

The Language of Narrative Drawing: a close reading of contemporary graphic novels

Abstract:

The study offers an alternative analytical framework for thinking about the contemporary graphic novel as a dynamic area of visual art practice. Graphic narratives are placed within the broad, open-ended territory of investigative drawing, rather than restricted to a special category of literature, as is more usually the case. The analysis considers how narrative ideas and energies are carried across specific examples of work *graphically*. Using analogies taken from recent academic debate around translation, aspects of Performance Studies, and, finally, common categories borrowed from linguistic grammar, the discussion identifies subtle varieties of creative processing within a range of drawn stories.

The study is practice-based in that the questions that it investigates were first provoked by the activity of drawing. It sustains a dominant interest in practice throughout, pursuing aspects of graphic processing as its primary focus.

Chapter 1 applies recent ideas from Translation Studies to graphic narrative, arguing for a more expansive understanding of how process brings about creative evolutions and refines directing ideas.

Chapter 2 considers the body as an area of core content for narrative drawing. A consideration of elements of Performance Studies stimulates a reconfiguration of the role of the figure in graphic stories, and selected artists are revisited for the physical qualities of their narrative strategies.

Chapter 3 develops the grammatical concept of tense to provide a central analogy for analysing graphic language. The chapter adapts the idea of the graphic 'confection' to the territory of drawing to offer a fresh system of analysis and a potential new tool for teaching.

The conclusion identifies the study's contribution to knowledge as twofold: first, in presenting a range of new interpretations of its field; and, second, in its employment of specifically adapted research methods which connect with a wider call for a return to 'close reading' as a productively sensitive research tool in its own right.

Introduction

This study was practice-based in its origin and it has been consistently practice-orientated in being occupied with how specific creative practices evolve. The research focus - which is rooted in ideas about drawing - grew out of some very clarifying conversations around drawings that I made at an early stage in the project. This focus has been fed constantly by an interest in how drawn narratives made by a variety of artists betray their origins and process in their final form. The study is greatly concerned with the detail of these specifics: with the quality of the language of a drawing's construction, and with its formal orchestration as a carrier of story.

The visual territory considered is the contemporary graphic novel, but this is situated within a generous sphere of graphic narrative activity, including other sorts of picture books, single drawings, and work from the past that anticipates the graphic novel form, although at first sight very tangentially. Lisa Pearson's recent anthology of varieties of practice - which she categorises as *image + text* - offers a precedent for opening the doors of interpretation in this way.¹ The graphic novel, or comic (to use the American term, and also to allude to the form's least controversial wider family), has frequently been analysed in relative isolation (granting its accepted indebtedness to film and animation), and it is a premise of the study that this is too limiting. The research has proceeded in the spirit of recent exhibitions which have opted, like Pearson, for a more expansive treatment of the material in entertaining its various connections with other art practices.²

The research also situates itself firmly in a broader climate of interdisciplinary academic enquiry, and its interest in hybridity on different levels is part of this picture. Its exploration of crossover ideas through seeking out formal fusions and pushing for fresh analogies from other disciplines expands upon existing interpretations of the subject area, where graphic novels have been typically and – it is suggested – rather narrowly subjected to earlier linguistics decoding (via semiotic analysis) and also to film and narrative theories (via interpretation of their structures and treatment of

¹ Pearson, 2011.

² Each of the following set out to explore connections and exchanges between comics and other art forms in different ways: *KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 17 May – 7 September 2008); *VRAOUM! Trésors de la Bande Dessinée et Art Contemporain* (La Maison Rouge: Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris, 28 May – 27 September 2009); *Rude Britannia: British Comic Art* (Tate Britain, 9 June – 5 September 2010).

time).³ In taking a close look at drawing as a foundational mode of visual story-telling, the study adds to more established readings of the graphic-novel form in a distinctive way: so it departs from a European tradition of categorising comics definitively and systematically as sequences of framed panels buoyant with characteristic speech bubbles, and also bucks the American inclination to catalogue the modern comic rigidly as a descendant of a specific element of popular culture first detectable in the late 19th century.⁴ In addition, the argument does not subscribe to the view of other contemporary commentators that post-modern theory necessarily supplies the tools for unpacking what is an intriguing, organically changing medium.⁵ And again, the role of new technology is not a central focus here, although the study touches on its emergence *in* the stories that it treats at several key points with a view to exposing how the form is inventively acknowledging broader societal changes – by means of the language of drawing.

It is fashionable to speculate as to whether the impact of the digital is changing creative practices irreversibly, but while this research has benefited implicitly from the availability of a huge variety of international work online, it has not been dissuaded from its sense that hands-on drawing continues to function as a primary source of originating energy across the globe. Although graphic language is being infiltrated by ingredients coming from the digital direction, it would be wrong to say that digital design floats free of the physical and spatial instincts and responses that underpin our basic experience of the world – and of which drawing has long been the ready-to-hand form of expression. The study stays with physical drawing precisely because this may be said at a profound level to underpin the digital.

The PhD has arisen at the intersection of my own practice, research interests and teaching experience. In a number of significant ways the study has been a form of self-interrogation – a way of taking to bits the practice to which I am committed. I make series of narrative drawings, and my research concerns itself with visual narrative of different varieties, often rooted in drawing but increasingly taking in physically-based creative forms such as dance and physical theatre. In addition, in professional life I am expected to witness and reflect upon the burgeoning practices of others – and this encompasses both the practice of art and the practice of

³ A recent example is Miller, 2007.

⁴ For the European approach see Groensteen's introduction in Groensteen, 2007. For the American, Dowd and Hignite, 2004, provides a characteristic timeline for the evolution of the form.

⁵ Ann Miller is a British commentator who sees this as a pertinent way of approaching the field. Op. cit. 9-10.

language. My teaching involves working in an art college, but I also teach English as a foreign language, and both areas have shaped the study perceptibly. The research has been crucially affected by the nature and habits of this context and I will expand upon it here before outlining in detail the objectives, focus and format of the study itself.

Foundations

The core interest of the study in how meaning is articulated has arisen very directly out of teaching. This has generated a strong preoccupation with ideas about how verbal and visual modes of expression engage with each other experimentally and supportively.

In my work with art students, I have been largely concerned with supporting students' studio development through stimulating writing within and around practice. This has often meant working with individuals not comfortable with writing or text, and has therefore created a need to look for ways of bringing these closer to their visual sensibilities. Typically, my other explicitly language-based teaching has been among very literate re-located professionals who need quickly to command the broad patterns of English usage and achieve very credible fluency, and so with an entirely different relationship to language and words on all levels.

Strategies that have grown up in my teaching of art students have aimed to bring writing firmly within the territory of studio practice. I have thus implemented a creative take on academic writing (seeing an essay as a ground-plan for a putative exhibition, for example) and my workshops have foregrounded forms of writing that aspire to be actively experimental and enquiring, and formally adventurous.⁶ Students' writing is critiqued within the group, like practical work, and it is encouraged that they view this in a similar way to visual experiment, always open to revision. What is being looked for is a sense of direction that is their own and which they themselves might run with.

My approach has fed beneficially on the example of commentators in other fields who have taken issue with an over-theoretical approach to interpretation within the

⁶Stimulation has come from a number of directions – James Elkins's concerted questioning of standard approaches to writing about art and his particular advocacy of close description as a research tool (Elkins, 1999); the varied and often richly playful strategies of educator Pat Francis (Francis, 2009); and recourse to such Oulipo writers who are translated into English, such as Raymond Queneau and Georges Perec.

Humanities. This topic is huge and falls outside the scope of this PhD, but I simply state here that I am comfortable with the views of Valentine Cunningham, for example, who in the field of literature advocates working very directly with creative works as a way of opening up capacity for sensitive investigation and active reflection.⁷ Olivier Berggruen puts it well in suggesting there is a place for using writing in connection with art to educate the senses.⁸ This positions writing alongside drawing as a tool for channelling directness of interrogation and thoughtful interpretation into a physical form.

In my current post I lead an MA programme in Drawing, and there has been an opportunity here - with greater involvement in the studio - to explore questing links between drawing practice and writing. I have been forced to think about the fundamentals of visual language in a detailed way, and to look for wider analogies that might generate imaginative analysis and clarify terminology.

Teaching English as a foreign language has supplied useful terms, tools and trickery to carry elsewhere. It has afforded a consciously analytical attitude, an overview of grammatical structures - including formidable organic patterns as well as anomalies. No less valuable has been a growing sense of the visuality and physicality of language through and through (I *see*/ I *grasp* what you mean), and a practical engagement with slippages of translation – with the creative richness of this shifting and sifting of meanings so readily available. Words have drawn attention to themselves very conspicuously in this context.

Certain linguistic constructions have worked their way into my basic creative vocabulary, giving a practical, active experience of grammatical structures which clearly plays a part in what follows. Moreover, I am continually encouraging others attentively to describe their system of expression – whether it is a piece of visual work and how it has been made, or a comparison between different aspects of syntax. This sits well with other research approaches that prioritise active description as a key mode of enquiry. Cunningham's advocacy of close reading of literature has already been mentioned, and James Elkins has put forward similar strategies in connection with painting. Richard Rorty, more ambitiously and far more broadly, sees choices of words as a fundamental way towards affirming an identity (and we might

⁷ Cunningham, 2002, 156.

⁸ Berggruen, 2011, 25.

here substitute 'creative practice'), taking the process of self-description to be a life-long constructive undertaking that necessarily involves revision.⁹

Various strands from these ideas – the sheer effort involved, and the waywardness of translation (but also its liberating qualities), the intriguing somatic nature of words suddenly spilling out, and the simple effectiveness of pursuing a process of description until it pushes at understanding unexpectedly – have each been built on consciously through the theoretical enquiry feeding the discussion below. They have also significantly helped to confirm the choice of themes in the three chapters.

Broad and Narrow Aims: Reassessing the Graphic Novel and a Proposed Research Method

The study offers an alternative framework for thinking about the contemporary graphic novel as a highly creative form of visual art practice. It is placed here within the broad and open-ended territory of investigative drawing rather than restricted to a special category of literature with determinate qualities meeting fixed expectations. In this way the study departs from dominant lines in existing scholarship wherein the form tends to be viewed either as a closed system that may be decoded, or as a phenomenon of popular culture to be read as a window onto social *mores*.

The analysis here is concerned with unpicking ways in which core ideas and eloquent driving energies are carried across specific examples *graphically*. Using analogies taken from recent academic debate around translation, aspects of Performance Studies, and finally some common categories taken from linguistic grammar, the discussion discloses varieties of creative processing within the drawings considered.

Close readings of these drawings were developed initially through bouts of searching primary analysis. The study embodies here a research method which it ultimately advocates: that of arriving at interpretation through highly attentive description. This

⁹ Cunningham advocates 'touching reading', reading that 'begins in bodily contact, which turns into close mental and emotional contact with text'. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, 147. Elkins demonstrates in his own writing that close description can be a form of reading images in a very physically focussed way that harbours rich imaginings. See his response to Rembrandt: Elkins, *op. cit.*, 114-115. Rorty sees the choices of words that we make in response to things as essentially useful and always contingent, but nonetheless a vital process in firming the sense of self: 'All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, their lives.' Rorty, 1989, 73.

method is distinctive in that it brings together practical sensitivity with insights and questions sparked by the application of an imported, de-familiarising terminology.

In these different ways – the first geared at extending the framework for thinking about the territory chosen, the second suggesting a method for heightening awareness in negotiating understandings of visual material – the study aims to present specific fresh tools for the interpretation of its field. Aspects of these might be applied directly in teaching undergraduate Illustration and Drawing, but there is scope also for further research with wider pedagogical ends in view, and this is advanced as a possibility in the final conclusion.

More specific research aims are carried by the individual chapters, and these are very relevant to aspects of undergraduate teaching. Taken together, moreover, the chapters offer an extended example of a personal research terminology in action. Each offers a scenario for the discussion and application of a chosen term, leading into a speculative analysis of a range of artists' work and demonstrating how once a personally charged descriptive vocabulary is up and running, it has the potential to complicate general understandings of a field in detailed and significant ways.

Each chapter contains a targeted area of enquiry:

1. The word **Translation** is employed in Chapter 1 to designate the transforming impact of process when any specific starting point moves towards a creative outcome. The aim of this chapter, which is informed by Translation Studies theory, is to show how process may itself be harnessed to instigate very different effects, each with the potential to open up the implications of a source-idea subtly or dramatically. Because of the integration of different sorts of language in the graphic narrative form, the potential for interplay is considerable, and this is highlighted. The chapter's analyses are offered as a tool for undergraduate teaching, making clear the creative impact of different varieties of conversion that happen in generating work. Fresh interpretations are offered of a number of artists' work as aspects of their process are interrogated closely.
2. Chapter 2, which deals with the word **Body**, takes the discussion towards Performance Studies. Here, drawn narrative is revisited using the filter of specific aspects of performance training. The chapter considers the potential

of focusing on the body for generating narrative content, and supports a more physical interpretation of the elements of narrative as a means of devising and shaping work, whether or not it includes text. The chapter's aim is to float the relevance of aspects of Performance Studies for teaching drawing. Again, new readings of specific graphic works are developed, with a particular consideration of qualities of drawing that pertain to performance.

3. **Tense** is invoked in the third chapter as a foundational component of verbal language that may analogously be applied to drawing. Variations of graphic approach are described according to a speculative 'tense system', and the latter is then applied experimentally across different examples of work to establish the quality of the graphic mixture each time. The analysis indicates the layered complexity of drawings that might seem, without the enquiring terminology, relatively straightforward. In this way a system of inventive labelling is shown to provoke a sensitive idea of a drawing's personality, coaxing out hidden energies and blends. The aim of the chapter is to describe the inbuilt narrative eloquence of actual graphic language, again as an example for teaching. Once more, new interpretations of existing work are put forward, highlighting the complex quality of their graphic energy in closely seen detail.

Method of Analysis within the Chapters

Each of the chapters borrows significantly from another discipline in its development of a theme. The choice of words originally came out of a scrutiny of practice but interdisciplinary enquiry has crucially enriched the potential of each term as a basis for detailed engagement. Testing specific implications against other artists' work revealed clear cross-currents between the words themselves, again deepening their implications, and various of these interweave throughout the study. In fact, the vocabulary grew to tie the separate accounts in the chapters together like a latticework, achieving increasing coherence as the research advanced. For example, Roland Topor's drawings are considered in the second chapter, relating to bodies, although his physical manipulation of anatomies might also be thought of as types of distorting 'translations'. Unica Zürn is dealt with in the third chapter in the discussion of tense, but she also made drawings that effectively transmute bodies - into floating parts and fantasy architecture – and so could equally well take her place in the other two. Again, Caroline Sury's greedy drawing style, though discussed as a variant of

mime in the discussion of physical creativity in the second chapter, might also be read as present-tense drawing (with some knowing past-tense elements flung in). Sound-translations appear in Chapter 1 but are also included in Chapter 2, since they are related to somatic aspects of language verbal and visual. In all these respects the chapters have both an individual focus on a specific theme, and additionally shed light on one other, reflecting how process, content and the detail of graphic delivery will tend to inform each other implicitly, and are ultimately impossible to separate entirely.

Each chapter begins with an extended discussion of the interdisciplinary ideas that underpin its direction. This is followed by a section that releases implications arising from this into a context for visual application. A final extended sequence of case studies examines specific instances of visual narrative in this connection, often concentrating on current tendencies in graphic novels to give a sense of how the themes illuminate the evolving language of the form.

Specifically, Chapter 1 uses concepts gleaned from recent developments in Translation Studies as a way of launching its analysis as to how visual narrative generation may proceed by stages of negotiation - with or without the input of words. The chapter thus complicates assumptions (for example, implied in Scott McCloud and also by Ann Miller) that the central dynamic of creation tends to centre on the word-image binary. Chapter 2 borrows forcefully from the ideas of French performance teacher Jacques Lecoq, particularly his stimulating variant of an extended system of training which focuses on the body and physicality as primary tools for creative experiment. Elements of other performance writing and teaching enrich the mixture (especially Anthony Howell's idea of an invented grammar for a discipline – and this has obvious further relevance later in Chapter 3), and the case studies are approached very much through this filter. Traces of much older performance styles rise to the surface with a reconfiguring of aspects of earlier narrative illustration (Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* and George Cruikshank's *Punch and Judy*, both from the 19th century). But the physical energy of contemporary graphic languages - such as Caroline Sury's - is also freshly explored for its performative qualities, and Lecoq's idea of *embodying* the world as an essential preliminary for creative work in general is renegotiated as a variant of drawing. The chapter begins to anticipate a central focus on drawing for creative devising across a wide variety of practice.

Chapter 3 looks at drawing language head on, basing its thinking in the first instance on George Yule's analysis of English grammar, and specifically his account of the understanding of tense and aspect as core elements in linguistic systems. The discussion of a putative graphic tense system in the central section of the chapter converts Yule's description of how language operates into a detailed analogy for ways in which drawings are actually concocted. Edward Tufte's idea of *confectionary* graphic systems is adapted in the final section to explore the nature of graphic blends and hybrids which are much more likely to occur in practice than strict adherence to a specific 'tense'.

In terms of the visual material examined in the chapters, Tufte's own highly eclectic three volumes on information graphics have been an influential precedent for selecting examples that seem to share a visual interface without necessarily coming together companionably on other logical or contextual grounds: this is the case, for example, with Lavater and Gerner in Chapter 1, and Stendhal and Zürn in Chapter 3. However, all the work considered may fairly be described as a type of visual *narrative*, using a more literary understanding of the word than Tufte's broader sense which entertains varieties of purely functional imagery intent on information exchange. The images dealt with here spin yarns.

The other influential quality in the choice of examples is to do with my own commitment to an expansive approach to drawing style, again very much with the aim of teaching in mind. Often the examples chosen allude to a long line of drawing that is keen to allow varieties of marks to speak, and in this way the selection avoids the narrower tributary of dumb-line drawing tending to be associated with comics and graphic novels stereotypically.¹⁰ Narrative graphic artists of the early-mid 20th century - George Herriman, George Grosz and Charles Schulz - are, aesthetically speaking, predecessors of contemporaries such as Sury and Julie Doucet discussed below for their black-and-white vocality.¹¹ For the same reason, new and relatively unknown artists have been included in the study where their graphic freshness has caught my eye (notably, John McNaught in Chapters 1 and 2, and Mio Matsumoto in Chapter 1). In one case (Stendhal, in Chapter 3), a well-known writer is commandeered for the little-known visual digressions of his autobiographical manuscript. The adventurous

¹⁰ This is a depersonalised, rigorously consistent outline, a relative of Hergé's *ligne claire*.

¹¹ Doucet's graphic language is very well discussed in the context of graphic autobiography by Ann Miller in Miller, op. cit., 231-235.

spirit of these examples is very much a part of the study's undepinning educational interest.

Other visual territory acknowledged comes from the three themes that have concentrated the thinking, particularly from the direction of the performance arts. Valuable insights around drawing have grown from looking freshly at theatre, dance and performance as a fundamental part of the research – in paying attention to instances of highly concentrated formal economy, for example, and layerings of sight and sound, and also carefully choreographed sequences of movement that may gradually unwrap a core idea. Rich examples are found across the 20th century: Oscar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet* and the associated developmental drawings; Samuel Beckett's use of strong visual symbolism, and the physicality of his late abstract shorts such as *Quad*; and also strands within modern and contemporary dance, as in the choreography of William Forsythe where obsessive permutations and genre ambiguity are driving creative devices.¹² The Lecoq-educated Swiss performance group, *Mummenschanz*, is less easy to categorise than these three: its performers transform their bodies with mask-objects to create theatrical spectacles that seem a cross between puppetry and mime.¹³ But the short bursts of action that their performances embody became suggestively reminiscent – in the context of this study - of surreally vital sequences in some mysteriously living comic.¹⁴

Notes on the Order of Play

The chapters in this volume investigate the three themes in the way described, providing extended examples of a personal terminology in action – how it grows from consideration of another discipline's terms and ideas, but also how aspects of this reflection might then be taken back towards thinking in detail about the nature of practice by means of negotiating other artists' work. The artist case studies that are filtered through the themes demonstrate, moreover, how on each occasion the ensuing process of redescription arrives at fresh analysis within the wider discipline.

