.

Is there a vanished event that you are trying to name?

She says she has called it the ‘twittering-tree’. But then she says that these words perhaps are inadequate for what was happening there, then.

For sure, it was no political revolution, no scientific invention.

An artistic creation?

Perhaps you could say that.

An example of love?

Perhaps a love between little brown birds and a tree. Perhaps a love between them and me. Perhaps as yet I haven’t clearly perceived what was at stake in that evanescent event, that *performance*. However, I can say that it *did* happen, and I’ll stick to that. And my sticking to that — well, why not call it a fidelity?

And, so I hear, someone’s fidelity is intrinsic to a truth-process. Oh yes, this someone (his word) and this fidelity is what acts as the material support for a truth-process; it is what, literally, bears the process — it is a participation that, in his words, enables the passing of a truth along its path.⁶⁵

The production of a truth is inseparable from a fidelity, and what a fidelity carries is, simply put, the not-known. Not simply the not-known but, rather, the not-known with respect to a given situation. What a fidelity bears is the hole-boring process, and it bears this process without knowing what the destiny might be. Oh yes, what a fidelity does is to remain faithful to the (future) consequences of — the distant effects of — a chance break that, by chance, an event gives.

Blind faith?

Perhaps. Perhaps the fidelity that a truth-process involves is something of the order of love. Isn’t a fidelity maintained by an intensity that knows no better name than love?

A fidelity, even in a political situation, may indeed be of the order of love, but a truth, and the commencement it is, can only advance in a

situation by the activity (his word) of someone's fidelity. The activity is, in a sense, what the commencement is made of.

And what does the activity involve?

An ordeal, no other words for it.

And it is an ordeal because the activity of someone's fidelity is that of becoming the material support for that which is in excess of the language and state of a given situation. And perhaps it is only something akin to love that can endure such an ordeal.

(Keep going, keep going.)

A fidelity is an ordeal for it involves the activity of thinking, bit by bit, and linking, bit by bit, the known via the not-known. Yes, it is a matter of moving about the situation and thinking the relation — more precisely, the un-relation — between a state of knowledge, more or less fixed, and the advent of the not-known, which is what comes with the hazardous emergence of a creation. Indeed, it is the labour of this 'bit-by-bit' thinking and linking that allows a truth to advene. A labour, an ordeal — yes; but this activity is also an adventure: by bearing the ordeal of thinking the known of a situation by way of the not-known, someone's fidelity explores the situation with respect to what the situation does not reckon and dismisses as an impossibility.

A truth is what a fidelity gathers together — bit by bit — and produces as someone (which can be someones) thinks the known of a situation by way of the not-known. For sure, this 'bit by bit' is a procedure, a laborious procedure — and time and time again you will hear him speak of this as an *infinite* procedure — but it is absolutely fundamental to the making of a truth. Which is to say, again, a truth is inseparable from the fidelity and procedure that bears its becoming.

He insists: 'I shall call "truth" (*a* truth) the real process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity *produces* in the situation.'⁶⁶

Her words: 'Didn't Barbara McClintock bear the ordeal of a fidelity as she persisted with those singular grains of corn?'

(Is it not a fidelity that will make this book become finished?)

A fidelity has no guiding star to follow, no beacon that leads it through the night — the flash of an evanescent event has gone. Only the fidelity remains, but what emerges with this is what he calls a subject.

Alain Badiou: 'I call "subject" the bearer of a fidelity, the one who bears a process of truth.'⁶⁷

A subject is not something that I can take as given; it is not something that I am but, rather, something that I become *through* a fidelity. The passing of a truth along its path is, in itself, nothing but a becoming and with this becoming there is also, for the someone or someones who enable the process, a becoming-subject (his words).

A fidelity is, in his words: 'to enter into the composing of a subject'.⁶⁸

Someone, and everything *this* is capable of, enters into the composition of a subject, and this subject in no way pre-exists the process.⁶⁹ Absolutely non-existent in the situation before the process proceeds, the subject you will hear him speak about is in no way a general human, or psychological, subject.