The drawings which initially provoked the three words adopted by the research, and that embody aspects of each chapter's enquiry in their qualities and intentions, are

¹² Forsythe and Schlemmer feature in passing in Chapter 2, and Beckett in Chapters 1 and 2.

¹³ Murray, 2003, 110-126.

¹⁴ Short sequences of performances are viewable at <http://www.mummenschanz.com/en> Accessed 26.2.2013.

included in this volume (Volume 1) along with the text of the study. They function as a distinct part of the research, and their role is outlined in three preliminary sections preceding the chapters. A second separate volume of images (Volume 2) contains the other visual 'figures' which are discussed and referenced throughout the written analysis in this volume. These have been kept apart from the research drawings: they are the supporting evidence for what is written, not in themselves embodying acts of research but subject to its contemplation. They should be viewed as data that has been processed, examples that are referred to, rather than an activity of thinking.

The general conclusion at the end of this volume summarises the achievements of the chapters in turn, and determines what the study has offered overall in connection with its aims. It considers, finally, how specific elements of the ideas put forward might be implemented practically in the future, and how this groundwork might now be taken forward through further experiment and enquiry, potentially in a wider disciplinary context.

Translation

Preliminaries

Translation is interpreted in this study as relating to processes of negotiation that take place between the various elements in the making of creative work. It is these that may be said to move a starting point through towards a final outcome. Some of this, of course, is happenstance, and the harnessing of accidents, even the so-called 'wilfulness' of materials, to gain unexpected ends is familiar to creative experience. Chapter 1 takes this idea further, however, in its exploration of aspects of recent thinking in Translation Studies, showing how an idea of translation as a visibly dynamic activity has rich application in the context of drawing and narrative formation.

The following images record my own working in ways that are in keeping with the ideas discussed in the chapter, and were, in fact, formative in taking the research in this direction. They feature, firstly, four texts (Illustrations 1-4) generated by writing close descriptions of existing images. This undertaking was deliberately complicated by the decision to write in French - by no means a language in which I am fluent. The resulting efforts were then used to spark drawings, and four examples of these follow on from the texts (Illustrations 5-8). The objective was to see what came up, using conscious disablement to force inventive side-stepping and an inbuilt process of transfer (from image into word and then again into image) to provoke a 'Chinese whispers' experience of conversion.

The drawings each show a different response to the original qualities of the texts. The first (Illustration 5) is a visual list or catalogue of items mentioned; the second (Illustration 6), more a type of rebus; the third (Illustration 7) settles on just two of the many words that might have been chosen for comment; and the fourth (Illustration 8) leaves words behind, becoming hooked on visual associations. These are just four varieties of translation, and the chapter itself deals with a range of others in its readings of artists' work, exploring narrative 'juice', sound-translation, and cannibalistic destruction of source texts as three identifiable approaches to graphic narrative construction within this framework.

These combinations of writings and drawings were made with no firm expectation of outcome, but they rapidly pushed my approach to drawing in terms of a new quality of openness. What was experienced was laboured concentration in making the texts,

followed by rapid-fire 'thinking' drawings as the packed associations of fought-for words were let loose. The texts show struggle with even simple words and phrases, but a happy realisation sometimes of unexpected multiple meanings, and a tendency also to indulge easy puns, rhymes and formal repetition. These troublesome bouts of activity shunted my mind into an imaginative zone of which the drawings are the fruit.

Already in these drawings lurk the topics of the other chapters in the study - the bodies and present-tense attributes pursued in detail below. This whole project has been accompanied by what I term 'thinking drawings', and these examples are among those which first brought out a sharp awareness of how drawing may race with thought. They also made clear the energy that text-image and image-text translation creates in terms of its potential to drive research by releasing unexpected content for analysis and development.

① VI

1 La dame est dans le lit rouge. / La porte est
fermee. / Les rideaux jaunes donnent sur une scene
2 bizarre. /

3 La dame dort tres bien pendant longtemps dans les
draps blancs. / Le lit est tendre. / La lumiere
4 douce. / un berceau, un bateau sur les ondes clapot
euse
- ~~est~~ / La dame est un bebe avec ses fosettes roses
5 et ses cils longs. / Son bras pend, ses doigts
6 courbent. /

7 La dame est dans le lit rouge. / La porte est ferme
8 e. / Les rideaux jaunes donnent sur une scene
9 bizarre. /

10 La dame dort tres bien pendant longtemps dans les
draps blancs. / Mais maintenant, un petit demon
11 s'assied sur ses seins. / Il chie sur son occur. /
12 Il est * ce petit demon - un trou noir, quand il
13 est la; un tache noire. / Mais la lumiere qui fait
14 le demon arriver aussi le fait aller. / Le papier
15 le suce. / Il n'est pas la. / jusqu'a le temps quand
16 le papier encore le crache. /

17 Le noir et le blanc. / Ici, la-bas, dans Demon,
18 dame. / Oui, non. / Continuellement.
19
20
21
22

Illustration 1

II 2 ② 3^{me} ③

① 1^o Un petit hublot. Noir sur rose. Nous regardons.
 Les jambes ④ chancelent, les talons ⑤ aiguissent.
 Les cuisses ⑥ cuit; les bas sont bas. Les lignes
 ne sont pas honnetes. ⑧

Le peau est blanc au-dessus le noir, contre le gr ⑩
 -is, mais cependant elle est fumeé, comme tous dan ⑪
 -s le cercle. Les jambe (sont) devant le rideau, ⑫
 le rideau ride. Les jambe devant le rideau font ⑬
 un demi-tour. Ils viennent et aussi ils vont. ⑭

Sophie va et elle vient. Elle regarde et elle ⑮
 est regardée. Elle se regarde et elle regarde les ⑯
 autres. Les autres elle regardent. Elle raconte, ⑰
 et elle est racontée. Le cercle est regardé et il ⑱
 regarde, raconte et est raconté. Les bras regard ⑲
 -ent, les talons aussi, les cuisses, les bas. Les ⑳
 lignes ne sont pas honnetes. Elles refusent et ㉑
 elles appellent. ㉒

Les mots sont tous séparés; soignes et honnetes.

franc: frank, straightforward, open, clear, clean
 rider: wrinkle, ripple
 bas: stocking
 rideau: curtain
 cuire: cook, fire, smart, sting, burn
 guisse: thigh,

Illustration 2

XI

Je lis avec difficulté.
ANTHOLOGIE DE SACS ET SACS A MAIN
Anthologie de sacs et sacs a main.

Oui.

Mlle/me.

Est-ce que c'est mademoiselle ou madame?

no. 500.

C'est sur. Mais 500 de quoi?

Le sac accord a corps.

Oui. C'est vrai, c'est cerise et goufle.

PAR Miss Lecroc.

Miss Le 'fang', 'Le 'hook'?

Miss Crocodile? Tears. Skin.

Alors, ^{tous} tous les petits caracteres. Au commencement
les uns qui ont les noms.

Le bennette de micro.

Un cadeau de mon grandpere.

Les devoirs du soir.

Le trousseau de recours des apparences.

Un petit encas de desir.

Le veilleur de conseil...

La conscience, peut-etre. C'est probable.

Les livres des jours.

Illustration 3

IX

Demons deux
 Pres en feu
 Mains anes
 Vrais chicanes

Langue bizarre
 Tete cigare
 ame rit
 Coffre lit

Chair courbee
 Doigts et nez
 Coupe bleu
 Sans le trou

Jambe barbus
 Nez roux
 Feuillage bleu
 Marnes et sueur

Petit osseux
 Sans trousseau
 A poil
 Je ne vois mal

Chicane: quarrel, zigzag. *petty zigzag, quibbling, quarreling.*
 courbe: crooked *quarrel*
 osseux,)se: bony
 poilu: hairy *shaggy*
 a poil: starkers *French idiom*
 sueur: sweat *like back*
 barbu: bearded *quelque barbe - mad a dog*
 barbe a papa: candy floss

Illustration 4

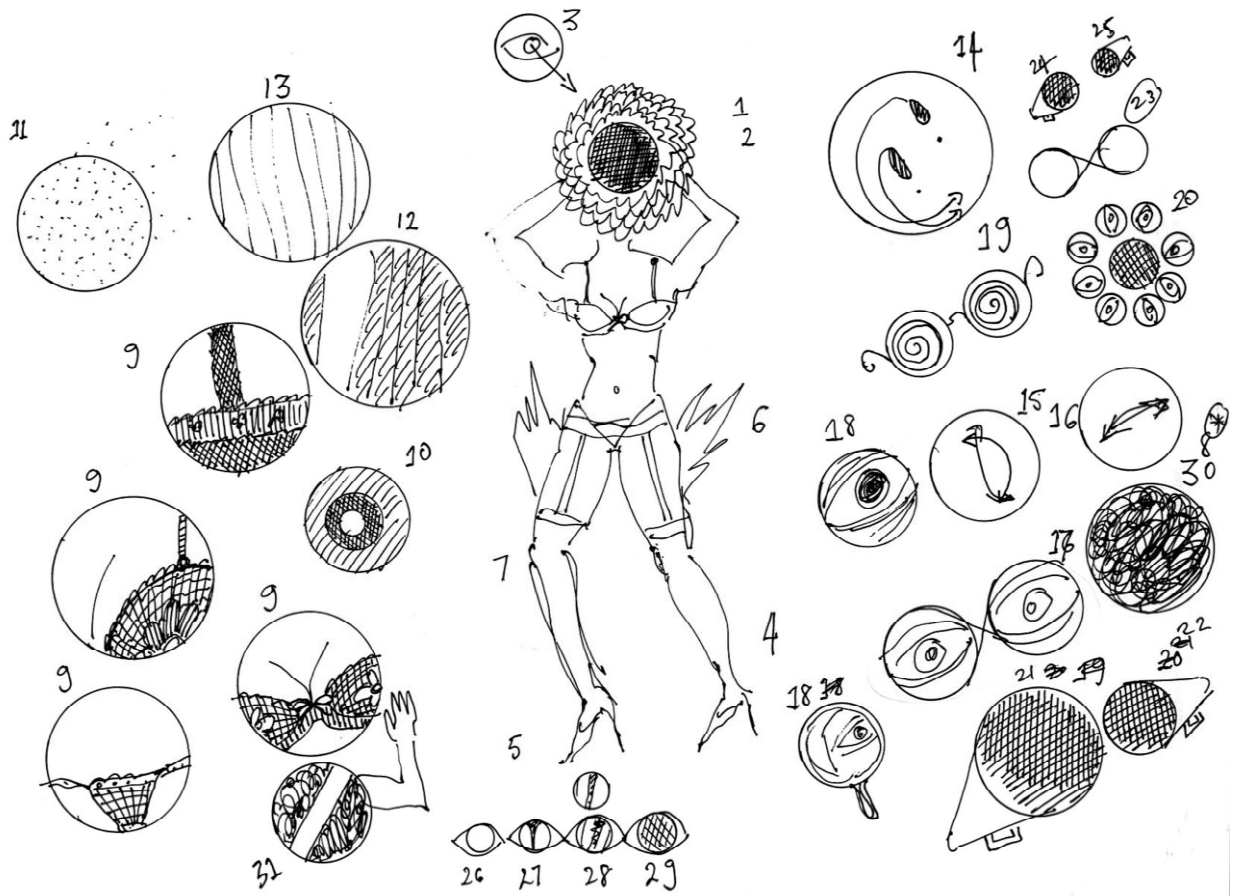


Illustration 5

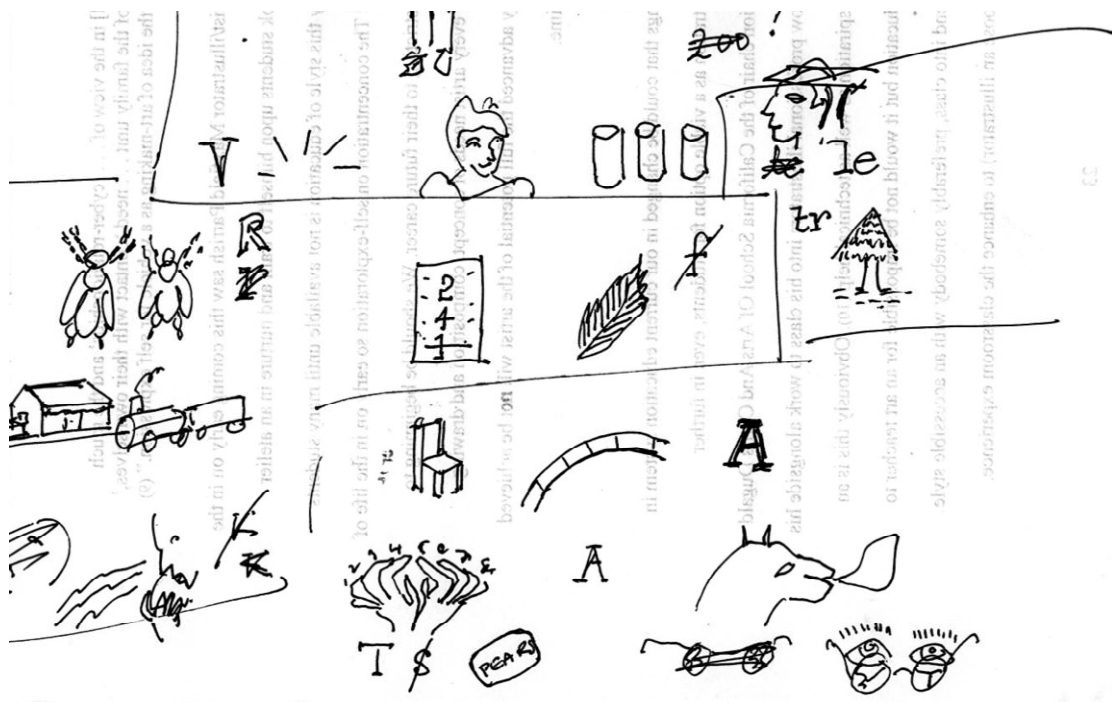


Illustration 6

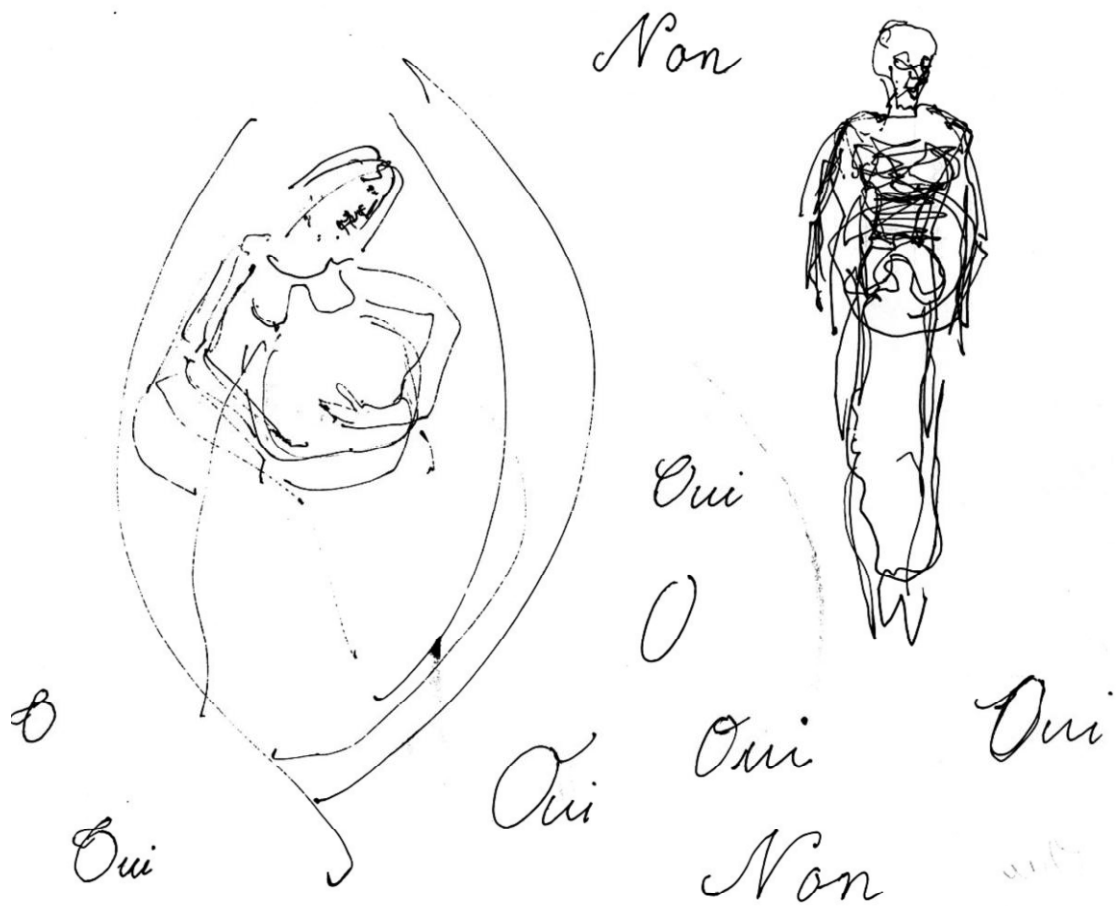


Illustration 7

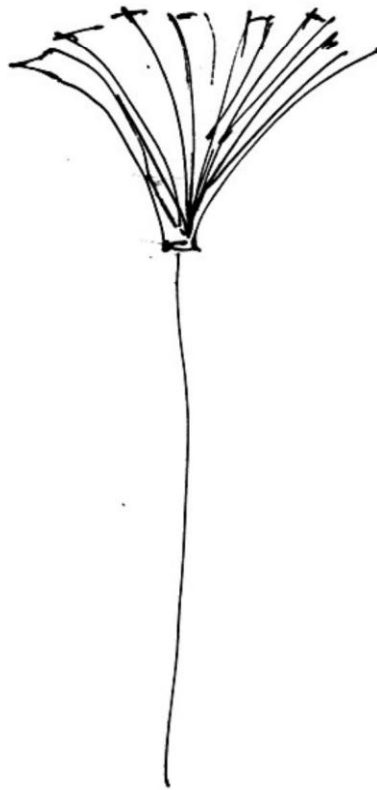
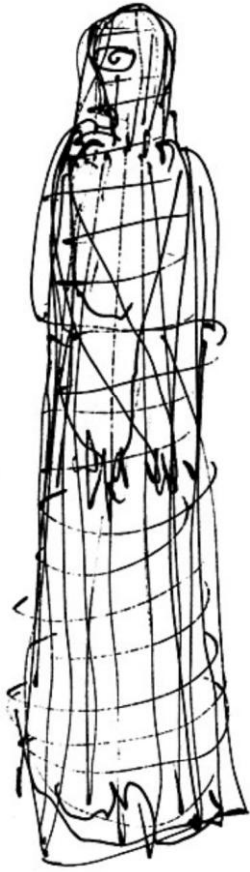


Illustration 8

Chapter 1: Transillumination¹⁵

I. Translation's Relevance

Like illustrators, translators have claimed a certain notoriety for being invisible.¹⁶ There is an interesting deeper parallel here in that the factor that is deemed significant in driving the idea in each case is also shared - both activities being seen as secondary to a 'more creative', initiating act, that of the generation of a primary text that is the justification for, on the one hand, a further text, on the other, an attendant image. As 'derivatives', both activities are seen as diluted or subservient enterprises, secondary in order and quality.

The issue of primary and secondary status in the realm of Illustration falls away, it might be thought, in the field of graphic storytelling where there is less stability in the relationship between text and image in terms both of sequence of production and functionality in offering meaning. A more complex symbiotic relationship is assumed from the start than is the case in other areas of commissioned illustration where the image is evolved to clarify what words have pre-determined. Even where a visual narrative proceeds via the production of text, the status of image in the final outcome is assured by its dominant visibility. Very often, moreover, both words and images are products of the same pen, and opportunities for creative cross-fertilisation during production are manifest in design tendencies and conceptual elaborations - words literally masquerading as part of an image, images taking detours or ramifying freely in relation to the core journey of the words, images that occupy a different narrative space to the text entirely.

In fact, none of these tendencies are specific to the territory of graphic storytelling, and it is not my concern to argue for exclusive rules of play. However, two assumptions stand out within my initial conjunction of translation with illustration that deserve examining in terms of the direction of this chapter. First, the underlying

¹⁵ This word was coined by the Brazilian poets and translators Haroldo and Augusto de Campos (born 1929 and 1931 respectively. Haroldo died in 2003). They embraced a radical idea of translation that was 'a form of transgression' but also 'an empowering act, a nourishing act, an act of affirmative play', and developed a new terminology to articulate their thoughts 'including transcreation, transtextualization, transillumination, transluciferation, and cannibalization'. Gentzler, 2001, 196.

¹⁶ See the suggestively named work by Lawrence Venuti: *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995). This claims to trace 'the origins of the situation in which every English-language translator works today, although from an opposing standpoint, with the explicit aim of offering alternatives, of changing the situation' (Venuti, 1995, ix). Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* is subtitled 'The Invisible Art'. McCloud, 1994.

assumption that anything that comes second in a creative process - that is prompted by something prior - is necessarily lesser. And second, and relatedly, that the direction of play is essentially in such cases one-directional: that this is a process of dictation rather than exchange or transformation in both directions, where insight might emerge in the prototype no less than the successor through an act of negotiation taking place.¹⁷ Seeing an image as quasi-textual – in this case as something approaching the second-order text of a translation (allowing for the moment this negative reading of the latter) - seems to fit with the currency of modes of image analysis such as semiotics which emphasise quasi-linguistic qualities of signification in visual media. Less easily reconcilable, perhaps, are tendencies in critical discussions of graphic storytelling which consider images with far less subtlety than textual content, as if implying that images have a coarser capacity for delivery. In recent reviews of Chris Ware's work the level of insight proved very unbalanced, for example, reflecting perhaps a more general predisposition to view words as the specialised bearers of meaning in the partnership.¹⁸ A less negative interpretation of this disparity of attitude might say that *equating* visual expression with verbal text is in fact unhelpfully limiting if not entirely misguided, and that these inconsistencies of response acknowledge what is a genuine difference in kind.

These issues will infiltrate the discussion below, which in a number of respects seeks to unravel the misconceptions that support them. More fundamentally, this chapter explores the creative context that arises when one thing is moved out of its own element into another, one language passing through the filter of a different sensibility to be recast. Translation is necessarily a mobile process, a shifting and reconfiguration: 'a rewriting of an original text' but also a 'manipulation'.¹⁹ In speaking of images, and of image-text negotiation, by means of its vocabulary we might fruitfully expect to reconfigure some familiar expectations.

¹⁷ This is an important word – Umberto Eco's in connection with translation – and I will return to it below.

¹⁸ This relates to Ware's *Building Stories*. On Radio 4's *Saturday Review* (22.9.2012) historian Kathryn Hughes struggled to know how to speak about this box of books, claiming to be baffled as to how to go about reading it and unable to respond to it as a visual artefact in the first instance. An otherwise astute review in the *London Review of Books* (Vol. 34, No. 23, 6 December 2012, 19-20) by Nick Richardson suggests that 'Ware, for the most part, favours the vivid, pared down style of Siegel and Shuster's early *Superman* strips'. This entirely fails to acknowledge Ware's variety of visual treatment.

¹⁹ General editors' preface by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre in Venuti, op. cit., vii.

Translation and Visual Narrative

In two specific ways translation offers an elucidating term for thinking about graphic storytelling.

First, if image is not in the limited sense a text, drawing is in a broader sense a process of translation. Without a verbal precursor, creating an image still deals ordinarily with the task of conveying a given although with the important proviso that this may have a primarily speculative drive – as indeed does some species of writing and much speech. Even where a drawing seems spontaneous – having discovered itself, so to speak, in the making (as with a doodle or a questing sketch) - finding its own materiality depends upon a whole sequence of triggers as one mark responds to another. Drawings translate things seen or felt but also labour to pass on the movements of the body extended through the pencil onto paper. Principal content might be something observed or remembered, or else something thought about rather tentatively or devised through steady application. The key point is that there are lots of options for moving an initial impulse into a readable form and each step requires a shifting process of interpretation. In this sense, drawing translates.

Second, graphic storytelling involves (very often) a conversation between verbal and visual delivery, and we might interpret this as negotiation between two systems of meaning or expression, even two forms of language.²⁰ While Umberto Eco disputes the idea that non-verbal sign-systems are capable of ‘translation’ at all, George Steiner offers a context of broader human activity involving inventive negotiation that is enacted in the linguistic sphere but not peculiar to it.²¹ In his view, there are no boundaries presented by a prerequisite for words: ‘pictorial encoding’ is ‘inside any given language’ anyway. ‘Translation between different languages is a particular application of a configuration and model fundamental to human speech even where it is monoglot’.²² And translators, practically speaking, are widely concerned with

²⁰ To say that images are not equivalent to texts is not to discard useful broader linguistically-related terminology in discussing them. This entire PhD uses a terminology of language to help situate its research. Visual ‘language’ is a useful concept in excavating how an image delivers certain ideas and associations. The ‘grammar’ of an image leads to thinking about structuring patterns and recurring ways of working within a tradition or within an individual practice. ‘Vocabulary’ suggests elements that are more detailed; ‘phrasing’, combinations of these smaller elements, creating their own significance. These categories are employed to support a particular reading of drawing that does not seek to overstretch the comparison so much as register a focus on structures and patterns of play for discussion purposes.

²¹ See especially Chapter 7 in Eco, 2003; Steiner, 1992, xii.

²² Steiner, *ibid.*, xii.

silences, the unspoken, the implicit, the 'gesture' of a text, the cultural spin that displaces surface meaning, the pictures in language that trip off its sound.²³ It is far too simple to think in terms of a process that replaces one word with another.

It is this idea of a deeper creative exchange of ideas and feelings that guides the consideration of interactions between different elements in graphic narrative that follows.

II. Middle-place Energy

Recent theoretical ideas about translation offer a very rewarding stimulus for approaching graphic storytelling. We might summarise these as being, since the 1970s, a significant shift away from an older ideal of a transparent one-to-one transition from original source text into target translation text, to a relativist revision that highlights the unachievability of stable meaning in any text, whether first or second in the chain.²⁴

In the last few decades, deconstructionist ideas in particular have focussed on the middle place that is the process of translation itself, coming between language systems, where glimpses of the struggle to find meaning are thought to take us closer to how things might be more authentically construed. Deconstruction's figurehead, Jacques Derrida, has promulgated a style of theoretical writing that might itself be considered a form of extended translation in this regard, preoccupied with its own process,²⁵ and his influence has had an effect on practical approaches to the translation of literature.²⁶ Overall, these ideas have highlighted the role of translation as a newly significant form of creative cultural expression, and called attention to process as an illuminating ingredient in target texts.

My own research has been drawn particularly to two areas of thinking which I will expand upon here in relation to graphic narrative.

²³ See Susan Bassnett's 'Between the lines', Bassnett, 2011, 102-105.

²⁴ For a survey account see Gentzler, *op. cit.*, Chapters 6 and 7. The idea of 'transparency' related to the desirability of the translation's invisibility – the new text should read seamlessly in the target language, quirky phrases from the original replaced by imaginative 'equivalents' so that the flow of the new prose is undisturbed by awkward literalisms.

²⁵ Hence the lingering perusals of syllable dynamics and word-associations within other texts, the mining of the twists and duplicities of even plain expressions, the vivid spinning of old inflections, exotic slants and crossbreed words to produce his influential neologisms. Gentzler gives an example of Derrida's approach using his 1985 essay 'Des Tours de Babel'. *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶ For example, in the case of Gayatri Spivak who operates both as theorist and translator. *Ibid.*, 182.

(i) Practical Negotiations

Underpinning the idea of translation in its older and newer senses is the conviction that opportunity for some sort of understanding is created largely through bilingual activity.

In fact, practical issues and contingent needs play a significant part in shaping overall direction and feeding in sudden cross-currents as translation proceeds.²⁷ The impact of this practical orientation is a helpful reminder that creative problem-solving (itself a form of story-telling) can form on the hoof. Eco calls translation 'negotiation', emphasising the need for give-and-take attitude, sensitive forwards-backwards exploration across both languages to open out knowledge and imaginative awareness.²⁸ Derrida says translation behaves like 'a child', speaking 'on its own', finding words as if for the first time and causing language to grow.²⁹ This can have a profoundly stimulating effect on the translator and there are examples of significantly exploratory writers (Samuel Beckett included) who in a sense came to know their own voice in this way.³⁰

In considering forms of narrative that bring together words with images, we might postulate a parallel process where 'bilingual' negotiation occurs that respects difference as well as establishing points of contact. Indeed, a searching examination of difference might be seen as an especially fertile choice, engendering a potential for establishing layered commentaries. Going cautiously with each mode at the point of developing an idea, turning them carefully against each other, weighing small units of inflection – syllables versus dots and dashes - might invite an especially imaginative attitude of precision.

One 'language', for example, might be prioritised while the other is temporarily excluded to create emphasis, just as it is currently permissible in linguistic translation to leave isolated words untranslated in a target text to remind of the original's

²⁷ Susan Bassnett describes her own process of translating as being very much led by intuitive impulse rather than rational deliberation in the first instance. Her initial draft is rushed through, gathering half-baked hunches quickly and noting immediate associations provoked by the feeling of the language. 'Gained in Translation', Bassnett, *op. cit.*, 118-119.

²⁸ Eco, *op. cit.*, 34.

²⁹ Gentzler, *op. cit.*, 164.

³⁰ Self-translation was important here. See Connor, 1989, 14. Marina Warner has argued that in Stéphane Mallarmé's as well as Beckett's cases, experience of a second, imperfectly-mastered language made for a crucial evolution in literary style. Warner, 2009.

strangeness.³¹ As part of his broad enquiry into the meeting place of written and visual language, Saul Steinberg's insertion of punctuation into pictures is an equivalent to this: the symbol keeps its capacity to reference written discourse while also extending its range. So a question mark may still evoke its linguistic heritage while freshly exercising rhythmic curvaciousness (Figure 1). This is exactly the sort of enlightened expansion of meaning across languages that Beckett has been shown to have achieved in substituting French for English and vice versa.³²

Appreciating difference between word and image also invites playful extrapolation from existing clichés. Pictorial substitution for the traditionally written content of speech-bubbles in comics is a case in point. It defies an older hierarchy whereby characters 'speak' in words and 'act' in pictures and is readily used wittily. So Marjane Satrapi (Iran) has fun with the notion of two men remembering the substance of their youthful fantasies (Figure 2) while Jon McNaught (UK) depicts a boy's suggestion for how to fill a long summer's day, pertinently made to look effortless (Figure 3).

Simply shifting between modes may create a change of mood, but awkward marriages - where image is not in sync with word - can also impact powerfully. Both Chris Ware and Jon McNaught commonly inject incidental background sound to complicate the reading. The background chivvying of a radio weather forecast in Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* (2000), or the jarring enthusiasm of a television commentary against empty lives in McNaught's 'Elmview' (2012), are characteristic (Figures 4 and 5). But the weight of the commentary can also become purely pictorial: Ware introduces street signage or food-packaging that jars in a very similar way to the radio soundtrack (Figure 6).

This type of 'bilinguism', involving swift image-text transition, can make the graphic novel a very different experience to purely word-based narrative. But the current generation are also palpably in-touch with wider multi-media influences. Formatting and layout is now more fluid, in keeping with the technological vagaries of text as well as image in daily life. While Paul Klee created visual versions of the paper-

³¹ This is part of a wider fashion for translation to retain in some way a sense of 'foreignness' – of coming from a foreign text. This is the line of Lawrence Venuti. See Gentzler, op. cit., 39.

³² Beckett moved between the two languages throughout his career which replicates particularly well the transitions in the creation of image + text narratives. No particular language, verbal or visual, need be regarded as the source or the target of translation but each will play both roles at different times, and there are many occasions for considering how each relates to the other from both sides of the equation.

based texts of his day, with pseudo-scripts and faux-maps and documents, artists such as Ware and McNaught evoke both print and electronic media in drawings that might be said to command a 'new semantic space' (just as Klee has been credited with doing).³³ Both artists quote from older art in their aesthetic delivery, but their stories also feature electronic media as plot catalysts, and text and visual content morphs at times into a new mongrel vernacular, as I will discuss below.

(ii) Somatic Semantics

A second strand of thinking relates to ideas developed further in Chapter 2 where I consider bodily storytelling.

Both verbal and visual language have their roots in the physicality of somatic experience and this continues to inhabit their evolution at a deep and surface level.³⁴ The energy and thus the shape and sound of words are essentially a consequence of air meeting soft flesh and the punctuating clatter of teeth.³⁵ A drawing, in keeping with its etymology (from the Latin verb *trahere*), is the consequence of a physical act of 'dragging' or 'pulling' - words which capture its active mobile nature more adequately than the now much mentioned 'trace' (also from *trahere*) which evokes a lighter touch.³⁶

There is thus, potentially, a significant territory of overlap and resonance to explore, though this has not been generally well appreciated in the field.³⁷ Even an artist as versatile and subtle as Chris Ware first approached bringing the two forms together in a rather surface way – giving a more visual quality to words by importing

³³ K. Porter Aichele has termed these Klee's 'unique contribution to the vocabulary of abstraction'. While informed aesthetically by his study of a wide range of written texts, his invented signs are 'nonrepetitive and unclassifiable' and 'their meanings are dissociated from any established system of conventions. They have other language systems as referents, but they themselves meet none of the basic requirements of a true notation system' such as 'unambiguity, differentiation and disjointedness'. Klee's 'kind of pictorial writing is syntactically fluid rather than fixed and occupies a new semantic space that is not governed by any conventions of representation or standard rules of apprehension'. Aichele, 2002, 201.

³⁴ The tiedness of language to bodily drives and experience is discussed in connection with the common ground of different languages in Eco, op. cit., 179-181.

³⁵ Connor, 2012.

³⁶ Traho, trahere, traxi, tractum: to draw, drag, trail, pull along, pull violently, take up, breathe, draw out, lengthen, draw together. These are a range of Classical meanings for the Latin verb. *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, 5th Edition, 2000, 610.

³⁷ Scott McCloud sees the merits of 'show' and 'tell' as mutually complimentary systems of communication but not of the same nature even if they share an ancestry in pictographic alphabets. This is not pursued to the point of seeing pictograms – as well as drawing - ultimately as stemming from a physical gesturing of experience. McCloud, op. cit., Chapter 6, 138-161.

typographical flourishes, and simplifying pictorial language to make it 'readable' just as typefaces are themselves refined.³⁸

One possibility for a more broadly physical approach to both is suggested by a recent article by Marina Warner which discusses the somatic qualities of verbal language specifically in connection with comics.³⁹ She singles out the onomatopoeic clichés of Superhero activity, 'Phew! Whaam! Aaargh! Boo! Oooh!', as a strikingly inventive mode, connecting with a 'deep stratum' of 'language on the other side of semantics' that is 'close to linguistic origins in the body'. Far from being basic in a pejorative sense, she sees these as opening up a deep exploration of human experience, to be considered alongside 20th-century avant-garde literature such as the poetry of DADA.

The visual-verbal quality of these 'vociferations'⁴⁰ is crucial, making them more physical and sensuous expressions than words alone: vocalising syllables send shockwaves into the wider image (Figure 7). But while this is in an important sense a radical collusion of the bodily aspects of word and image, it has its limitations for Warner suggests that these heightened versions of diagetic⁴¹ soundtrack offer something rather too sensational. She calls for an extension of the range of reference towards 'a more perceptive relationship to our living juices'. One option is 'to accept and explore non-diagetic noise', sound which is not altogether explained by the content of the scene but that is operating poetically.

In fact, this is an option that has been taken on in current approaches to graphic storytelling where small incidental noises and even a shifting awareness of silence have become richly inventive presences. Word and image are held here in non-sensational synaesthetic encounters that rarely treat them entirely discreetly. These also will be sounded out in what follows.

³⁸ Raeburn, 2004, 18.

³⁹ Marina Warner, 'Sound Sense: Phew! Wham! Aaargh! Boo! Oooh! Is there a natural value to certain sounds?' This was a talk given at The Seventh School of Sound International Symposium at the Southbank Centre, 18 April 2007. The author has kindly provided me with a typescript and all further quotations are from this.

⁴⁰ Warner borrows this term from Beckett's expression for Lucky's incoherence in *Waiting for Godot*. 'Vociferations is a good term...for what I am catching at here. Vociferations are expressive and hold meaning, but without referring to anything one could put into significant words. They turn into pure sign – acoustic sign.'

⁴¹ Diagetic sound in film terminology is that which relates to the action shown in a film as opposed to its non-diagetic counterpart which is not explained by what is taking place. The latter is commonly introduced to lend direction or atmosphere to the story.

III. Creative Exchanges

The case studies below examine species of translations that occur in graphic storytelling particularly regarding the ideas outlined above. My interest in looking at the work has been to consider how moving between verbal and visual conceptualising sparks sensitivity and inventiveness across both modes. Three areas of particular focus will structure the discussion.

I consider first the notion of 'gesture' in graphic storytelling. This is a term associated with the physicality of drawing but I use it to equate to the broad idea of a text's meaning according to the translator's terms of reference. Useful, also, is the eastern concept of *rasa*, translating pungently into English as 'juice', itself reminiscent of Warner's phrase above.⁴² The *rasa* pertains to the emotional tenor and presiding aesthetic of an artwork. I examine graphic narratives that establish a strong 'gesture' or 'juice', cutting across word-image difference and pooling the energies of both in the formation of an identity.

Second comes the idea of a bilingual sensitivity in graphic narrative, particularly relating to the use of noisy picturing and the infiltration of nonsense and fragmentary 'words' as carriers of nuance.

Third - and prompted by a terminology of cannibalism in relation to creative expectations of translation coined in Brazil⁴³ - I look at works that have in a sense 'eaten' other works, and, finally, at newly evolving instances of verbal-visual vernaculars growing from the old.

(i) Juicy Stories

In analysing graphic narratives, critical writing often tackles text-image interaction as the key dynamic to be investigated,⁴⁴ but in various ways my own research has

⁴² This term is discussed by Vayu Naidu in relation to her practice of performance storytelling. For Naidu the 'rasa' is the fundamental gesture of a story that the storyteller searches for (and looks to 'enact' at the heart of a performance) before settling in on the detail of what happens. See Aston and Harris, 2008, 149-150. Professional storytelling, as Naidu describes it, might be seen as a free form of translation. So while the essence of the story is the focus of the telling, the surface detail of actual words chosen will depend upon the teller's inspiration in the moment of the performance, involving perhaps an idiosyncratic response to context and audience reaction.