His words: 'There is not, in fact, one single Subject, but as many subjects as there are truths ...'⁷⁰

The subject that becomes through a fidelity to an amorous encounter is a subject of love that *both* the lovers enter into the composition of. *In* love, both the lovers are *in* the becoming of a subject and, what is more, this subject exceeds them both. Or again, the subject of an art-process is not the artist; the subjects are the works of art themselves. She, as artist, enters into the composition of these subjects without these becoming reducible to 'her'.⁷¹

Becoming a subject is born of a fidelity and a fidelity is a matter of being seized. Oh yes, with a fidelity we are seized and we let ourselves be seized. And — yes — doesn't this seizing have, even in the field of politics, all the intensity of love?

Did she not let herself be seized by the event she has named the twittering-tree?

To be seized is something that happens to you.

He insists: 'To enter into the composition of a subject of truth can only be something that *happens to you*.'⁷²

Her words: 'And what happens to you is of the order of an encounter that brings a "sudden feeling", a feeling of being affected by feeling, a feeling that you have been "gotten hold of". It is not a duty that holds your fidelity, rather it is that feeling of being "gotten hold of". The feeling of being seized is the *hold* of a fidelity. And anyone can be seized. Anyone can be seized by a truth-process.'

Was not Barbara McClintock seized by a fidelity? What else were those long years of study but her faithfulness (mad woman they said) to the singularity of grains of corn? She did not know exactly what had gotten

hold of her, until one day she laughed and thereupon affirmed the unexpected.

When the properly incalculable happens to you, how can you not feel that you have been seized by something in excess of yourself? At least once in your life-time you must have felt this. But then, it can happen at any time to anyone.

Yes, he is most insistent that: 'a truth, in its invention, is the only thing that is for *all* ...'⁷³

You're a mortal individual pursuing your ordinary interests and then by chance something happens to you. It seizes you and in that moment, which is nothing but truth's undoing of time, you let the not-known, the incalculable, seize you. Astonished? Perhaps. Perhaps inexplicable tears. What can you say? However, what you can say — what he says — is that you are being seized and punctured (his word) by something in excess of your ordinary living situation. It could be an amorous encounter. It could be something in a photographic image that is nonspecifiable. It could be, as he says, the sudden feeling that this poem is addressed to you; or it could be, as again he says, a scientific theory whose initially obscure beauty overwhelms you.⁷⁴ Perhaps it is over in a flash; nonetheless, you are seized and this means you cannot continue as if nothing has happened, as if nothing consequently will happen. And this is where — for the sake of those future consequences — a fidelity takes hold and bores through you. And this is where for you there is a 'piercing through'.⁷⁵ And this piercing through is what calls us to become — for the sake of something new to happen — the subject of a truth-process.

Alain Badiou: 'We might say that the process of truth *induces* a subject.'⁷⁶

A fidelity is something that bores through you; something has gotten hold of you though you can't say exactly what it is, but your fidelity is called for and in that calling you are called upon — *convoked* as he would say — to enter into the composition of a subject, to *become* a subject. You are called upon but this calling does not come from on high.

He insists: 'It is we ourselves, as ourselves, who expose ourselves to the becoming-subject.'⁷⁷

Simply put, it is *self-subjectivization*.

Becoming the subject of a truth-process she does not know exactly what will result; nonetheless she holds out for the future consequences. She continues with *this* that is boring through her. She continues to think, bit by

bit, and link, bit by bit, the known by way of the not-known. She continues, and the only maxim of her fidelity is: *Continuez!*⁷⁸

In other words, keep going.

And this is what Barbara McClintock did.

But of course, the lovers may break up. Weariness may make your fidelity waver.

For now, however, you haven't given up. You keep going and say, 'There is still more to say.'

Can you bear it?

Can you bear to hear that in becoming a subject of truth a break will course through you and interrupt you? Would you bear a break passing through the known multiple that you are and persevere in being?

Could you bear to be broken?

The known multiple you are, and your perseverance in being that, will be broken, but this rent is nothing other than the effects of the not-known passing through you.

Can you, truly, bear that? But you do, at least sometimes. Sometimes you do let yourself be seized by the not-known and the duration peculiar to it. But, for sure, this duration, which is the undoing of the time of your situation, will interrupt your being.

But he insists: 'Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you.'⁷⁹

(Broken or, in other words, disjoined — hasn't she heard something like this before?)