⁴³ See above, footnote 15.

⁴⁴ Groensteen notes this and within his own terms responds to it. Groensteen, op. cit., 10.

pulled me back and forth in this regard. Sometimes it has become helpful to relegate this relationship to a more background status: to think of the two as each an eloquent tool in conveying something that is kept more centrally in mind in driving the story.

In creating graphic narrative close commitment to text-image interaction *can* certainly be the force and form of the work. Significant examples are found in the work of the French Oubapo artists from 1992 onwards. Experience of earlier Oulipo literary strategies caused the Oubapo laboratory for comics to develop a highly exploratory range of new forms.⁴⁵

Other inventive comics, however, have evolved without a driving text-image exchange. Here the quality of the negotiation might be seen less as a foreground issue than as part of a picture of wider considerations. In terms of practice, establishing other priorities in the process of making can help release the telling from too pivotal a focus on these rather obvious ingredients. Artists may invent freely across all aspects of delivery, intent primarily on giving creative and aesthetic integrity to the work as a whole.

Particular choices in this respect will relate to an artist's own thematic interests, often carrying across serial projects. So, Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* repeatedly poses the spectacle of ignored private life against the misplaced grandness of public history.⁴⁶ This manifests visually through depictions of indulgently decorative public events – sweeping the story backwards in time - alternating with minutely catalogued minor happenings in the present.⁴⁷ Text and image mutate accordingly between the splendidly architectural, as with the sequences relating to the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition, to passages of modest and banal repetition such as Jimmy's unhappy visit to hospital (Figures 8 and 9). Jon McNaught's narratives show a sensitive and on-going concern with transitions between indoors and out, resulting in

⁴⁵ Matthews and Brotchie, 1998, 321-326.

⁴⁶ While always concerned with exploring intimate private lives, Ware's other works to date do not share in quite this way a contrasting backcloth of absurd public spectacle. *Building Stories* does, however, use architecture conspicuously – in the guise of a single apartment building - as a vessel for human exchange and introspection, so there is always a sense of the small individual moving within a larger public framework that endures over time and sees the passage of many such lives.

⁴⁷ This relationship has been analysed by Shawn Gilmore who points out the role of the work's paratextual endpages in 'guid[ing] the reader towards a synthetic interpretation that interrelates the novel's two main narratives'. In fact, while Ware certainly enjoys enriching his narratives with esoteric instructions and diagrammatic paraphrases, Gilmore shows how synthesising elements inhabit the work more pervasively: the two narratives, private and public, share 'thematic, symbolic and visual resonances'. 'Public and Private Histories in Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*' in Ball and Kuhlman, 2010, 146-158.

stories such as 'Elmview', about an old people's home, that are punctuated by key moments that merge both elements lyrically – ceilings that open out onto 'sky', for example, like a ghostly relative of a James Turrell skyspace (Figure 10). The text, too, fluctuates in sympathy. With McNaught, both inside and outside can 'speak' their presence with or without words. The great outdoors remains text-free when it is spared human interventions, as in *Pebble Island* (2010) (Figure 11). This is a very different space to that depicted in *Dockwood* (2012) containing urban stories with soundscapes of clinks and rustles (Figure 12).

The opportunity for carrying major themes across the verbal-visual partnership means that even in mainstream graphic storytelling digressive translations – as we might call the adjustments made necessary where specific conventions are fitted to new needs or contexts - happen incrementally as the artist releases a central idea into the properties of both expressive forms.

As an instance of this, treatment of text often recalls very recognisable literary/filmic models. The idea of the narrator (from the novel), or the voiceover (from film), and the centrality of dialogue to plot development (from both), have their equivalents in the boxed commentaries and relays of speech-bubbles in comics. This may result in some very predictable manoeuvring but there is still always space for local deviation. In his anthropomorphic account of his father's wartime experiences *Maus* (1991), Art Spiegelman provides a typical 'voiceover' with his ribbons of text over pictures. These carry his father's words - seemingly verbatim - recounting the memories visualised beneath. This presiding text is complimented by more impressionistic dialogue placed within the pictures by means of speech-bubbles. But in using these very settled conventions, Spiegelman still forges a conceptually coherent relationship between the two strata of text to suit his main theme. The one, overarching, seems to contain the other, which is dynamic and embedded in the visualised memory (Figure 13). The remembering seems, therefore, itself to carry what is being remembered.

At times Spiegelman plays with this simple hierarchy to provide additional layers that - still respecting these first principles - emphasise the actual fact of the telling, itself a central theme. Thus he intermittently shows his father speaking the story as if in the immediate present, framed inside the main picture space (Figure 14). Elsewhere, sequences of images with little or no overlying commentary feature Spiegelman and his wife in this same time zone, dealing with their feelings about what they have heard. Their presence seems relatively unmediated, as if we are listening in, and this

pushes the rest of the narrative back into a more distant space (Figure 15). So the images alternatively beckon and are distanced, and the careful manipulation of text is part of this reading.

The idea for *Maus* matured through Spiegelman's extended interviews with his father and its construction respects this origin. In finding a 'visual voice' for his father's words, the artist looked for a form of graphic language to communicate specific qualities of authenticity. He wanted a contrived uncontrivedness, like a 'forged diary':

It wanted to have that feeling of handwriting. So I was working on stationary with a fountain pen and correction with typewriter correction fluid. And I wanted it to feel like a manuscript because that would allow a kind of intimacy to it, and it would keep me from frill and decoration in the drawing.⁴⁸

The gesture of the drawing is indeed economical (Figure 16), with a confident clumsy eloquence that looks back to Franz Masereel's woodcuts (Figure 17). Tight little scenes dispense stark actions. Chiseled shapes emerge through thick outlines, modified by heavy hatching and strong stripes with energetic stabs and dashes for the lighter mid-tones. Like the treatment of text, the mark-making repertoire is orderly and worked-through, though the penwork moves into summarizing virtuosity once the action shifts to scenes of mass extermination (Figure 18), where photographic reference is also apparent (Figure 19). The aesthetic preoccupations in the drawing of *Maus* give it a variant of juice somewhere between memoir and fable. These drawings have digested archive photographs and this is undisguised but always crossing over into a nightmare of masks and monstrosities (Figure 20).

Other memory-stories opt for different flavourings. French artist David B's *Epileptic*⁴⁹ (2005) is a large graphic novel which recounts the author's experience growing up with an epileptic brother in the sixties and seventies. It is in two senses a memoir: both a memory of a childhood, but also a detailed exploration of processes of memory. As with *Maus*, but much more centrally, the storytelling is a form of self-

⁴⁸ Spiegelman speaking in a radio interview with Neal Conan on National Public Radio, USA, billed as "MetaMaus": The Story Behind Spiegelman's Classic' (5 October 2011). <http://m.npr.org/news/Books/141085597?singlePage=true> Accessed 23.1.2013. Spiegelman describes how in *Maus* he left behind his earlier 'overheated' expressionist mode of drawing, quietening his visual approach towards a matter-of-fact simplification 'appropriate' to the text. The drawings 'had a little bit more of a handwriting, gestural quality to them. They allowed for a little bit of distance', unlike his earlier attempts with the subject matter.

⁴⁹ The English translation of the French original, *L'Ascension du Mal*, originally published in instalments in Paris by L'Association, 1996-2003.

interrogation, presented very deliberately as a way out of the past for the writer.⁵⁰ A key visual ingredient in representing this struggle is a constant breaking down of barriers and losses of containment or control.

The mode of drawing itself is fundamental here, since the flood of its underlying rhythm launches a sense of comprehensive interpenetrability. In pictorial terms, metaphors multiply like disease in contaminated water: ghastly spillages, ruptures and inundation, and fantastical suffocations (Figure 21). Teeming enemies thrive - whether in David B.'s own childhood drawings (Figure 22) or actual representatives of the medical profession (Figure 23). Because everything is physical drawing, disparate elements are made to transform in ways that mimic psychological disintegration extravagantly (the author's own mental integrity is crucially at stake throughout the story). The nightmare is in essence strongly bodily (Figure 24). The graphic language conveying this, though sharp and formal in its clearly executed contrasts and stylised delineation, swarms with all-over energy characteristic of the illness at the book's centre (Figure 25).

Pursuing the other end of Spiegelman's memoir-fable blend, a very different energy comes with the modern folktales of Swiss artist Anna Sommer. Sommer's *Damen Dramen* (1996) is a sequence of nine erotic parables about contemporary women.⁵¹ The reference to 'drama' in the title is apposite, as there is a performative quality to Sommer's visual language.

These stories issue forth like theatre improvisations. A man finds a dress in a rubbish bag and conjures up a 'woman' to serenade (Figure 26). A woman disguises herself as a man who has returned to life, and on delivering a lesson to his slayer, reveals her true identity and flourishes different tricks (Figure 27). These adults, though certainly highly sexualised and even violent beings, play around like overgrown children - dressing up, getting their own back, getting their wicked way. The motives for these antics reside in age-old yarns - revealing misdemeanours, escaping detection. One thing leads to another, and usually it all ends in bed (Figure 28).

⁵⁰ This has become a conspicuous theme in contemporary graphic novels. The dialogue between the present-day self and the narrated past self is a central narrative device for Marjane Satrapi, another prominent L'Association artist.

⁵¹ *Damen Dramen*. Zürich: Arrache Coeur, 1996.

Sommer's drawings are suitably direct, and their detail – taking in office accoutrements, and all kinds of street furniture, as well as domestic paraphernalia through from nappy-changing equipment to kitchen items - is offered in plain-speaking visual 'prose'. Uniform contours describe the content of these images but they also link across separate scenes rhythmically to support the sequencing of the action (Figure 29). There is pleasure in surface pattern, another linking device. No boxing of scenes here, or inserted strips of verbal commentary to structure the reading: the whole is held together by graphic means. So the shapely dynamics of disporting bodies flicker through individual scenes to carry the eye forwards. Some pages linger on this abstract dance like a vaudeville turn or burst of song (Figure 30).

Sommer avoids words except in her bald titles – 'The Rubbishman's Wife', 'The Woman from the Petshop' - and the strong visual focus of occasional signage. As with Satrapi and Mc Naught, speech and thought-bubbles are subverted pictorially so that a character 'speaks' an object or 'utters' a signal (Figure 31). This is Sommer's way of taking pleasure in the logic of the medium, so speech is rendered as image, as a mime artist acts out a conversation or draws an idea in air in place of a soliloquy. The joke of the translation depends in each case on knowledge of a pre-existing convention that is gracefully turned on its head.

Sommer's work is at heart ticklish slapstick; David B.'s, an unravelling, uneasy remembering. In both instances, the logic of the design and the nature of the drawing idiom stem from an idea of form deep within the subject matter, speaking on the one hand of disastrous inundation, and on the other of sparky ingenuity taking on life's trials. As with Spiegelman's tale, the reading takes place in as well as between the lines of story, and what is seen is also heard, though in a striking sense silently.

(ii) Bilingual Soundings

As I have said already, recent tendencies in graphic storytelling have focused anew on strange incidental sounds as 'voices' for pictures, although an interest in deviant sound as part of the mechanism of graphic storytelling goes back to much earlier comics – not simply to Superhero onomatopoeia as Warner seems to claim. George Herriman's strip *Krazy Kat* (1913-1944) attracted the regard of modernist writers for

its playful appreciation of dialect and phonetic spellings and its constant experimental pleasure in formal rhythms across visual and verbal.⁵²

As Warner points out, focusing on the sounds contained in individual letters and syllables rather than the taken-for-granted meaning of full familiar words awards a more attention-seeking vitality to text.⁵³ By breaking words into phonetic components, or finding dialectical variants that seem to recast them, even the simplest labels become textured and more cross-sensual in effect.

Herriman's exotic sound-play works invariably in the direction of humour (Figure 32). The elaborately misfiring dialogue between Krazy Kat and Ignatz the mouse is heightened by their strange creole, and their slapstick dance more absurdly physical for its spelt-out 'pows' and 'zings', although there is an allusion here to the clunkiness of human relationships more generally. In this more serious way Herriman anticipates the attentive listening-in of Chris Ware's storytelling and the gentle aural undertow of Jon McNaught's.

Chris Ware: tinkering at the edges

Chris Ware's comics are attuned to urban life in contemporary America, full of disposable consumables. His strategies blend film-inspired expectations for a soundtrack (where background sound is a device for storytelling but also a definer of mood) with the gleanings of his own close ear for detail and emotional resonance. Also pertinent is his broader idea of the musicality of the comics form: like musical composition, comics creation is concerned with 'tak[ing] pieces of experience and freez[ing] them in time'.⁵⁴ His idiosyncratic treatments of layout feed off his enthusiasm for jazz, with their syncopated themes, rotating rhythms, and sudden shifts in direction of play.⁵⁵

⁵² The poet E. E. Cummings was a declared fan, and wrote an introduction to the first published collection of Herriman's strips (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1946). Cummings practiced a policy of defamiliarisation of the reader in his own poems through devices that can be paralleled in Herriman's work. Both artists enjoy phonetic spellings, dialect-based and fragmentary words, and experiments with visual spacing and layout.

⁵³ Warner, op. cit., n.p.

⁵⁴ 'Introduction: Chris Ware and the "Cult of Difficulty"' in Ball and Kuhlman, op. cit., xix.

⁵⁵ See Raeburn, op. cit., 24-25. Ware plays and studies ragtime 'assiduously', but also sees reading a comic as like playing a piece of music and asserts that they are structurally comparable: "In music you breathe life into the composition by playing it. In comics you make the strip come alive by reading it, by experiencing it beat by beat as you would playing music." The design of a comic is like the composition of music: a way of "aesthetically experienc[ing] comics" is "to pull back and consider the composition all

Ware's use of sound was already striking in his first extended work, *Jimmy Corrigan*, where painful attention to the fabric of Jimmy's domestic environment and the wider spaces of his wanderings reinforces the sense of a hollow life: very little happens, but the insufferable pace of the not-happening is made extremely tangible. A drip falls and a telephone 'rings' (Figure 33), slowness meeting urgency, and such sensual incongruities are typical. Jimmy himself is out of kilter: never belonging, unhealthily oversensitive, and preyed on by what is ordinarily negligible. His body is itself clumsy and makes unsettling sounds that disturb (Figure 34). Even his tentative sense of beauty is mocked by inability to make the right connection – recording an aeroplane rather than the intended birdsong is one instance of his habitual derailments (Figure 35). Sounds disturb Jimmy's subdued attempts to bear things (Figure 36), and little energies terrify him (Figure 37). Often he invests them with far too much hope (Figure 38), not capable of weighing them fairly or finding comfort in their simple smallness. One of Ware's overriding concerns is the poetry of small things, and how shapes, textures and sounds can engender a state of 'illuminated awareness'.⁵⁶ The reader is exposed to this sensibility through Ware's own capacity to meet lyrical relationships and echoes in improbable places (Figure 39). His protagonist, though, remains internalised, unable to listen or distinguish.

The soundplay in Ware's storytelling extends the onomatopoeic referencing of earlier comics described by Warner as coming closer to the physicality of living. With Ware, this is generally at first sight a text-based mode - he does not create pictorialised sound-words like the Superhero comics - yet he does register their *physical* nature in certain key ways. So his strings of consonants defy silent reading and demand to be actively voiced. They are also generally capitalised to indicate that they belong with the 'noisy' and require extra attention, and are clearly localised within or across the thing that makes them, so in this sense they identifiably relate to something in the world, often an object, through this visual proximity. One sequence in a florists⁵⁷ in *Building Stories* shows the wrapping of flowers thus (Figure 40): 'BDGDGDGD' (pulling out brown paper from a roll), 'SHRRPPP' (tearing the same against the blade), 'KRNKL' (wrapping the flowers), 'KRNKL' (sealing with a sticker), 'CHNK'

at once, as you would the façade of a building. You can look at a comic as you would at a structure that you can turn around in your mind and see all sides at once."

⁵⁶ Nathalie op de Beeck's phrase, from her discussion of Ware's *Building Stories*. Op de Beeck, 2006, 827.

⁵⁷ This is from the young life story of the amputee contained in *Building Stories*. It is contained in a hardback blue-green book with no title on the cover but with a diagrammatic introduction on the opening endpage, 'I just want to fall asleep and never wake up again'. The *Building Stories* box operates like an uncatalogued archive and the lack of titles and page numbers is part of its condition of overall narrative fluidity.

(stapling cellophane), 'CHNK' (and again), 'SET' (now the final positioning). This is characteristic Ware, inventing as he goes but also making use of forms already settled in his repertoire ('KRNKL' and 'SET' are such). In translating sound he is literally inventing language, devising a colourful evolving labelling for actions that are routine but suddenly made visibly lively.

But the dual delivery (every sound is accompanied by a careful picturing of its reason) is placed within the context of a day much occupied by silence. The crossing arms in the central panel anchor the girl's existence: a gesture to the little activities defining a life which is also shown to be a process of watching and waiting. This is one page in a sequence that moves the girl out of the drifting tracks of memory that tell her overall unhappy story. There, more conventional narrative commentary and speech-bubble dialogues take over (Figure 41). The shop, by contrast, is a place of gently noisy activity, where people rarely speak (although little cards carry their messages, and soliloquies are possible) and where the girl seems more at ease with her melancholy. In walking to its door in the morning she notices delicacy in the wider city.

These particular pages carry atmosphere and theme rather than the cut and thrust of plot. Ware's work has been compared to visual poetry⁵⁸ and this tendency is especially clear here, where the entire page is a tightly woven textile distinguished visually by pronounced controlling rhythms, balancing harmonies and contrasts, and structuring shifts in accent from line to line. By contrast, the wider memory sequences are formally much more open-threaded and mobile in shape - more akin to sprawling flow charts than sonnets - and filled with events taking place, so that they are less appreciable as self-contained pieces either in this concentrated design sense or as intense snapshots of being alive. Ware's use of shards of sound on the more poetic pages seems to work in tune with the more concentrated aesthetic. They gleam like grit.

⁵⁸ Of Ware's early strip *Quimby the Mouse*, for example, Gene Kannenberg says the 'strip collections recall sonnet sequences in that each page is a single unit and the aggregate whole is more concerned with communicating mood and feeling than in presenting narrative'. Quoted by Daniel Worden in 'On Modernism's Ruins: The Architecture of "Building Stories" and *Lost Buildings*' in Ball and Kuhlman, 2010, 110.

Jon McNaught: soundscapes

The young English artist, Jon McNaught, has built on Ware's atmospheric treatment of spelt-out sound effects, but he is achieving his own direction.

Throughout his first works,⁵⁹ McNaught made captured sound rather than voiced narration or dialogue his key form of text-content, and what Ware uses intermittently he makes a central device. While Ware principally records human activity, moreover, McNaught's ear is caught by all sorts of passing traffic: his attention is less character-centred, and more genuinely atmospheric in focus. What results is a collage of different elements, human and non-human, machine-made as well as organic, and in some ways close conceptually to an eclectic and opportunistic documentary soundtrack in both approach and intention - a type of *Realmontage*.⁶⁰

As a representative example, *Birchfield Close* (2010) is a narrative piece that follows the experience of two boys idling away a summer's afternoon. It offers a variety of sounds as follows: a bleeping computer game, different birdsongs, car drones, noises snatched from the interiors of different houses (phones ringing, doors slamming, dogs barking, coughing, a burst of indeterminate music), song lyrics from a radio, a TV soundtrack offering disjointed bits of a film, the 'sound' of a gun going off (this in one of the boy's imaginations), the soft swish of a hot air balloon, fragments of 'Little Nemo' being watched on a passing plane, and eventually - at the end of the long afternoon - the *stompings* and *klinkings* as the boys go off to bed.

McNaught gives all of these sounds equal status, awarding them uniform speech-bubbles,⁶¹ which are strikingly circular to compliment the regular squares of the gridded pages (although the song lyrics, for example, float freely in the air, as they seem to do in life). As with Ware, contrived onomatopoeic spellings are frequent, though McNaught delivers more gently in lower-case handwriting. These cover bird song ('chwhip chwhip') and ticking car engines ('dru dru drum') as well as distant

⁵⁹ Including *Birchfield Close* (2010) and *Pebble Island* (2010). *Dockwood* (2012), his most recent work at the time of writing, sees him introducing elements of extended conversation.

⁶⁰ This is Ernst Bloch's term for Walter Benjamin's process of looking. Nathalie op de Beeck has applied it to New York filmmaker Jem Cohen's treatment of 'movements and sounds' but it reads well in relation to McNaught's aesthetic: Bloch wrote that Benjamin's philosophical 'detective work produced...a *Realmontage*, that is a bringing together... of things that were far removed from each other superficially... [T]hings that, in the normal sphere of experience, stood at an extreme distance from one another were suddenly jolted, through this montage, into the closest proximity.' Op de Beeck, op. cit., 814.

⁶¹ The world 'speaks' in McNaught's stories.

moving air ('fshhhh') (Figure 42). Although both of the latter spellings seem freshly coined, other quoted sounds are familiar from comics and beyond ('boom', 'yelp', 'ha ha ha', 'zzz'). The attention to noise in a general way, however, and the policy of setting diverse individual elements symphonically together, gives a narrative texture that rushes together the close-to-home and the unfamiliar (Figure 43). The whole effect is to destabilise the tendency within habitual experience to edit out the abundantly available richness of sensory effect.

This use of synaesthetic juxtaposition has matured in a subsequent story in *Pebble Island* to offer an exchange between a TV soundtrack and a quiet cottage interior (Figure 44). Here, rather differently, both sound and image converse with matching voices, reflecting the core poetic contrast of the central notion: technology versus homestead, fast action meeting enduring clutter. The TV images are brighter and occupy a consistent formal rectangle with a text band sympathetically flickering in front; the room is darker and full of odd shapes but has no words, only objects with unspoken secrets. 'Pilgrims' (2011) is a further story featuring silence but this time with no overlying text at all. A similar central contrast is established between the principal aspects of content: a large, fresco-clad interior of a basilica and small scurrying tourists with sweets, cameras, audio-guides and gift-shop purchases (Figure 45). The visitors' activity gives an implied soundtrack of rustling, of clicking cameras and clinking coins, but the focus overall is visual this time: the fresco is a type of comic strip hovering above the strap-line of the tourists, and the delivery helps keep this witty interplay dominant.

Both McNaught and Ware, therefore, represent an approach to graphic storytelling that leans significantly towards aspects of visual poetry, but which also takes an interest in edited sound manipulation akin to the effects of montage film or music mixing. The inclusion of snatched sound and inventiveness with textual language at a detailed level makes different sorts of stories possible, where texture (rather than direction) of experience is cast as a distinct narrative focus in its own right.

(iii) Cannibalism

Commentators as distinguished and as varied as George Steiner and Jacques Derrida have built in their own ways on Walter Benjamin's famous comments

regarding the translator's task, which was to discover or recover the language that all languages lead back to.⁶²

Derrida's version is characteristically enthusiastic about the potential for plurality of expression as part of this process. Rather than the universal language that Benjamin postulated he looks for multiplicity of languages and meanings arising during the course of negotiation. New expression may occur not merely in the fabric of the constructed target text but in relation to how the original source text may itself be re-encountered. Languages – 'the means by which we understand ourselves' – grow by these means.⁶³

In wider cultural terms, translation as an impetus for literary creation has certainly produced some dynamic (and extreme) interpretations of source texts, resulting from an opening out of approaches and changing priorities. So, for example, non-semantic aspects of a text's identity have been particularly targeted (the Brazilian de Campos brothers emphasised sound and visual qualities of words as key), and elements of the translator's own identity are sometimes incorporated in a fundamental way, as when Christopher Logue made a determined virtue of his own lack of Greek in 'translating' Homer.⁶⁴

By way of pursuing these ideas into the visual, two aspects of radical translation relating to graphic storytelling are here considered that integrate in some sense with an idea of creative 'cannibalism'. The first of these explores graphic narratives that consume a source 'text', fundamentally transforming it in the process to give an open new reading of the original. The second looks at instances of new language being generated even as fresh ways of showing/telling stories are being devised. In particular, instances of technological visual 'feedback', and also 'speaking' diaries are considered as two types of current vernacular.

⁶² Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', reprinted in Benjamin, 1973, 69-82.

⁶³ Gentzler's paraphrase. Gentzler's discussion of Derrida's ideas relates Derrida's commentary on Benjamin's text to his own experience of how literary translations were being approached in practical terms around the year 2000. Gentzler, *op. cit.*, 164.

⁶⁴ Logue worked out his version by scrutinising existing English translations. Logue, 2001.

Eating Words

Steiner identified a double-edged energy in translation: on the one hand trust and respectfulness of the original, assisting its survival; on the other aggressive and deposing, and carrying an inevitable sense of loss.⁶⁵ In connection with the latter, postcolonial politics have deeply affected current ideas, as has feminist theory, both in their way being interested in critiquing and superseding older orders.⁶⁶ But even here, where translation may be a weapon for indignation, it can also be a way of salvaging something that has run out of appropriateness but is still seen to be worth saving. Translation in this sense is close to what happens when a text is 'updated' within a language, where the lexis has been judged as old-fashioned and inaccessible: it was in this spirit that in the 1980s Angela Carter made feminist versions of fairy stories full of menstrual imagery and overt eroticism. The impulse to translate may flow from a decision to reclaim or recover deeper 'truth', as with the first vernacular translations of the Bible out of the Latin.⁶⁷ Something is always being destroyed by these means, something retained, and the process is always transforming.

The mutation of fairy stories through cross- and intra-cultural retellings has been a particularly regular arena for contesting perceptions.⁶⁸ Indeed, folk and fairy tales were first a product of oral culture, and oral telling is itself a combination of characteristically stable linguistic elements, such as mnemonic conventions, and others less so, such as reformulations and linguistic shifts. A mixture, therefore, of retaining and discarding, fairy tales have a formal heritage that has been implicitly cannibalistic and shape-shifting.

Warja Lavater (1913-2007) was a Swiss artist whose accordion-fold abstract books specialised in visual permutations of key European fairy stories. The books have attracted both scholarly and pedagogical interest in recent years, because they seem

⁶⁵ Steiner has argued for a 'four-beat model of the hermeneutic motion of the act of translation' involving 'initiative trust – aggression – incorporation – reciprocity or restitution'. Steiner, *op. cit.*, 312-317.

⁶⁶ Gentzler draws a connection between these two elements in certain contexts, giving examples from French Quebec where 'a bond exists between feminist theory and postcolonial theory'. Gentzler, *op. cit.*, 198.

⁶⁷ David Edgar's play 'Written on the Heart' (RSC, Stratford, October 2011-March 2012) explored the political and philosophical implications of the translation of the King James Bible in the early 17th century. It is a play about the idealism and destructivity of translation as well as the impossibility of pinning meaning down.

⁶⁸ Jack Zipes has looked at this with respect to the convolutions across time of *Red Riding Hood*, for example. See his introductory essay 'The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood' in his edited anthology of the tale, Zipes, 1993, 17-88.

to offer a spatial approach to narrative that seems ahead of its time, and also because their rich physicality has been found to encourage active and imaginative reading in children.⁶⁹

Lavater's renditions of *Little Red Riding Hood* (Figure 46) and *Cinderella* (Figure 47) are representative of her general approach in translating the stories into visual mode. The detail of the elements within the visualisations, and the careful decisions in placing these and articulating each page within the sequence, gives an idea of the distilled quality of the aesthetic and also of Lavater's capacity to suggest the unfolding of events through choreographing shapes and colours. Typically, the story elements are given geometrical symbols, as here in *Little Red Riding Hood* where individual characters are seen as variously coloured circles, and significant objects have become simplified mappings (the house) or shapes possibly derived from the idea of a section (the bed). Where this repertoire extends more idiosyncratically, graphic energy may intervene as when a free-wheeling flourish stands for Cinderella's dress. The various elements are always clearly distinguished at the beginning with a word-image key, but beyond this words are absent, and the translation into visual language is complete.

The language of the 'target text' here operates by means such as articulate formal adjustments (as where one circle absorbs another to suggest it has eaten another character) and shifting spatial relationships as the ingredients interact. The options are determined by the fundamentals of design, which has a clearly Bauhaus feel: manipulations of scale, the exploitation of opposites such as soft and hard or dark and light to indicate different emotional resonances, the introduction of echoing rhythms or a sudden energy of resistance through blocking shapes or opposing lines, and so on.

In Figure 46, after the key, Little Red Riding Hood exits her warm brown house, waved off by her golden well-fed mother. The forest – a sea of green and brown circles - is ahead of her but at this stage it is a gentle fringe, not impinging on the ground in front of the cottage. By the time of the enlarged image shown here, the red dot is hemmed in by trees that are gigantic, and an immense black circle, the wolf, is blocking the way directly. The red dot is now centrally disabled, throbbing against the dark shapes.

⁶⁹ Sandra Beckett, 'Artists' books for a cross-audience' in Keenan and Thompson, 2004, 163-166.

In Figure 47, Cinderella is first seen not from the air but straight-on, floating inside her ashy fireplace. The blue-grey of her cindery world stays with her, as if the marks of her work stain her skin: she carries an aura of grey like a travelling dust cloud in the second image. When she enters the palace some way into the story (the third image here) she is splendidly dressed in orange and gold to meet her formal triangle of a prince. As they finally overlap in conjugal bliss the orange glow of the glass slippers compliments her blue-tinged interior, making her subtle and layered in her new state of happiness.

Lavater's stories depend on an extended professional exploration of pictograms (she also developed logos and designed signage) and a continual study of abstract sequencing in drawings such as Figure 48. The keys to her books sometimes carry German, French and English word alternatives as if she conceived of the pictures as occupying the intersection between these languages – rather like Benjamin's ideal of an all-encompassing language into which others stream. As a Swiss, bilingual and even trilingual communication was a fact of life and this perhaps offered an experiential impetus to her life's work. It is also significant that these stories are known across European culture, and thus transcend linguistic difference. They are imbibed as part of childhood in different ways: as printed texts, improvised tellings, pantomime and music, film and now multi-media. Their basic shape is within the circle of a most readers' understanding and coming into contact with Lavater's work produces a desire to speak them, returning them to their oral beginnings.

An experience of recognition such as this is by no means the only response a cannibalistic visual translation can produce and at the other end of the scale the source text can be so obliterated as to become unrecognisable. Jochen Gerner is a contemporary French artist whose technique is a form of physical smothering, often with the blackest of inks. As with Tom Phillips' *A Humument*, Gerner's starting-point is found printed matter, of considerable variety, and out of his interventions come narratives that are often thematically focused but open-ended in their specifics. His concept of translation has been fed by Oubapo experiments but he also describes his creative objective as personal research for secrets.⁷⁰ Projects proceed by extended exploration of an existing 'text' which may itself have strong visual elements (from IKEA catalogues and postcards to earlier comics). He does this by

⁷⁰ This is explicit in the title of one drawing depicting floating elements lifted from Hergé, 'Objectif Secret' (2003). <http://www.jochengerner.com/index.php?page=galerie&id=32&suiwant=oui> Accessed 3.2.2013.

drawing directly on top, implementing calculated selections and radical obliteration by means of active physical cutting and lavish application of ink and paint. These drawings are often presented in sequence, as wall-based series, variations on a theme. Others become books, as with the particularly high-profile *Tnt en Amérique* (2002) which is an alteration of Hergé's *Tintin en Amérique* and a commentary on modern American culture, and *ABSTRACTION (1941-1968)* (2011) which responds to the abstract qualities of a 1968 French comic book to establish a link with post-war American Abstract Expressionism.

Like the artefacts that stimulate them, Gerner's narratives are 'found'. The condensed cleverness of the final distillation arrives through 'exercises, experiments'⁷¹ but also through scouring the surface of the original for a personal reading:

Through analysing Hergé's comic strip *Tintin en Amérique* I realized the recurring incident of falling bodies in this book. I wanted to understand where this permanent giddiness came from. In early 2001, I began to understand this violence (violence always softened and made to seem ordinary thanks to the clear line of the drawing: getting punched is much more violent than what is shown in this kind of book).

The same filtering occurs with the words:

I first analysed and dissected the text in Hergé's balloons. Then I kept the words for their meanings (in relation to the violence and the symbolical themes of American society) and their musical qualities. I drew up lists.

The final images (Figure 49) discover a hidden narrative about urban 'giddiness'. American culture, by implication, supplants the gentler romantic days of Hergé's Europe. Gerner's pictograms are salvaged from the colours in Hergé's images, his words extracted from his speech-bubbles, so in each case a translation takes place to create a new blend. The colours, however, remain strangely familiar – Hergé's palette is distinctive – and the title gives enough of a clue as to the origin of the work, but the spotlight on the reorientation of Europe and America post-war completely inverts the original's European optimism. New-world clichés glow through the night.

⁷¹ Gerner's words here and in the following quotations come from a statement on the website of his gallery, Galerie Anne Barrault, Paris (my translation): www.galerieannebarrault.com/jochen_gerner/tnt.html Accessed 2.2.2013.

ABSTRACTION proceeds very similarly (Figure 50), with the same policy of selection through dark editing that is also concerned with illuminating a connection between cultures – this time, high and low art, but still with a European/American focus. These drawings tease out rhythmic, gestural qualities in images from a pocket-edition *bande dessinée* of 1968, excising almost entirely the original pictorial references.⁷² Gerner's interest is in indicating the underlying relationship between the graphic art of cheap commercial work with the seemingly radical enquiry of the revered Americans. His treatment of the text also causes a hidden poetic energy to surface, reminiscent of modernist writing. The words selected sit more esoterically within their images than in *Tnt en Amérique*, and there is more onus on the reader to find associations that satisfy - more of a feeling of encountering something just out of reach. The new phrasing achieves only a vague sense of direction, as if fog is interfering with the line of vision. The words taken individually combine obtuseness and lyricism, with the occasional hit on a piece of pointed military vocabulary, giving a pervading sense of war, or of a sea battle somewhere in progress, while still holding on to a quality of senselessness (Figure 51). As before, Gerner has gravitated to the topic of the enormity of the Second World War in bringing cultural change.⁷³ Here is a typical verbal sequence, taken from consecutive panels (pp.33-40):

BATEAU/ EN FLAMMES
OVER
OISEAU D'ARGENT
ORDRES
DOUTE/ ARGENT
BRAVO
OH!
FEU
CHEF
MORT/ PORTE-AVIONS
RETOUR
CAPITAINE/ JOUR
MERCİ

⁷² Entitled *Sueurs froides*, NAVY no.124, Imperia and Co, 1968.

⁷³ The two dates in his title reference the date of America's entry to the war, 1942, and the year of student protests in France, 1968, which drew in turn on the ideas of the American Civil Rights movement.

PILOTES
ACCUEIL/ ENTHOUSIASME
JOUR HEUREUX

The plates themselves offer very stylised renderings: fluid permutations of white on black that offer shards of light and electric flickers, swimming amoebae, crimped clouds on stripes, regimented bars of light, strings of beads, comets and star bursts, drop-shapes obedient to gravity, filings suddenly magnetised, and so on. As with the words, these elements at times seem to suggest a context - the possibility of an event - but at others wander inscrutably (Figure 52). A further implicit narrative arises from a specific art-historical echo. Roy Lichtenstein's shadow lies over the project - particularly in Gerner's preservation of typical comics jargon such as is seen in Figure 53. But the hierarchy is overturned: abstraction is found in comics, whereas Lichtenstein had brought comics to abstraction. Gerner makes a stand for the graphic arts.

As with Lavater, Gerner's approach to translation is rooted in a wider visual practice that is committed to exploring the interface between word and image. Gerner calls this 'infinite' in its possibilities, a relationship that is 'continually confronting in a kind of alchemy'.⁷⁴ In his own way he seems to support Derrida's idea of plurality occurring where languages meet, just as Lavater's work seemed to look in the direction of Benjamin's more universal and foundational idea of expression, capable of leading us back to our roots.

New Vernaculars

Thinking about how new elements of language emerge through processes of translation in the context of this research has highlighted aspects of fluidity and fusion in individual artists' work. In terms of linguistics, the translation of foreign into native tongue and back again, and also the moving of languages through different systems or varieties of mediation and expression (the impact of mass media on local dialects, for example), spawns neologisms, loan words, hybrids, adaptations, and as well misconceptions and wild guesses, to deliver radical as well as subtle slippage. When we contemplate the idea of 'new' language in graphic storytelling, we might therefore anticipate an equivalence of mix.

⁷⁴ Statement on Galerie Anne Barrault website, op. cit.

In small ways the detailed vocabulary of contemporary graphic stories – the fabric of lives being depicted, the rhythms of spoken exchanges and, as already indicated, even the changing texture of silence - is acknowledging the direction of societal flow. The mobile phone, for example, is now a widespread visual-textual point of interaction between characters in comic strips, already achieving a status of near inevitability in personal space (Figure 54). It seems now an iconic extension of the voice box, rather as Beckett's Krapp related to his tape recorder as an external version of memory.⁷⁵

More broadly - and touching on qualities of design rather than the specifics of content - it is possible to suggest that the visual-verbal language of these stories is clearly now responding to the level of screen-based activity in modern life. Jon McNaught regularly uses suggestions of screen-grabs not just to dress the scene but to complicate the telling, allowing his own scene-frames to mutate into screens inside the story, so that the reader's viewpoint moves into the narrative space itself. This is part of a wider exploration of vicarious distraction which carries across successive stories. These slices of 'somewhere other' interjecting between real-time experiences clarify the quality of the life to hand: whether calm and methodically focussed on soothing routine, or leaden from unremitting boredom.

Specific graphic effects are also growing to accommodate these new variants of aestheticised experience. McNaught offers bright, fizzing computer games, and the front-on camera work of stark black and white film replaying on TV (Figures 55 and 56). Ware – who is often very attentive to light in his images and sensitive to the possibility of a focusing geometry – makes laptops glow like white triangles at the centre of dark rooms (Figure 57). Both artists observe the sensory aspects of these new arrivals, finding through the reach of drawing a feeling for their distinctness. But Ware through his confectionary page-layouts also evokes a sense of underlying graphic continuity across old world and new, bringing together semblance of circuit diagram with computer network (Figure 58).

While acknowledging the new technology, McNaught and Ware have also gravitated to the fringes of towns for reference, where neglect and piecemeal development

⁷⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, 1958.

preserve debris and refuse.⁷⁶ Ben Katchor (USA) has made the edges of cosmopolitan life the mainstay of his graphic enquiry, and since 1988 has created regular eight-panel strips⁷⁷ featuring the poorer districts of New York where businesses struggle to stay 'relevant', and also the qualities of locations such as hotels and farms and airports where the essentials of globetrotting commerce coincide. Far from embracing the radically new, Katchor's snapshots make clear that it is possible to address the topics of the day by implementing older words unsullied by current usage, and almost entirely neglecting to register artefacts that are up-to-the-minute. The present is always out-of-date.