You are broken yet you are seizing what has broken you. And in that act you are yourself, nothing other than yourself, but you are, simultaneously, *in excess* of yourself. And what is more, you are having to think. Yes, you are thinking. Indeed, what else is the seizing of what has broken you but the ordeal of examining the known from the perspective of the not-known?

Yes, this is the question boring through you: How will I link the things I know, in a consistent fashion, via the effects of being seized by the not-known?⁸⁰

And you need not be a 'great' thinker to ask this, to *do* this. And you *do* do this, and maybe in doing this you find yourself asking — what will become of me?

His words: 'To belong to the situation is everyone's natural destiny, but to belong to the composition of a subject of truth concerns a particular

route, a sustained break, and it is very difficult to know how this composition is to be superimposed upon or combined with the simple perseverance-of-self.⁸¹

Difficult, perhaps; but his insistence is: 'do not give up on that part of yourself that you do not know.'⁸²

Do not give up on that which is in excess of the known multiple-being that you are; and to not give up is to continue to expose yourself — myself — to what in time exceeds time. For sure, as a result I will be suspended (his word) but this is so because my perseverance is pouring itself into future consequences — *it will have happened*.

Supporting the future anterior of a situation, which could be a political, scientific, artistic or subjective situation, there is no denying that truth's forgetting of time will pass through you. Yet in this forgetting I live as if *this* time has never existed.

Her words: 'Through remaining faithful to an immanent break there is for me and you the chance to exceed our being, and this, for me, is what becoming-subject really entails. I cannot think it any other way: becoming-subject is becoming a subject who does not give up on *becoming*.'

His words: 'It is clear that under the effects of a loving encounter, if I want to be *really* faithful to it, I must completely rework my ordinary way of "living" my situation.'⁸³

Her words: 'If I want to be faithful to that which in a photograph has seized and bewildered me then I must at least practise photography in a different manner. If I want to be really faithful to a body of writing that has riven me then I can't continue to write — and read — as if nothing has happened. Becoming-subject is nothing other than becoming a subject that does not give up on exceeding its being.'

Exposing ourselves to a subject-becoming is an act of self-subjectivization, and what we expose ourselves to in this act is something in excess of ourselves. Moreover, this act and this exposure is what makes us become, in his words, an immortal. And whether or not one favours this word 'immortal', what is at stake with it is the putting to end of consensus, which is what every emergence of hitherto unknown possibilities does.

His words: 'How, indeed, could the incalculable novelty of a truth, and the hole that it bores in established knowledges, be inscribed in a situation without encountering resolute opposition?'⁸⁴

Dominant opinions always work for the benefit of some rather than all; and because a truth is the only thing that is there for *all*, is it any wonder

that these few should be against the possibility of something new, something ‘impossible’, happening? Indeed, what is at stake is — dare she say again? — an emancipatory project. But this is not the emancipation of beings that can be *identified*.⁸⁵ Rather — and here she is risking simplification — the emancipation consists in making possible that which is deemed impossible by a given situation. And if we evaluate the situation from this ‘impossible’ position there is the chance that we will demonstrate what the situation doesn’t give shelter to in its reckoning and gathering of itself.

The numbering — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 — is now to stop, but as it stops here there is a question that is pressing to be asked, which is: how is a truth-process to end?

She says: ‘A truth-process has no *telos*, no teleology, which is to say that a truth-process is not about a true world to come. For Alain Badiou, it would be disastrous to think this is so. There is no teleology — no one has been promised anything. But an incalculable future is there in the making, and it will have been indiscernible.’

And I say: ‘A truth-process is what interrupts the status quo and, in a sense, this interruption, as the forgetting of *this* time, is “eternal”. However, by interrupting the status quo a truth-process indicates, in more ways than one, what *this* time of *this* situation is really made of. Indeed, you could say that it offers the truth of a situation. But — be warned — this truth will never be a total truth, and this is so because truth doesn’t have a total power.’