Katchor's view of international travel, for example, resists straightforward allocation to specific nowness - although it alludes in a very compelling general way to fluid contemporary values and a condition of extended dislocation. In Figure 59, middle-aged manic travellers lurch from airport to hotel, from game of squash to indeterminate meal, in non-stop chatter. Clothing and architecture suggest a context someplace sometime recently in being anodyne and superficial, but this could be at any point in the late 20th century. The hotel was clearly quick to build, a temporary fix, and everything that might have tended towards particularity has either been watered down or overdone. As is the case with the food - 'chop suey de foie gras, Hungarian style' - nice distinctions have been overridden, and this is carried over in the ubiquitous insensitive lighting, the unremitting presence of cheap luxuries ('A cigar at this hour?'), and the determination of the guests to have their good time in such unpromising, compromising circumstances.

Over it all presides Katchor's distinctive narrative voice which clings to a more distant and grounded past. This is so in its mastery of rhythm and cadence, and in its turn of phrase and choice of wording (balancing cliché - 'taking all cultures in his stride', with seeming poetry - 'swaths of day and night...now coexist in a single room', as well as interjecting witty image-blends such as the terminating 'group of after-dinner cognac drinkers from Peru'). By such means it delivers a wry judgement on this facile hanging-around style of a present, all the while seeming to sustain a tone of genial approval.

⁷⁶ McNaught's *Dockwood* is a case in point, with its untidy bus routes and graffiti, and shabby walkways and flimsy buildings are as much a part of Jimmy Corrigan's world as the interiors he fails to feel comfortable in.

⁷⁷ Initially these are published weekly in *The New Yorker* and *Metropolis Magazine*.

Katchor's approach is well composted. The basic elements run across his successive projects very consistently. The eloquent, seemingly authoritative commentator (reminiscent of a speaking version of old-fashioned advertising) dictates across a sequence of surreal moments crammed with scenic detail and optimistic hangers-on. This combination is gracefully contrapuntal, the irony softly implicit in the text-image juxtaposition rather than riding on easy contradiction. Often it is merely that the images make clear how hard the characters are struggling to keep up with the words. Each narrative seems to glimpse a process of large generational evolution rather than identifying a precise moment of activity - which, after all, is but one version of time. Like Michel Serres's fold-image for temporality, Katchor's 'dough' grows and re-buries itself in its own fabric.⁷⁸ One picture-story emerges and another springs out of it sometime later, folding back to meet a former theme or earlier character. Like the life it depicts, Katchor's technique is resourceful and enduring.

Katchor's feeling for old words and his broad but visually-intricate questioning of the currents of the age makes for a 'target text' - a translation of life today - that keeps a sense of life's strangeness to the fore. His particular creative dialect has not embraced the new lingo but kept older ways sharp - and sharper for the fact of what now surrounds them outside the strips. This is like the speakers of Yiddish Katchor heard in his youth, who seemed out of their time, and in relation to whom he has said: 'Sometimes you see [language] coming out of people's mouths.'⁷⁹

Life on the Run

At the other end of the spectrum comes, finally, a newly conspicuous ambition within the territory of graphic narrative that connects strategically and more sympathetically with life-on-the-go aspects of modern culture. The recent trend towards autobiography in the graphic novel, and by extension the rise of diary or journal formatting that mutates so well into visual delivery, has been well recognised.⁸⁰ A variant of this - prioritising fast drawing and immediate annotating - has at its best the potential to catch a great range of incidental aspects of lived experience. Like

⁷⁸ In *Rome; The Book of Foundations* (1983), Serres depicts time and history as like dough, organically mobile and endlessly capable of folding back into itself and reforming. Discussed by Connor, May 2002, n.p.

⁷⁹ Interview with Sam Adams, April 22, 2011. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/ben-katchor,54962/>
Accessed 5.2.2013.

⁸⁰ See Beaty's Chapter 5 on the context for the rise of graphic autobiographies in the 1990s: Beaty, 2008. Miller includes two chapters on this key area in her recent survey of the field in France. See Miller, op. cit., Chapters 11 and 12.

simultaneous translation, it weaves in off-the-cuff inventiveness, trying to anticipate meaning even before the sentence finishes.⁸¹

A work of exceptional directness will stand as an example of this approach. Mio Matsumoto (Japan) was suddenly afflicted by cancer of the tongue while still a Royal-College student in 2002. Six months of treatment took her back to Japan and away from her studies, and her response to the crisis was to keep a visual diary, now a published book.⁸²

The works discussed above have significant elements of extended planning in their design and delivery. Matsumoto's work, by contrast, though informed by a well-founded graphic sensitivity and manifest capacity for formal control (she knows her language), seems to improvise even as it flows.

The narrative of the illness – the deeply anxious stages of acknowledging it, taking action, responding to the questions it provokes, re-emerging into wellness, the sense of personal well-being that finally clarifies – lends the work ongoing coherence even if the specific ending could never have been decided in advance. As a life-event Matsumoto's extreme experience asked for openness of approach, and the work traps, by its very nature, inroads of uncertainty and loss of direction within its mix. Unlike more extended autobiographical construction where retrospective making-sense may impose itself heavily, this telling seems to be trying to deal with events in small ways incrementally from the perspective of the waves of feeling cast up.

Ann Miller, drawing on psychoanalytical approaches to the topic, has outlined ways in which even (visual) diaries, like other variants of autobiography, are thought to impose their own forms of structuring on life's flux.⁸³ In two important ways diarists are said to be engaged in building self-image, and they relate with their content accordingly. First, they are actively trying to deal with inevitable feelings of personality fragmentation in contriving a unified idea of self - in effect mirroring themselves in a satisfying way in a tangible text-object. Second, the ritual of the

⁸¹ This is touching now the area which I discuss as 'present-tense' drawing in Chapter 3.

⁸² Mio Matsumoto, *My Diary*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2008. The work originally started before the illness as a way of dealing with 'my stress and negative state of mind towards my hopeless love' (quotation taken from the front cover of the book) but the illness then took it over. It is interesting that the impulse to create the initial diary is given as intentionally therapeutic and that the habit of visual-verbal diary-keeping to alleviate stress preceded the work that resulted.

⁸³ Miller, op. cit., 215-227.

diary-form 'gives fixity to the passage of time': again, therefore, acting as a grounding device that lends regular security to the restless business of living.⁸⁴

Miller, in fact, disputes these ideas with regard to contemporary French-language *bande dessinées*. She analyses particularly the playful negotiations that take place internally in recent graphic autobiography whereby centrifugal aspects of the personality are actually relished as components of the artist's creative tool-kit, citing Julie Doucet (Canada) as having regularly split 'herself' into different selves as a central device of plot.⁸⁵ Miller sees such strategies as characteristic of a wider cultural shift towards an idea of the self as 'genuinely' fragmented. In the new variant of visual autobiography coming through, the subject's dissolution 'into multiplicity' is offered as a more authentic statement of being than the unifying drives of older models.⁸⁶

What is artificially constructed as opposed to what is genuinely experienced (or perhaps merely thought of as being experienced)? Of course, such tendentious oppositions raise impossible questions in the final instance, and there seems to be no option here but to take individual endeavours on a case-by-case basis. Regarding Matsumoto, it does at least seem plausible, and there is internal evidence for this, that what the diary might have been doing was all of these things together: to help give stability and some clinging idea of unity at a time of (bodily) disintegration (Figure 60), and also to keep time manageable - there are plentiful references to times of appointments, for example, and recordings of how time is passing, or feelings as to how the passing of time is in the new state of the illness (Figure 61). But also, there is a compelling recognition that the self is genuinely under attack (from the persona of the illness, for example (Figure 62)), although alongside this is the intermittent hope that it might gradually be reconvened and take up position again (Figure 63).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 217.

⁸⁵ For example: 'In another dream, Julie can have a man's body on one side of the mirror and a woman's body in the reflection...they end by stepping through the mirror and embracing.' Ibid., 234. Miller sees an extension of this process in Doucet's 2005 *J comme Je*, which is an entirely verbal narrative but once again a version of autobiography: 'Julie is now invisible and her textual self is painstakingly put together from the stuck-on letters, words and phrases' cut from women's magazines. Ibid., 235.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 216. My quotation come from Miller's, taken from Mounir Laouyen's 'Préface', *L'Esprit créateur: Les Nouvelles Autobiographies*, vol. XIII, no. 4, 3-7.

In terms of the question of the work's spontaneity – and I will term this its directness of translation – close examination of the materiality of the image + text combination offers some pointers.

In the first place, it is difficult to ascertain from internal evidence alone the degree of retrospective intervention imposed on the original diary to produce the final book – whether later drawings were inserted into the sequence, or whether others were removed. It seems fair to say that certain refining design strategies are detectable in specific ways: where pages have been entirely reversed out to introduce specifically black moments at key points (Figure 64), or images have been (exceptionally) repeated digitally to create an echo (Figure 65) or overlaid with mechanical tone (Figure 66). Some instances of text also seem subsequently inserted as if the plot needed harnessing or scenes bridging to achieve integration: these seem to be functional linking phrases such as 'I went to see a doctor in Japan'. But this opportunity is by no means always taken up, and certain sequences, as in the last days before the operation, retain disjointedness very effectively. A stately black page (Figure 67) comes directly after one that reads persuasively as an actual diary drawing (Figure 68), where Matsumoto shows herself reflected in an aeroplane window, there and not there. The drawing is annotated 'Take off to Japan 19th July 2002' and, more erratically, 'When Luca was here the moon was [drawing of a crescent moon symbol]. 9.47pm I'm (was) off.' The change of tense might be later editing, but it also enacts the essence of the ambiguous image and, furthermore, the status of the entire work as moving across the deceptively simple categories of 'I am' to 'I was', and back again.

This sort of embedded uncertainty seems to reflect the growth of the work truthfully but also to express the divided quality of its central topic hovering between fear and hope. Other elements such as Matsumoto's habit of using incomplete contours reinforce this (Figure 69). The written text itself shifts between English and Japanese at times, and even where English prevails this has not been 'corrected' so it still evokes a sense of bilingual identity that compliments the underlying struggle to express something that is difficult to reach. Nevertheless, the concise focus of the words shares the directness of the drawings, so there is also a strong idea of firm feeling too: 'Saki told me to say in the word everything I feel'/ 'I feel this is enough to feel the sadness. I'm scared enough so give me hope'/ 'I still want to be in love with someone who is my special one'/ 'unfortunately my illness seems very naughty.....FUCK OFF....'

Organisationally, too, there is a sprinkling of equally mixed signals. Seemingly retrospective reflections appear that are dated within the chronology of the diary, but even as events occur alternatives seem to be being considered in drawings and words. Other annotations look and read like scrawled outbursts or simply unwanted thoughts flung down at the time of emerging. Yet at other points dialogue is constructed in a more staged and conscious way, and Matsumoto pulls in speech-bubbles and drawn capitals for emphasis (Figure 70). Some of this is clearly happening within the diary itself - experience being translated in the moment, or almost so, by familiar devices. Matsumoto is perhaps receiving events through her own graphic awareness - like Katchor, seeing language 'coming out of people's mouths'. What is certainly abundantly striking is her ready pictorialisation of verbal language around the basic conventions, so that she seems constantly to be inventing and reformulating between word and image as she goes: thus, speech is made in some ways very physical - borne by the body (Figure 71) or carried around its edges; speech-bubbles themselves carry the graphic energy of the rest of the drawing, so there is no tagged-on quality or hint of separation perceptible; and intriguing objects within the story are regularly inventoried as part of the record, as if in moments of anxiety the need to visualise and label is the instinctive response (Figure 72). This latter ability to assume emotional control within the course of the work emerges in other ways too: Matsumoto greets the humour in certain situations, knotting a predicament into a slapstick diagram (Figure 73). In other respects she converts complex feelings or pain into eloquent visual *précis*, letting the words retreat: a stomach ache as a tangle of lines; her racing heart in pink crayon, always a love-heart in shape, but more striated and fleshy when afraid (Figure 74) and childishly eager when pumping with romance (Figure 75).

In fact, the vast majority of the drawings and their annotations appear to have accumulated as the days were lived, with Matsumoto devising within her knowing repertoire and extending its reach as she encounters barriers to her own thresholds of understanding and experience. This is seen in consistent deftness in using the space of the page eloquently, and in skill at creating simple transitions or sudden crops to capture shafts of anxiety or ideas of obsession or introspection. She uses upside-downness, for example, to convey emotional turmoil which becomes especially evocative on the journey to the operating table (Figure 76). The pursuit of single motifs across the work is particularly the role of image for Matsumoto, as opposed to words, which tend to specify, annotate or reflect – to denote rather than connote – although these also hold imaginative and precise visualisations (going to

the theatre 'on a (like) cooking board') and I would not wish to overstate this distinction.

So there is a repeating visual focus on the mouth (Figure 77) and its changing tongue (Figure 78), and both of these, like the heart, are privileged in being turned into colour. And there are plentiful wider allusions to mirrors, to food, kissing, hunger, taste, spit, and concern with physical appearance, across the situations depicted. Of course, these are perhaps the inevitable preoccupations of the condition, accidental motifs in one sense, but Matsumoto's emotional as well as visual acuity, and her skill at graphic distillation turns them incrementally into metaphors for her anxiety regarding her betraying body and hunger for the chance of life. There is an interesting question here as to the surfacing of metaphor out of experience. The things that speak to us and that we notice and pay heed to in particular emotional states or in the context of certain life experiences become the essence of these feelings. So attentive is Matsumoto to her own responses and the process of the illness that it is almost as if we are seeing the growth of a language in the work, in the sense that the images she needs to tell of are finding, with her help, a way out of her.

This quality of attentiveness, complimented by the respective mediations of word and image, is the route to a questing and extremely lively translation. A hybrid in various ways, and never intending to be what it became, it captures very surely the struggle of its projection.

IV. Conclusion

This term 'translation' has expanded in intriguing ways as it has passed through the analysis of this chapter. Translation Studies has afforded it gustatory qualities while the case studies have taken it variously towards birdsong and car engines, screen-technology and, finally, a diary. The discussion has demonstrated how a single piece of terminology gains in considerable richness through this double pursuit of its application in theory and in practice.

The descriptions in the case studies have shown intricate negotiations at play in the fabrication of artists' work, supporting the argument for a more extended idea of process as a formative creative device for educational contexts. Across the discussion of individual practices, aspects of process have come through as a

distinctive quality in each narrative form. This is as true of Spiegelman, who contrives to keep his delivery close to a form of conversation between father and son, as it is of Matsumoto who uses both word and image in a continually fluid way to commit her feelings to paper effectively as they arrive.

The chapter has also focused in fresh ways on themes indicative of the preoccupations of graphic novels at the time of writing. These include interest in soundscapes, experimental autobiography, and conjunctions of different types of language - assorted vernaculars, technological neologisms, and old dialects coming up amid the new. In various ways, it has shown graphic narratives responding to transitions taking place in broader culture, identifying very specific elements of content and delivery adjusting to wider change.

The next chapter, which explores the word 'body', will look particularly at translations that occur as a young practice is formed, considering how a specific focus in drawing may be used to develop themes for future exploration in a chosen practice and a foundational network of personal insights and technical strategies to support this.

Body

Preliminaries

The following drawings (Illustrations 9-16) are a reflection of how I use drawing to play with bodies. The performance pedagogies that inform the second chapter give central importance to this fundamental human tool, and these drawings take pleasure in invented versions of their own. Their origin comes from the haptic movement of the pen's line - thinking combining with gesture.

Chapter 2 sees the ideas and preoccupations of performance training as highly relevant to drawing. It does this through focusing on the versatility of the body for conveying narrative experience and also on learning strategies adopted in performance training for interpreting the world as full of physical energy. Drawing is identified as related to other forms of physically creative practice, as a mode of 'embodying' the world but with a special ability to condense it down to portable dimensions. Its intrinsically active nature helps it insinuate energy into what it represents, right across the range from still to hectic.

Much of the chapter's discussion tracks inventive drawings. The case studies – like the performance ideas considered – show artists like Roland Topor uncovering narrative by metamorphosing bodies, and Edward Gorey creating stories by depicting spaces that bodies have left behind. Caroline Sury's vivacious graphic language is interpreted as a form of mime. Cross-sensory interplay in drawn narratives is seen to show bodily tendencies in content that is often overlooked.

These symptoms of somatic interest in drawing lead this chapter towards a recommendation that the body be given a renewed focus in creative education, and the drawings that follow here show my own engagement with this. These are devising drawings, finding ideas through variations on a theme, away from the Life Room and out of my head. There is a clearly performative streak coming through, since these bodies are inclined to disport themselves and like to dress up or down. Everything comes from the vagrant line, however: costume or flesh, dance or suspended state.

In addition:

Muhammad Wafiq
 Kate Boly
 Eliott Davies
 Group B

Site Goodsite
 Kay Masini
 Masni Masni
 Group A

Tutorial Group

9:30am Dinner

9:30am Tutorial

11:30am Private study

Afternoon (Group A-Friday)

1:30pm Lunch

11:00am Drawing workshop

10:30am Coffee

9:00am Drawing workshop

Weekends (Group A-Friday)

3:00pm Dinner

4:12-8:00pm Dinner

3:30pm Tea

3:12pm Tutorial

Saturday & Sunday

All Group sessions will take place in Room 1.13.

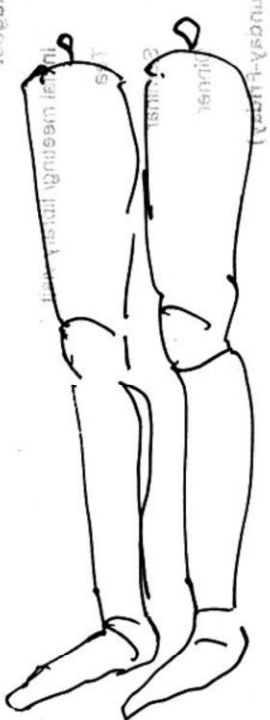


Illustration 9

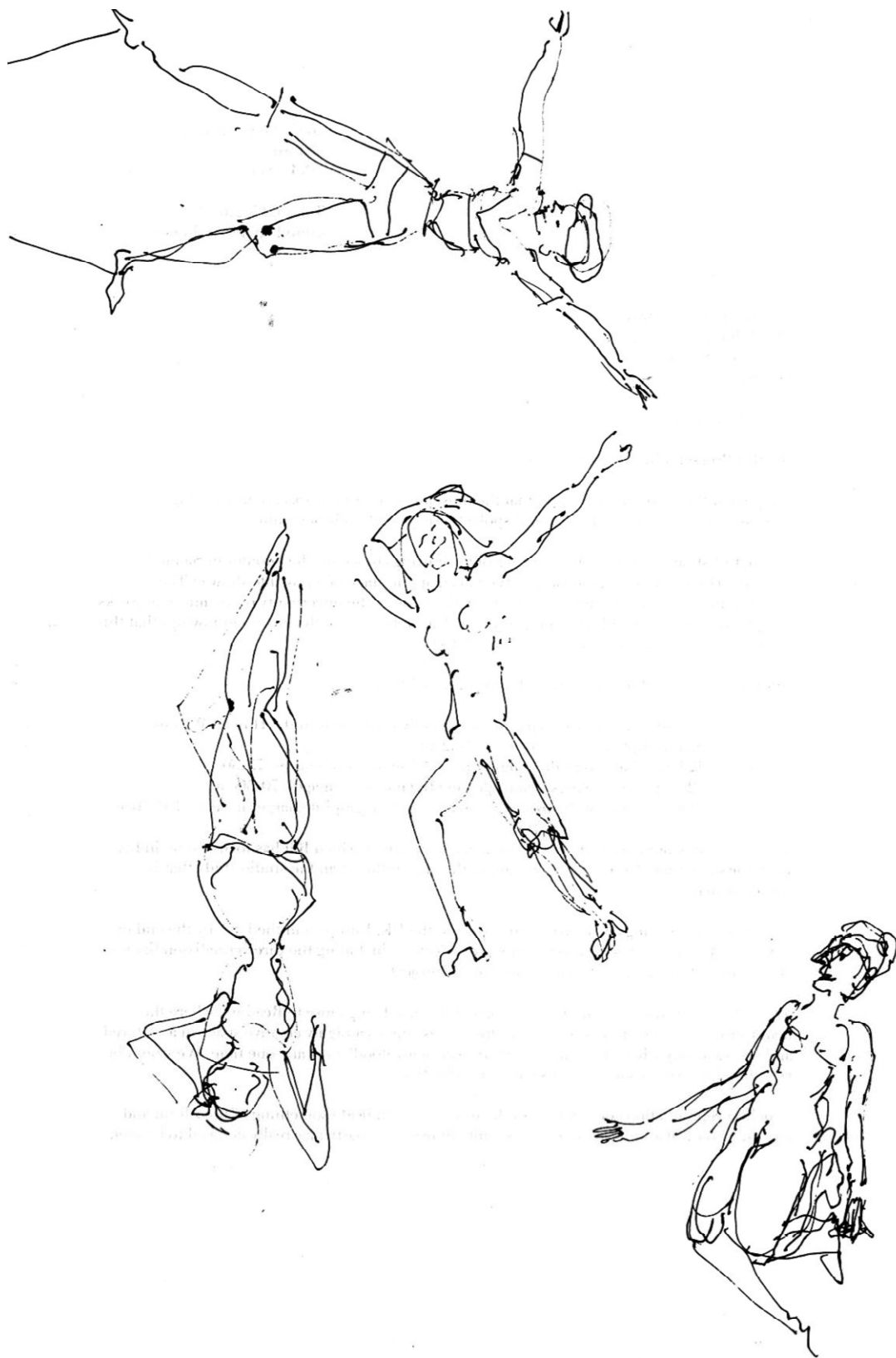


Illustration 10



Illustration 11



Illustration 12

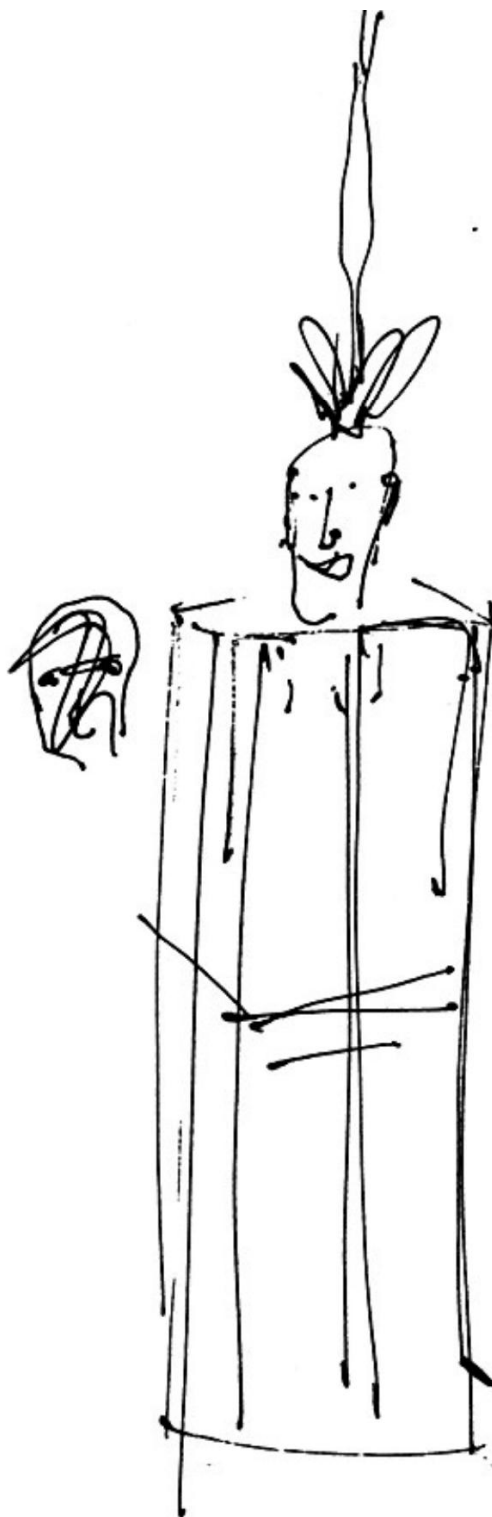


Illustration 13



Illustration 14



Illustration 15



Illustration 16

Chapter 2: Drawn Narrative and Performance

I. Regarding Bodies

The Body in Contemporary Culture

The word 'body' is invariably allied with the definite article in contemporary artspeak. It is as if individual bodies that have always intrigued artists have become absorbed into a single fleshy Leviathan.⁸⁷

Beyond the tendency of theory to subsume detail within general concept,⁸⁸ this situation reflects significant aspects of the way art has evolved over the last hundred years. In part this is about primary content. Greater focus on the artist as active creative agent, and a concomitant emphasis of process over product, private vis-à-vis public, have made artists' bodies conspicuous across cultural categories. Political considerations have played their part. Female artists - Schneeman, Sprinkle, Hartoum - have bared not just breasts but intimate interiors. The body is the last bastion of the persecuted, and protest art often makes it a central device. Beyond the artist, audiences too have been prompted to move their bodies in response to interactive modes of presentation - through the Futurists who attacked them with voice boxes as well as hectic gestures, making them up and leave, to Artaud whose *Theatre of Cruelty* has been highly influential in its aim to galvanise pained life beneath dull skin in viewer as well as performer.⁸⁹

Bodily traces also are emphatic in the detail of artistic practices from the early 20th century onwards, significantly affecting approaches in 2-D making as well as in obviously physical practices such as sculpture and performance. 'Performance' is taken in a broad sense in what follows, and categories of work that are considered in connection with the term include examples of performance art as well as performance that is associated with the tradition of theatre. In dealing with the scope of activities now embraced by the term, Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris refer to 'a range of performance genres that include performance art, live art, performance poetry, playwriting, performance storytelling, radio drama, stand-up comedy, and

⁸⁷ For a general context see O'Reilly, 2009.

⁸⁸ In the theorisation of drawing preoccupation with 'the mark' is a case in point.

⁸⁹ For physical engagement between the Futurists and their audiences see Freeman, 2007, 34-35. For Artaud, see the discussion in Machon, 2011, 44-45.

site-specific performance'.⁹⁰ My remit considers the central use of the live body and I have been drawn to production across categories that in other respects remain very diverse.

Perceived connections and exchanges between drawing and performance are certainly evident in current literature and practice.⁹¹ Drawing and dance are seen as implicitly intertwined, and for a long time being actively conscious of this - in both directions. From dance's side, for example, choreographer William Forsythe has exploited this connection demonstrably - devising through scribbling on photocopies of Tiepolo drawings (Figure 79).⁹² In recent analysis drawing's historical commitment to bodies has shifted from studying anatomies to harnessing their expressiveness and recording their traces,⁹³ and distinct performance strategies (exemplified famously by Bruce Nauman's walks) use the notion of drawing with the body writ large, slowly carving space or trailing movement across surface or substance.⁹⁴

There is, as well, a rich theoretical consideration of the body in contemporary critical and philosophical writings. The context explored here is wide – speculating, for example, as to how new technology might be considered in relation to bodily experience and expression, or how the body and the idea of the body carries meaning in different cultures and across time.⁹⁵ Michel Serres's *Variations on the Body* pushes on from earlier phenomenology such as Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* to secure a place for an idea of complex emotional awareness located in flesh rather than architecture.⁹⁶ A quality of experience that is located in an intricate, many-sided, deeply-chambered body is described graphically by Serres, and this is a fair

⁹⁰ Aston and Harris, 2008, 2.

⁹¹ Explored by Butler and de Zegher, 2010.

⁹² This resulted in a performance by nine dancers called 'Hypothetical Stream' (Tours, 1997).

Photocopies of Tiepolo drawings were drawn on by Forsythe and faxed to the dancers to interpret: 'I took a series of sketches from 'Tiepolo', and I drew any number of vectors, emanating from these knots of suspended figures that were all flying in, in, in the clouds, and all very knotted, very baroque. And I drew a number of vectors, and said these are knots, and these need to be solved, or unknotted. And I, the lines that I drew were hypothetical solutions, to these...' Forsythe quoted in Tusa, 2006, 100.

⁹³ It is not so much their skill or accuracy or lifelikeness as their quality of 'personal unfettered expression' that allows the drawings of the past to speak 'clearly and directly' according to Tate Modern curator, Emma Dexter. A drawing is 'a map of time recording the actions of the maker'. Dexter, 2005, 9, 10.

⁹⁴ Nauman's walks typically brought together the security of geometry with bodily awkwardness – an interesting contrast of emphasis familiar in drawing: 'Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square' (1967-68).

⁹⁵ A general context for this theoretical interest is outlined by Murray, 2003, 36-40.

⁹⁶ For Serres, for example, knowledge is ascending a mountain, the exertion and exhilaration of pulling the body physically up through thinning air, rather than climbing a flight of stairs simply to reach the top of a house which is Bachelard's metaphor for rational plenitude: 'alpine climbs, for writing, are as good as ten libraries. Serres, 2011, 12. 'Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear,' Bachelard, 1994, 18.

reflection of the multi-faceted ambition for the body acknowledged in the field of contemporary performance practice.⁹⁷

This Body

In the present research, two strands of thought in approaching this topic have been key.

The first is the idea of using the body as a central pedagogical resource within art and design education for building creative awareness and generating specific personal strategies for invention. The second – and focussing closely on the graphic context that is the special interest of this study - has been a growing sense that the body is surprisingly under-explored in forms of contemporary drawn narrative.

The first point has been suggested by my encounters with studies of performance that have prioritised the body as a formative creative tool. This is both in terms of education – where combinations of structured and playful physical exploration may evolve a foundational creative language for emerging performers - but also, very clearly, for highly inventive research within established companies on an on-going basis. The body is subject-cum-instrument across the spectrum of contemporary physical performance, and alongside this, other considerations are set spinning. So multi-sensory treatments of interpretation and delivery become accessible - creative understanding coming from a mixture of cross-sensory ingredients rather than depending principally on verbal decoding and intellectual articulation. Further, words themselves disintegrate in such a context - in being concentrated on as 'bodily' rather than rational in essence, they are no longer seen as concrete or distinct slithers of meaning so much as tatters of sound or snatches of image. Earlier 20th-century artists led the way here. Artaud saw words as carrying 'an undercurrent of impressions, connections and affinities beneath language' that could be released through performance.⁹⁸ This challenges heavily semiotic understandings of verbal language and – in sympathy with the other chapters of this study – opens out onto curious byways of inter-sensory interpretation.

⁹⁷ Freeman, op. cit., 81-113.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Machon, 2011, 73. This whole area of cross-sensory practice is examined in Part 1 of Machon's book.

It is a central idea in what follows that leaning on a somatic idea of experience provides strategies for creative invention going beyond performance. In drawing this is hardly a radical idea: with certain artists – Watteau, Sickert, Kossoff – both aspects (body as topic, and the flickers of the artist's own body movements in the substrata of the drawing) are simultaneously very appreciable, defining the character of the work (for Kossoff, see Figure 80). The first part of the chapter will reflect on how aspects of performance training might more formatively input into disciplines where there is such overlap.

More specifically, addressing how the body features in the area that is my interest, a starting point has been its place in the contemporary graphic novel. In drawing the figure, clichés and ciphers are common, and if detailed description occasionally shines through, inventiveness and idiosyncratic sensibility, as with some of Joe Sacco's visual journalism, (Figure 81) are comparatively rare. Jochen Gerner's playful *Contre la Bande Dessinée* satirises an identikit approach to drawing faces (Figure 82), not without justification. The visual conservatism of the field as a whole avoids really exploring the form of the figure or risking variations or layerings of graphic energy, and a stultifying aspect of this is the perception of a prescriptive language that can be learned,⁹⁹ although the best practitioners of the past were prepared to create special 'vocabularies' of their own. With George Herriman's scratchy penmanship and radical approach to page-layout, and Gustave Verbeek's teasing upside-down stories,¹⁰⁰ the approach to the figure matches the wider idiosyncrasy of the work (Figures 83 and 84).

Daring departures do exist in contemporary work, and from this perspective of a greater focus on bodies - their symbolism and physicality, the treatment of their movement in space, their relationships with objects, props and architecture - some familiar older examples suddenly arrive illuminated as pertinent and underappreciated. The major part of the chapter concentrates on examples of work old and new where artists have succeeded in bringing a physical, corporeal direction to narrative.

⁹⁹ Practical guides to creating comics reinforce this impression. In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud breaks comics into various basic components that may be put back together, even though he also makes it clear that each artist has 'different innermost needs and ideas' and will 'find different forms of expression'. McCloud, op. cit., 57.

¹⁰⁰ Herriman's key work, 'Krazy Kat', was first published in *The New York Evening Journal* in 1913, running until 1944. Gustave Verbeek's 'The Upside Downs of Little Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo' occupied *The New York Herald* between October 1903 and January 1905. Both have had a significant effect on artists looked at in this study. See Ball and Kuhlman, op. cit., xii, for Chris Ware's admiration for Herriman, and Beaty, op. cit., 78, for Oubapo interest in Verbeek.

In art education, drawing the figure is perceived as relevant in the Illustration studio but with a focus often on capturing resemblance or learning to express gesture convincingly to present an illusion of 'life'. At the other end of the scale, the summarising or elaborating distortions of caricature are also evoked. These two understandings of drawing - on the one hand, as a process of extended observation and, on the other, a rapid condensing of an idea through strategic editing – sit happily with two principal elements in performance training: namely, detailed processes of collecting experience in combination with inventive yet systematic recreating. This incipient parallel will be a central strand in what follows.

II. Performing Bodies

Performance Training

A valuable aspect of working with the ideas of those who have written or spoken about performance as teachers has been the individuality of approach worked out over time, alongside clear expectations that students should achieve something distinct and consciously their own.

Learning to perform invites constant exchange between life going on around and the discovery of a personal methodology and form of delivery. Whether working towards a role in theatre or approaching performance art, there seems to be something of a pattern of teaching and learning that depends on close exchange between teacher and students.

A good example of this comes through in Anthony Howell's *Analysis of Performance Art* (1999), which is in many ways a teaching manual. Howell defines his first principles in creating his curriculum, and in relating the discoveries of his practice as a performance artist to the needs of teaching he negotiates a personal and very developed idea of a 'grammar' for performance art.¹⁰¹ Working with a variant of performance art which he has termed 'actuation', Alastair MacLennan has similarly seen 'teaching as one limb of my art practice': it as 'a creative activity and very important. I don't try to contain my ideas of art in the teaching structure; rather, I

¹⁰¹ As the basis for his 'grammar' Howell identified three primary elements, analogous to the primary colours of colour theory: stillness, repetition and inconsistency. Howell, 1999.

contain the teaching structure within my overall attitude to art'.¹⁰² Both Howell and MacLennan have used the spaces of their workplace as sites for their own work; MacLennan, indeed, used aspects of his working day and of his role as a lecturer and tutor as the substance and arena for early performances.¹⁰³ Both artists have worked collaboratively with students in their teaching.

In the field of theatre, the ideas of French performance teacher Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999) have been a great stimulus to my thinking. Lecoq established a theatre school in Paris in 1956 that has had a significant impact on developments in physical theatre internationally.¹⁰⁴ In this country he is acknowledged as a key player in recent performance trends rooted in the body.¹⁰⁵ His pedagogical ideas are presented in his book, *Le Corps Poétique* (1997), and though this reads as a rather poetic manual, it still communicates a very practical orientation, offering a ground-plan of his school's course of study and reflecting on years of experiment. Lecoq was aware that his ideas had a significantly broader application than theatre, and this was confirmed by the expanding remit of the school's curriculum over the decades - gradually encompassing architecture and writing in addition to theatre arts, always tackled through extensive playful exploration of ways in which the body feels and moves.¹⁰⁶

Idiosyncrasy of thinking characterises *Le Corps Poétique* and, as Simon Murray's 2001 study points out, the ideas are awkward to contextualise in terms of other dominant contemporary theoretical or cultural models.¹⁰⁷ Murray favours the opinion of former students that Lecoq worked instinctually and experientially. Like Howell's, his teaching grew its own methodology, which was inescapably direct, throwing the student back on their own resources.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Snoddy, 1988, 7. For many years MacLennan led the MA in Fine Art at the University of Ulster.

¹⁰³ See especially the performances of the late 1970s. *Ibid.*, 27, 35, 40.

¹⁰⁴ John Calder's obituary refers to Lecoq as commanding 'a reputation in the theatre the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated. He was a teacher unlike any other, a perfectionist who inspired many - probably most - of the leading actors and dancers of his time and brought mime up to the level of the greatest acting.' *The Independent*, 28 January 1999: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-jacques-lecoq-1076692.html> Accessed 13.11.2012.

¹⁰⁵ There is a thoughtful discussion of the impact and implications of Lecoq's teaching and its relationship with theatre in Britain in Giovanni Fusetti and Suzy Wilson's 'The Pedagogy of the Poetic Body' in Bradby and Delgado, 2002, 93-101.

¹⁰⁶ Lecoq's training of architects was 'respecting the movement of the human body in space', and the 'same pedagogic process can be adapted to all artistic education'. Lecoq, 2000, 173.

¹⁰⁷ Murray, *op. cit.* For example: "Lecoq's school took root ... during a period when French intellectual life was dominated by a number of highly theoretical thinkers about cultural forces' but he 'enjoined his students to learn through action, the senses and somatic experiences'. 57.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 45. Drawing on a discussion with former students, Andy Cook and Mark Evans.

Lecoq's ideas will provide a jumping-off point for thinking about transferring strategies across from performance into drawn narrative. They are considered both in view of their wider pertinence to creative education but also to open up specific paths of enquiry that will focus the ensuing discussion of drawings.

Jacques Lecoq: *Everything moves*

Ordering Play

Lecoq's system of teaching was elegantly diagrammatic in its eventual conceptualisation. The teaching method envisages interplay between a search for 'abstract, essential principles underlying all lived experience' and intense observation of the specific across time.¹⁰⁹ Students are asked to imbibe the detailed particularities of what is around them in life (the flop of an omelette, for example) and negotiate the stored-up energy of old knowledge in ancient dramatic modes.

Lecoq placed his confidence in two underlying, unrelated configurations: in 'laws' and generalisations that can seem quasi-mathematical and scientific and that are especially apparent in his understanding of the body and its attitudes; and, as well, a formidable poetic sensitivity to underlying patterns, rhythms and connectedness based in imagination. Out of this comes a formalised tendency towards analogy which is a major aspect of his technique:

Materials, especially, provide a tragic language which we can borrow. A sugar-lump which dissolves, a piece of paper which crumples, cardboard which folds, wood which splinters, cloth which rips, are all profoundly tragic movements.¹¹⁰

There is seriousness at play throughout Lecoq's vision of education, and underpinning his entire system is a commitment to discovery through playfulness (*jeu*), to be taken advantage of by the body's informed versatility. The curriculum takes place over two years. The first is foundational – building a language for performance and very much informed by exploring the ways in which the body moves. Students carefully reinterpret aspects of the physical world and human experience in relation to the body's tendencies. The second builds on this

¹⁰⁹ Lecoq, op. cit., 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 141.

knowledge, reinventing old forms of drama from a physical perspective, and finding pathways to fresh stories made with an evolving physical language of expression.