There is much that can be added here, but it is indeed too much to be added; it could never be added here. But what she can add is that, for all his philosophical disputations, particularly in relation to the question of what constitutes an event, this Alain Badiou is a thinker whose ‘care and passion’ — as Michel Serres would say — is the possible.⁸⁶

This is his insistence: ‘The possibility of the impossible, which is exposed by every loving encounter, every scientific re-foundation, every artistic invention and every sequence of emancipatory politics, is the sole principle ... of an ethic of truths.’⁸⁷

And again: ‘... it’s an immense task to try to propose a few possibilities, in the plural, a few possibilities other than what we are told is possible. It is a matter of showing how the space of the possible is larger than the one we are assigned — that something else is possible, but not that everything is possible.’⁸⁸

In our bleak world not everything is possible, but something else is possible, though Alain Badiou does not set out to say what is possible — he is no prophet.

And I say: ‘And he really is no prophet because the event he sounds and the truth he sounds do not sing of the already given. For sure, he insists that everything that *is* is in a given situation. What *is* is situated and he insists upon this so as to avert the inscription of a place where transcendent gods rule the future and make irrefutable decisions as to who will be given what. But for *new* compositions (of being) to happen, something must happen that is not pre-given. And this happening is what the evanescent event gives and this is the gift that a fidelity carries. But this gift is no possession. There is no fancy paper to remove so as to unwrap and reveal a present. And this is so because with the evanescent event — whose very being *is* to disappear — what is given is subtraction. Subtraction from being. A peculiar gift: nothing is given. But what can come from this, the escapade that may ensue, is a composition that begins without being given beforehand. No pre-given subject. No pre-given truth. No pre-given new composition.’

In event and in truth, his is a song of subtraction. It may or may not be music to your ears, but what it sounds is the un-pre-given.

And that, possibly, is a note to end on.

Epilogue

She says that we must end. I agree, say the same thing, but add the question of what note to end upon. She says that music always ends upon a note or several played at once and I say that such notes do not always sound like a sweet home-coming to the ear.

She again says that we must end but quickly adds:

'Can we say, finally, that it did happen?'

And I say:

'Can't say a classic whodunit happened. That never did quite happen. Can't say a rollicking yarn happened. No winged horses. No flashing of blades drawn in battle. But there have been escapades; there have been episodes; there have been encounters — perhaps nothing but encounters.'

And she says that with these episodes and encounters she has heard a variety of events.

'Hasn't a variety of events been said of the photographic image?'

She says a variety of events and I say a variety of definitions and conceptions.

And almost together we add:

'And a variety of consequences following on from what is said to constitute an event.'

And then she says:

'For sure, the events have not always had things in common, yet sounding them, listening to them, what can be heard are certain things being put into question, such as: — A certain present moment — A subject

that is certain it is standing there before an event befalls — A creator that sits above its creations — A sentence that ranks the predicate as secondary — A noun that speaks of a substance that considers itself primary in relation to a verb — A movement that has to stop in order to start — The outline of an object — The certitude of what stands and falls as an object — The rosy red apple in the bowl on the kitchen table. And yes, the question itself.’

I ask if these are the notes upon which we are to end.

And she adds:

‘But there could be other notes.’

I say:

‘The pitter-patter of self-constituting processes.’

She says:

‘The quiet thundering of a fidelity faithful to a future that isn’t neutralized before it happens.’

I say:

‘The murmuring of a wandering excess.’

She says:

‘The cry of a slaughtered cat.’

I say:

‘The noise of a world perturbing itself.’

She says:

‘The tinkling of words agitated and restless.’

We pause, take breath.

And then I say that a lot of questions have been sounded, and she adds that they will not end as we end.

‘In many respects the questions are only just beginning. Indeed, isn’t it in its resonance that a question really begins?’

She says that a question resonates when little bells go off and I say that such bells are going off now.

And then a voice quickly adds:

‘But at this end it’s not so easy to innocently say — *now*.’

Notes

1

A difficult beginning

1 See Yve Lomax, 'Serious Words', *Writing the Image: An Adventure with Art and Theory* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

2 Isabelle Stengers, 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', *Power and Invention: Situating Science*, trans. Paul Bains, foreword by Bruno Latour, *Theory out of Bounds*, Vol 10 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p 136.

2

A twittering noise

1 See Michel Serres, *Genesis*, trans. Geneviève James and James Nielson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995) p 130; see also Michel Serres, 'The Origin of Language: Biology, Information Theory, and Thermodynamics', *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, eds Josué V. Harari and David Bell (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) p 83.

2 Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and

William Paulson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995) p 3.

3 See *Genesis*, pp 2–8.

4 *Ibid.*, p 4.

5 *Ibid.*, p 12.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p 13.

8 *Ibid.*, p 6.

9 *The Natural Contract*, p 7.

10 *Ibid.*, p 8.

11 *Ibid.*, p 9.

12 *Genesis*, p 7.

13 *Ibid.*, p 6.

14 Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) p 107.

15 *Genesis*, p 61.

16 *Ibid.*, p 22.

17 *Ibid.*, p 62.

18 *Ibid.*, p 67.

19 *Ibid.*, p 101.

20 *Ibid.*, p 60.

21 *Ibid.*, p 61.

22 See *ibid.*, p 72.

23 *Ibid.*, p 34.

24 *Ibid.*, p 132.

25 *Ibid.*, p 24.

26 *Ibid.*, p 134.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, p 101.

- 29 See *ibid.*, p 99.
 30 *Ibid.*, p 76.
 31 *Ibid.*, p 132.
 32 *Ibid.*, pp 66–7.
 33 *Ibid.*, p 2.
 34 *Ibid.*, p 67.
 35 *Ibid.*, p 123.
 36 *Ibid.*, pp 68–9.
 37 See Serres, 'Lucretius: Science and Religion', *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*.
 38 *Genesis*, p 24.
 39 *Ibid.*, p 117.
 40 *Ibid.*, p 119.
 41 *Ibid.*, p 117.
 42 *Ibid.*, p 120.
 43 *Ibid.*, p 97.
 44 *Ibid.*, p 41.
 45 *Ibid.*, p 110.

3

A single grain of corn and a song of immanence

- 1 Isabelle Stengers, 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', *Power and Invention: Situating Science*, trans. Paul Bains, foreword by Bruno Latour, Theory out of Bounds, Vol 10 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) pp 146–7.
 2 Stengers, 'Complexity: A Fad?', *Power and Invention*, p 19.
 3 Stengers, 'Black Boxes; or, Is Psychoanalysis a Science?', *Power and Invention*, p 85.
 4 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', p 144.
 5 Stengers, 'Who Is the Author?', *Power and Invention*, p 163.
 6 'Black Boxes; or, Is Psychoanalysis a Science?', p 99.
 7 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', p 145.
 8 'Complexity: A Fad?', p 9.
 9 'Who Is the Author?', p 163.
 10 *Ibid.*
 11 *Ibid.*, p 164.
 12 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', p 141.
 13 Stengers, 'Is There a Women's Science?', *Power and Invention*, p 126;

also published as foreword to the French edition of Evelyn Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1983).

- 14 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', p 137.
 15 *Ibid.*
 16 'Is There a Women's Science?', p 127.
 17 *Ibid.*, p 123, p 127.
 18 Stengers, 'Of Paradigms and Puzzles', *Power and Invention*, p 115.
 19 *Ibid.*, p 112.
 20 'Is There a Women's Science?', p 125.
 21 'Of Paradigms and Puzzles', p 114.
 22 'Black Boxes; or, Is Psychoanalysis a Science', pp 83–4.
 23 'Is There a Women's Science?', pp 127–8.
 24 *Ibid.*, p 128.
 25 *Ibid.*, p 127.
 26 *Ibid.*
 27 *Ibid.*, p 130.
 28 'Black Boxes; or, Is Psychoanalysis a Science?', p 88.
 29 *Ibid.*, p 87.
 30 'Of Paradigms and Puzzles', p 116.
 31 'The Thousand and One Sexes of Science', p 146.
 32 *Ibid.*, p 148.
 33 *Ibid.*
 34 *Ibid.*
 35 *Ibid.*
 36 'Who Is the Author?', p 172.
 37 Stengers (with Ilya Prigogine), 'The Reenchantment of the World', *Power and Invention*, p 58.

4

A passage of time and a present moment that doesn't easily slip by

- 1 Here I am referring to Alfred North Whitehead's *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995); first published in 1920.
 2 See *ibid.*, p 58.
 3 See *ibid.*, p 167, p 185.
 4 *Ibid.*, p 33.

- 5 See *ibid.*, p 185.
- 6 See *ibid.*, p 166.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p 74.
- 8 See *ibid.*, p 75.
- 9 See *ibid.*, p 54.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p 24.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p 59.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p 78.
- 13 See *ibid.*, p 52.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p 186.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.107.
- 16 See *ibid.*, p 108.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p 53.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p 34.
- 19 See *ibid.*, p 56.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p 186.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p 69.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p 59.
- 23 See *ibid.*, p 72.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p 73.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p 72.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 See *ibid.*, p 65.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p 172.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p 173.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p 169.
- 31 See *ibid.*, p 171, p 190.
- 32 See *ibid.*, p 135.
- 33 See *ibid.*, p 163.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p 19.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p 18.
- 36 See Donald Davidson, 'The Individuation of Events', in *Contemporary Readings in the Foundation of Metaphysics*, eds Stephen Laurence and Cynthia MacDonald (Oxford and Malden, MA: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp 302–3.
- 37 See *ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Ibid.*, p 304.

5

Listening to it happen

- 1 See Jean-François Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) p 18.
- 2 See Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', *The*

- Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1998) p 197.
- 3 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Time Today', *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) p 65.
 - 4 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Newman: The Instant', trans. David Macey, *The Lyotard Reader*, p 243.
 - 5 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p 79 (Nos 131–2).
 - 6 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', p 197.
 - 7 See 'Time Today', p 74.
 - 8 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', p 197.
 - 9 'Time Today', p 59.
 - 10 See *The Differend*, p 73 (Aristotle Notice 2).
 - 11 See *ibid.*, p 74 (Aristotle Notice 2).
 - 12 See *ibid.*
 - 13 See 'Time Today', p 59.
 - 14 *Ibid.*
 - 15 See *The Differend*, p 75 (Aristotle Notice 3.1).
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p 116 (No 173).
 - 17 'Time Today', p 73.
 - 18 *The Differend*, p 75 (Aristotle Notice 3.4).
 - 19 *Ibid.*
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p 181 (No 264).
 - 21 See *ibid.*, p 80 (Nos 135–6).
 - 22 See *ibid.*, p xii.
 - 23 Translators have differed on how to translate *phrase*. In French a *phrase* is a sentence, but in English a *phrase* has a more incomplete ring to it. Following Van Den Abbeele (see Glossary, *The Differend*, p 194) I take *phrase* to be more than a grammatical entity. To say something — *to put into phrases* — is to do something that is not necessarily a linguistic operation; for example, staying silent is saying something.
 - 24 See *The Differend*, p 74 (Aristotle Notice 2).

- 25 Ibid., p 77 (No 124).
- 26 Ibid., p 151 (No 218).
- 27 See *ibid.*, p 66 (No 102).
- 28 See *ibid.*, p 84 (Nos 147–8).
- 29 *The Differend*, p xi.
- 30 See *ibid.*, p 138 (No 190).
- 31 See *ibid.*, p 141 (No 200).
- 32 Ibid., p xvi.
- 33 'Time Today', pp 65–6.
- 34 See *The Differend*, p 181 (No 263).
- 35 See *ibid.*, p xvi.
- 36 See 'Time Today', p 76.
- 37 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982–1985*, trans. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (London: Turnaround, 1992) p 112.
- 38 See *ibid.*, p 106.
- 39 'Time Today', p 74.
- 40 See *The Differend*, p 140 (No 197).
- 41 *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p 106.
- 42 'Newman: The Instant', p 243.

6

An impossible refrain

- 1 See Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1992) pp 35–6.
- 2 See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) p 75.
- 3 A reference to Maurice Blanchot's *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- 4 See *The Step Not Beyond*, p 5, p 7, p 59.
- 5 See *ibid.*, p 50.
- 6 A reference to *Le pas au-delà (The Step Not Beyond)*.
- 7 See *ibid.*, p 15.
- 8 Ibid., p 19.
- 9 See *ibid.*, p 1.
- 10 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) p 30.
- 11 *The Infinite Conversation*, p 44.

- 12 *The Step Not Beyond*, p 129.
- 13 Quoted from Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) p 177.
- 14 *The Infinite Conversation*, p 121.
- 15 *The Writing of the Disaster*, p 14.
- 16 See *The Space of Literature*, p 229.
- 17 *The Writing of the Disaster*, p 37.
- 18 *The Space of Literature*, pp 30–1.
- 19 See *ibid.*, p 31.
- 20 See *The Step Not Beyond*, p 84.
- 21 Ibid., p 15.
- 22 *The Infinite Conversation*, pp xviii–xix.
- 23 Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonos Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998) p 11.
- 24 Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Dialogue*, trans. Rosemarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987) p 23.
- 25 *The Step Not Beyond*, p 62.
- 26 *The Infinite Conversation*, p 207.
- 27 *The Writing of the Disaster*, p 138.
- 28 See *ibid.*, p 28.
- 29 See *The Infinite Conversation*, p 207.
- 30 Ibid., p 414.
- 31 See *ibid.*, p 119.
- 32 See Ann Smock, Translator's Introduction, *The Space of Literature*, p 11.

7

Dancing to the tune of the infinitive

- 1 Put simply, free indirect speech is a literary style where within indirect speech there is an indeterminacy between the speech and thinking of the narrator/reporter and the speech and thinking of the character or reported. Gilles Deleuze explored this style at length.
- 2 See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p 63.
- 3 See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles

- Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: The Athlone Press, 1990) pp 4–6.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 1993) p 54.
- 5 See *ibid.*, pp 52–3.
- 6 See *The Logic of Sense*, pp 4–5.
- 7 See *ibid.*, pp 5–7.
- 8 See *ibid.*, p 123.
- 9 See *ibid.*, pp 169–70.
- 10 See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) p 99.
- 11 See *The Logic of Sense*, p 21; see also *Cinema 1*, p 97.
- 12 See *Cinema 1*, pp 96–7.
- 13 See *The Fold*, p 53, pp 76–7.
- 14 See *Dialogues*, pp 63–4; see also *The Logic of Sense*, p 24.
- 15 See *The Logic of Sense*, p 184.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 See *Dialogues*, pp 63–4.
- 18 See *The Logic of Sense*, p 151.
- 19 See Gilles Deleuze, ‘Louis Wolfson; or, The Procedure’, *Gilles Deleuze: Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London and New York: Verso, 1998) p 10.
- 20 See *The Logic of Sense*, p 41.
- 21 See *ibid.*, p 9.
- 22 See *ibid.*, p 62, p 63.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p 158.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p 164.
- 25 See *ibid.*, p 11.
- 26 See *ibid.*, p 9.
- 27 See *ibid.*, p 1.
- 28 See *ibid.*, p 68–71.
- 29 See *ibid.*, p 35, p 100.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p 63.
- 31 See *ibid.*, p 162.
- 32 See *ibid.*, p 64.
- 33 See *Dialogues*, p 66.
- 34 *The Logic of Sense*, p 103.
- 35 See *ibid.*, p 166.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 *Ibid.*, p 181.

- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 See *ibid.*, p 185.
- 40 See *ibid.*, p 11.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p 167.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p 22.
- 43 See *ibid.*, p 33.
- 44 See *ibid.*, pp 149–50.
- 45 See Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p 141.

8

Echoes

- 1 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: The Athlone Press, 1990) p 136.
- 2 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London and New York: Verso, 1994).
- 3 See *ibid.*, p 111.
- 4 See *ibid.*, p 158, p 111.
- 5 See *ibid.*, p 156.
- 6 See *ibid.*, p 96.
- 7 See *ibid.*, p 158.
- 8 See *ibid.*, p 37.
- 9 See *ibid.*, p 59.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p 10.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p 6.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p 109.
- 13 See *ibid.*, pp 41–2.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p 111.
- 15 See *ibid.*, pp 28–9.
- 16 See *ibid.*, p 110.

9

Fortuity

- 1 See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill, Theory out of Bounds, Vol 16 (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) p 76; see also Alain Badiou, ‘Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque’, in *Gilles Deleuze and The Theatre of Philosophy*, eds Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p 56.

- 2 Here I am referring to Alain Badiou's *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, SUNY series, 1999) and also to his *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London and New York: Verso, 2002). *L'Être et l'événement* to be published in English as *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum Books).
- 3 Alain Badiou, 'Being by Numbers', interview with Lauren Sedofsky, *Art-form* (October 1994) p 87.
- 4 See *Ethics*, p 25, p 27; see also 'Being by Numbers', p 86.
- 5 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 103.
- 6 See *Ethics*, p 25.
- 7 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 106; Badiou elaborates upon *le compte-pour-un* in *L'Être et l'événement*.
- 8 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 80.
- 9 See *Deleuze*, p 4.
- 10 'Being by Numbers', p 86.
- 11 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 124.
- 12 See *ibid.*
- 13 'Being by Numbers', p 87.
- 14 See 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', p 65.
- 15 See *ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 35.
- 19 See *Ethics*, p lvii.
- 20 *Deleuze*, p 76.
- 21 See *ibid.*, pp 72–7.
- 22 See *Deleuze*, p 4, p 76; see also 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', pp 66–7.
- 23 See 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', p 67.
- 24 *Deleuze*, p 97.
- 25 Alain Badiou and Peter Hallward, 'Politics and Philosophy: An Interview with Alain Badiou', *Angelaki*, Vol 3, No 3 (Oxford: 1988) pp 124–5; also published as appendix to *Ethics*, see p 123.
- 26 See *Deleuze*, p 76.
- 27 'Politics and Philosophy', p 125 (*Ethics*, p 125).
- 28 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 36.
- 29 'Being by Numbers', p 87.
- 30 See *ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 See *Ethics*, p 81.
- 33 'Politics and Philosophy', p 130 (*Ethics*, p 136).
- 34 *Ibid.*, p 129 (*Ethics*, p 134).
- 35 See *Deleuze*, p 85.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, pp 94–5.
- 38 See *Ethics*, p 67.
- 39 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 81 and p 85.
- 40 See *ibid.*, pp 104–5.
- 41 'Politics and Philosophy', p 126 (*Ethics*, p 127).
- 42 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 37.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 See *ibid.*, pp 143–4.
- 45 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', p 69.
- 46 *Deleuze*, p 65.
- 47 See *ibid.*, p 91.
- 48 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 57.
- 49 See *Deleuze*, p 55; see also 'Being by Numbers', p 86.
- 50 *Deleuze*, p 58.
- 51 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 91, p 107.
- 52 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', p 67.
- 53 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 80.
- 54 See *ibid.*, p 73.
- 55 See *ibid.*, pp 80–1, pp 103–9.
- 56 'Being by Numbers', p 87.
- 57 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 80.
- 58 *Deleuze*, p 75.
- 59 See *Manifesto for Philosophy*, pp 104–6.
- 60 See *Ethics*, p 47.
- 61 'Being by Numbers', p 87.
- 62 *Deleuze*, p 64.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp 64–5.
- 64 *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p 143.
- 65 See *Ethics*, p 40.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p 42.
- 67 *Ibid.*, p 43.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p 40.
- 69 See *ibid.*, p 43.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p 28.
- 71 See *ibid.*, pp 43–4.
- 72 *Ibid.*, pp 51.

73 Ibid., p 32.

74 See *ibid.*, p 52.

75 See *ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*, p 43.

77 *Ibid.*, p 85.

78 See *ibid.*, p 46, p 53.

79 *Ibid.*, p 47.

80 See *ibid.*, p 50.

81 *Ibid.*, p 46.

82 *Ibid.*, p 47.

83 *Ibid.*, p 42.

84 *Ibid.*, p 32.

85 See 'Being By Numbers', p 123; see also 'Politics and Philosophy', pp 119–24 (*Ethics*, pp 110–21).

86 See, for example, 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', pp 56–69.

87 *Ethics*, p 39.

88 'Politics and Philosophy', p 121 (*Ethics*, p 115).

Index: Encounters with proper names

- Badiou, Alain, 162–83
Blanchot, Maurice, 125–36, 147
- Davidson, Donald, 97–8
Deleuze, Gilles, 137–51, 153–5
 and Félix Guattari, 156–61
- Jabès, Edmond, 132
- Levinas, Emmanuel, 131–2
Lyotard, Jean-François, 109–13, 114–
 19, 120–3, 124, 135–6
- Serres, Michel, 11–14, 15–18, 23–30,
 33–7
Stengers, Isabelle, 47–53, 62–8, 75–9,
 82
 Barbara McClintock, 64–8, 82,
 173, 177, 178–9, 180
- Whitehead, Alfred North, 83–90, 95–7,
 124