Le Corps Poétique is full of words that conjure ideas of movement and spatial physicality. The first year is three *journeys*, the second establishes *territories* to explore and themselves be taken on journeys.¹¹¹ This is underpinned by a consideration of *gestural* languages – by which Lecoq means varieties of mime, which he sees as a physical understanding – *embodiment* - of the world.¹¹²

Wider Implications

In his postscript to *Le Corps Poétique*, Lecoq points to the diversity of work by ex-students, attributing this to the emphasis on rediscovery and renewal within the school.¹¹³ The technique of mimodynamics, which approaches the world through the rhythms of the body and exerts the lively curiosity of all the senses, is offered as something that is a fundamental research process which ‘could be adapted across all art education’ and the ‘resulting forms would, no doubt, be more deeply felt and less cerebral’.¹¹⁴

These ideas have a Bauhausian confidence about them, and they sit oddly against the contemporary climate of art education in England that has tended in a number of significant ways to emphasise theory over play.¹¹⁵ There is a structural bias here within the curriculum: the current fashion for modular delivery, for example, can instigate task-orientated teaching that encourages compliant responses - playing by

¹¹¹ Ibid., 103.

¹¹² ‘To mime is literally to embody and therefore to understand better’ and ‘miming is a way of rediscovering things with renewed freshness’. Ibid., 22. And: ‘The mime which I love involves an identification with things in order to make them live, even when words are used.’ 23.

¹¹³ Ibid., 172.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹¹⁵ The reasons here are complex. The emergence of art and design degrees from the early 1960s shifted the emphasis away from the predominantly practical orientation of earlier teaching towards a greater commitment to intellectual enquiry. The discipline of Visual Culture, which has increasingly superseded Art History in servicing courses in this way, is itself a Theory-driven territory in its range of analysis and approach to content. From the 1980s onwards, generic educational strategies have placed a requirement on degree students across disciplines to emerge with a compliment of ‘transferable skills’. On this last point see Mantze, 2006. Processes now embedded within degree-teaching have also reinforced the situation: defined learning objectives and assessment criteria are published in the interest of transparency and to focus the learning process, but they may also seem to warrant procedures that guarantee their fulfilment rather than open-ended risk-taking and genuine exploration. Brighton School of Art has a relevant potted history on its website, tracking the evolution of ‘Complimentary Studies’ as part of the art-school curriculum in the 1960s through to the valued acquisition of an academic research profile in the present day: <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/faculty-of-arts-brighton/alumni-and-associates/the-history-of-arts-education-in-brighton> Accessed 17.2.2013.

the rules rather than simply 'playing'. Moreover, the art forms Lecoq draws on¹¹⁶ as relevant and useful precedents do not conform at all to the more usual English art-school diet of art after Modernism. Current writing on the multi-disciplinary aspects of performance, however, does engage with specifically physical channels of enquiry. Artaud sits alongside Barthes, Cixous and Derrida, amongst other theorists, in Josephine Machon's exploration of what she terms 'visceral performance'.¹¹⁷ Anti-cerebral, pro-bodily tendencies abound in her discussion of creating, writing, designing, enacting, but also receiving the varieties of work she considers.

It is the influence of this sort of analysis that has encouraged me to divide up the components of the graphic work I have been looking at to bring it closer to Lecoq's strategies for creative play: to think about its core ingredients - words, visual content and overall formatting - as equivalents to performance elements - the sound, the actors and props, and the design elements of the 'staging'.

Considering Illustration

The implications of Lecoq's ideas for approaching Illustration on these grounds stimulate thoughts that on one level seem distant from digital concerns, which might be thought to be where the future of graphic communication lies.¹¹⁸ From a broader perspective, the diversity of outcome among his own students' work - and this not technologically shy - offers a plausible case for on-going opportunities being presented by a physical, process-driven direction driving creation and communication, whatever the format or nature of the ultimate delivery. Taking this into a context for teaching drawing is a tantalising prospect but I will focus here principally on a more contained question, one that might pave the way for such endeavours in the future: how are traces of Lecoq's thinking anticipated already in existing drawing practice? Contemplating his categories may open up 'new shapes for thought' regarding what we already think we know.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *Commedia dell'Arte*, clowning, a wide range of mime, for example.

¹¹⁷ Machon, op. cit., Part 1.

¹¹⁸ Robert Mason negotiates the impact of digitalisation in Illustration in Mason, 2000. He advocates a situation of evolving good practice among a number of artists who are comfortable combining digital and physical making and can move in either direction as creative needs dictate. This fits well with my own feelings.

¹¹⁹ Steven Connor's phrase for Michel Serres's shape-invested patterns of thinking. Serres's 'work makes it clear how crudely mechanical or frankly magical (the same thing perhaps) our conceptions of the nature and workings of social life and time can be. Characteristically, and superbly, he has done this, not through critique, but through the invention of new shapes of thought.' Connor, May 2002, n.p.

I have found it useful to settle on three specific aspects of Lecoq's thinking:

Mime – which is a way of absorbing the world into the self through copying and reinterpreting experience physically. Lecoq's students watch the world and then reinvent it through their bodies.

Body – which is the essential tool for expressing the individual's sense of the world. The body is the performer's eloquence.

Text – which, rather than necessarily being seen as an existing written document, comes about through a process of finding an idea and evolving this into an appropriate performance language that may or may not ultimately contain words or speech explicitly. Text is embedded in the performance (or artwork) and evolves with each new version of this. Importantly, the playing that arises from mime is often the way to text.

These may be expanded on in relation to the objectives of my research:

Mime

A crucial aspect of mime for Lecoq is that it is always a process of investigation and recreation – it should never congeal into cliché but remain curious and open. Equally, it is fundamentally a disciplined activity underpinned by systems for interpreting experience that the practitioner has encountered or devised personally in training.

In terms of the wider visual arts we might think of this in association with the evolution of a personal visual or, more widely, sensual vocabulary. Lecoq's students typically explore a physical vocabulary with dramatic potential. The illustrator, in turn, may ordinarily pursue through open-ended drawing a personal repertoire of marks, particular strategies for relating emblem to idea, a characteristic narrative interest, a recognisable identity of practice, and so on. A more consciously 'performative' approach in this context might suggest some free-wheeling graphic experiments, using analogies perhaps that are physically inspired: overtly spatial, for example, where movements or relationships between elements are traced as they move along a narrative track. Again, an artist might chase different voices across different media, playing different roles in each context rather than aiming to establish a single predictable mode of working.

Body

If mime is the way of enquiry, the body is the actor's key tool: *le corps poétique*. The body can appreciate experience through all the senses and carry this knowledge over for future use.

Lecoq's emphasis on the body, firstly, as a place for knowing the world and, secondly, as a fundamental device for expression accords well with attitudes that are - as already indicated - prevalent across the arts. What is suggestive for present purposes is the way Lecoq identifies the body as a site for on-going *research* across disciplines. This is clearly the case in aspects of the individual artists' work considered below.

A core part of Lecoq's method, moreover, is his sense of the internal life or energy of things. The observing body should respond articulately to this ubiquitous evidence. Although Lecoq does not approach this himself, there is perhaps a case for using drawing as a mode of entry here, to encourage very particular encounters with detailed aspects of the world on an on-going basis.

Text

Lecoq situates actual texts and their component words in particularly physical terms. By implication, verbs – as words associated with movement - are his particularly favoured parts of speech:

We consider words as living organisms and thus we search for the body of words. For this purpose we have to choose words that provide a real physical dynamic. Verbs lend themselves more readily to this: to take, to raise, to break, to saw, each contains an action which nourishes the verb itself.¹²⁰

Moreover, understanding of a text comes 'through the body'. Writing is 'a structure in motion'.¹²¹ Communicating a text is better achieved through the gestures and actions of the body than mere speech: Mimodynamics is a way of 'truly putting [a] poem into motion in a way verbal translation can never attain'.¹²²

¹²⁰ Lecoq, op. cit., 50.

¹²¹ Ibid., 22.

¹²² Ibid., 51. This way of thinking leads Lecoq to a certain widening in his understanding of the terminology associated with text to include aspects of communication or delivery not involving words

In terms of Illustration, this way of thinking triggers consideration of the discipline's deeper history which entertained a more physically expressive treatment of ideas in depicting the body than we are used to now. Typical of pre-20th century illustrations is a vivid approach to characterisation that links to live and exaggerating performance conventions much more obviously - right away from the photographic close-ups and cinematic cropping that have contributed to expectations much more recently.¹²³ There is a common root here with Lecoq's own special canon of dramatic forms.

There is also an invitation to take words on their own terms: to translate them loosely or bizarrely; to concentrate on sounds, literal nonsense, etymologies; or to find rhythms in fragments of sentences before stitching them together to reinstate a unified 'reading'. With Lecoq, an essence or gesture of a text is sought out: this is felt to be more truthful than that which is 'stuck at the verbal level'.¹²⁴ Potentially this greatly opens up the range of possibilities for image-text inter-relationship.

So far the discussion has remained abstract in scope. In what follows I will close in on specific images, considering ways in which these ideas might already be said to inhabit the territory of this research as part of my argument for their wider future deployment.

III. Illustrated Bodies

There are energetic echoes of, and suggestive correlations with, Lecoq's ideas in the work of the artists that follow. This section interrogates a number of images with the intention of unpicking the instincts and decisions that they embody and the experiences that they may offer to the viewer.

Not all the images discussed below are drawings. I myself work through drawing and the images reproduced here are selected for their aesthetic relevance to my own interests. In fact, Illustration has a long relationship with print media for obvious reasons, and it would be counterproductive and misleading to be too purist in this

(171). Even where words continue to be present in an actual 'text', the spoken aspect of delivery is said to be secondary to physicality (152).

¹²³ See my comments below on Edward Gorey and Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*. Shaun Tan (Australia) is a contemporary illustrator who uses photographic-style cropping and the semblance of focussing camera work in his drawings. He is discussed below.

¹²⁴ Lecoq, op. cit., 152. This is reminiscent of Vayu Naidu's concept of the 'rasa' and my own discussion of 'gesture' in connection with this in Chapter 1.

respect. Indeed, it is very characteristic of Illustration to mimic other methods in its approach to drawing – Edward Gorey’s penmanship, which is featured below, imitates the fine hatching of 19th-century metal engraving (just as his language echoes literary surrealism). Working for reproduction has been a significant impetus behind graphic invention and creative decision-making in Illustration and this continues now into the digital age. Likewise, playing with the photocopier continues to be revelatory for students as they extend their experience of how marks may sit on paper.

There are, however, certain distinctive qualities across the images discussed. While it is the intention of this study overall to encourage pattern shifting and instances of ‘intermarriage’, processes of exchange and even fusion also throw into relief unique strengths within specific fields. In these examples, a blending of certain enduring qualities with newer hybrid tendencies has often caught my attention.

These images typically create a small world on a piece of paper, readily held in the hand in front of the eyes. Each stands as a fragment of larger narrative which is never laid before the viewer remotely as completely as a live performance that offers moment-by-moment development. It is part of the deal that much is left to the viewer’s imagination. Within each drawing this world has plausible coherence - the product of its facture even where internal formal conflicts or tensions are part of the impact. This arrives through elements such as consistency within choice of materials, the logic of process, the unity of surface and the constraints of enclosure. In addition, there are relationships of detail in terms of energy, concentration, and minuscule decisions in the mark-making, and the establishment of rhythms through changes of scale and across treatments of different sorts of content.

If there is a sense of intimacy in creating and experiencing these drawn narratives, important also is the opportunity for thinking in the spaces that open up between images viewed in sequence. While the images themselves might be experienced as distilled moments - a condensing of relationships and atmosphere (whether psychological, social, conceptual or fantastical) - in the spaces in between the viewer’s thoughts (and not always relevant ones) may gather before the story takes flight again.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Michel Serres sees places of Interconnection as special sorts of middle places when they are themselves mobile - as a confluence of thoughts may perhaps seem to be. See Connor, July 2002.

Certain performers make use of these special qualities in their pursuit of drawing as a background creative drive. Alistair MacLennan has routinely created drawings as a way of raiding his subconscious for images that are eventually integrated into activations.¹²⁶ Their substance surfaces out of random mark-making, as if the act of drawing brings a narrative lurking under the skin into the light (Figure 85). From the second half of the 1980s MacLennan used large *in situ* drawings in conjunction with objects and his own body as part of his performance delivery.¹²⁷ Using drawings in this second way as part of a larger ensemble turns them into quasi-objects, taking them away from the territory I am interested in here. MacLennan's generative use of drawing, however, is extremely pertinent, and his images sit well with the others I shall now discuss as windows onto imagined worlds and entries into narrative.

(i) Little Worlds

George Cruikshank: *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy*. 1860; Edward Gorey: *The Other Statue*. 1968.

Cruikshank's sequence of twenty-four engravings to accompany the archaic text of *Punch and Judy* are a departure among his body of work in their formal design and consistency of graphic shape.¹²⁸ Best known for his illustrations to Dickens, Cruikshank's typical format is pictorial vignette, often irregularly edged (Figure 86). This new regularity is a playful allusion to the performative nature of the text that was the work's excuse: each image is effectively a miniature stage, a draped and adorned dark rectangle where a cast of puppets arrives to be dispatched - at worst into the emptiness which is in front of the picture plane and an implied 'auditorium' (Figure 87).

Cruikshank's *Punch* stands as an early example of how a 2-D image may borrow from performance conventions to generate a hybrid aesthetic. The formal repetition gives a sequential feel to the work consistent with the dynamic of the play's narrative.

¹²⁶ Snoddy, op. cit., 147-149. Linda Bassett describes use of drawing within the rehearsal process in preparing for Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* (Royal Court, 2000) as a way of finding out the pictures beneath the words of a playtext – as if an understanding of the underlying action might be bored into by this means. See Machon, op. cit., 148.

¹²⁷ Different types of drawings were involved here – large, more realised images of talismanic objects, cut out, and mounted directly on the wall like a special breed of object among counterparts; or, again, shadowy presences where MacLennan drew directly on the wall itself – items such as the stepladders that had aided the assembling of a piece, this time in unstable charcoal, and documenting movement around the space. Snoddy, op. cit., 124-125.

¹²⁸ For Cruikshank's life and work, see Jerrold, 1971.

It is a fine example of two of Anthony Howell's primary colours of performance in action – repetition (new combatant arrives to be defeated) spiced with occasional inconsistencies. These provide lightly humorous distraction, for example, by stretching a point (Figure 88). All of this dallying is leading to the climax of the ultimate scene (Punch's unexpected defeat of the devil) which wavers wickedly and hangs darkly (Figure 89).

In Cruikshank's images, against the undercurrent of repetitive violence, each character steps into the light to make a bid for his continuation. The tustles and beatings to stillness, the shoving of the dead 'overboard', are drawn unsentimentally. A crude bundle of scraps and carving, each puppet is at one moment a raging fist, the next a flopping glove. The miniature universe of black marks makes the mechanics of the performance fuse with its metaphors: it is at once a performance - with all the artificiality and contrivance that this involves - and a coherent event because the drawing makes it so. For drawing has a special means of blurring ideas of pretence and actuality, and in quoting pretence so centrally this is especially apparent.

Graphically these images look forward to the hatched rectangles of maverick American illustrator Edward Gorey's strange invented dramas of a century later.¹²⁹ Gorey's settings acknowledge the perspective of early cinema rather than the stage – opening out onto landscape and panorama (Figures 90 and 91). But as with Cruikshank, the aesthetic still borrows from a theatrical notion of ideal vantage point where the viewer/camera is always sitting in the best seat in the house. Even with outdoor settings, the composition is reminiscent of a stage (as early cinema was too), the background like a painted backcloth replete with contrived perspective, and the characters keeping to the front of the boards.

With Gorey, the characters' bodies do the work of telling the action as they interact with invasive upholstery or falling objects. Their postures derive from melodrama and an acting tradition (again carried over into early film) that knew little of subtlety, being rooted in gesture that could be seen at a distance. Faces, less crucial than limbs, are bland and inexpressive on the whole, though villains sport sinister scowls. Cruikshank, too, makes use of the whole body to suggest a puppet-character's

¹²⁹The aesthetic of the stage is also highly relevant in Gorey's case. He was a great fan of New York ballet and made drawings of dancers on box-like stages, executing formal entries and exits, and holding their poses and leaps. Ross and Wilkin, 2002, 86.

experience in the moment or to indicate a wider identity (rich or poor, seductive or a threat), but the physicality of the drawing's detail (there is much more chanciness in his delineation) can push even puppet faces into contortions (Figure 92). With both artists, broader structural rhythms and echoes carry the dynamic 'juice' of the story: like Cruikshank, Gorey uses his largely stable format to establish a feeling of recurrence or predictability - but then breaks this repeatedly using inconsistencies in his treatment of words and events to throw the reader with the experience of each turning page. Here, from *The Object-Lesson* (1957), in sequence as published: Figures 93, 94 and 95. Nothing follows on.

It seems likely that the *Punch and Judy* images were made as faithful illustrations to the nonsensical text that was their starting point, but Cruikshank was a consummate caricaturist who could condense a general idea into a pointed punch. *Punch and Judy*, a descendant of *Commedia dell' Arte*, at his bidding yields illustrations as offspring of performance: the flow of the drama's more extended action delivered as frozen stills. Gorey, in contrast, was formally inventive throughout his career and saw himself in very specific ways as taking issue with rational understanding, borrowing from the Surrealists in this, and anticipating Oulipo in his use of lists and imposed formulaic structures to give a false logic. The way his images often amalgamate improbable ingredients (Figure 96) is reminiscent of Max Ernst's serial collages, and his treatment of words has a similar texture.¹³⁰ His books celebrate meaningless coincidences as their point of departure and each stage of the action jumps from a similar *non-sequitur*. His narratives are generally situated back before the advent of late Capitalism and the technological revolutions of his own lifetime. Adapting the aesthetic of early cinema was part of his route to imagining such a world and some of its visual clunkiness (the extravagant whispers and dramatic asides, the flouncy exits and posed encounters) fits with the creaking hinges of his artificial linguistic idiom.

As with Cruikshank, there were formal benefits to be had for Gorey in reviewing the rhythms of earlier ways of visualising stories, and both artists seem to have achieved distinctive clarity of structure in working over older performance forms and translating across from very stylised genres.¹³¹

¹³⁰ The variety of words was an editing ploy: 'Mostly I look to see that I haven't repeated the same word over and over again. If you've only got 30 sentences, you'd better have as much variety as possible.' Interview with Clifford Ross, *ibid.*, 22.

¹³¹ Fusions of form, of course, will be encouraged according to the specific availability of wider cultural influences. Recent examples of illustrations that borrow from electronic media include Joe Sacco's graphic-novel journalism where the interviewees are depicted as though 'on camera'. The drawings are

(ii) Drawing as Mime

Caroline Sury: *Tourista Dubijos*. 2004.

Lecoq's extended idea of 'mime' as a physical way of processing experience for diverse creative translation presupposes two principal layers of activity. These relate closely to the two ideas identified across performance training at the beginning of this chapter. In Lecoq's terms of reference an initial gathering of observations and sensations – 'embodiment' - is followed by the evolution of a language of delivery that comes about through exploring these in extended play as well as through structured and considered reformulation.

As already indicated, attitudes, processes and categories associated with drawing readily accommodate these varieties of approach. Gombrich identifies two stages of production that are familiar within the basic experience of life drawing, for example: a roughing out of a general idea of form, followed by more detailed refinement where qualities such as clarification and expression come to the fore.¹³² This layering of activity and attention is often physically visible in the finished drawing, creating richness of texture and depth.

The vocabulary associated with drawing is also suggestive: the more provisional 'sketch' or 'impression', 'likeness' or 'mapping', as opposed to the more detailed or worked-up 'study'. Sketches are 'dashed off', likenesses are 'captured', whereas studies are 'made' or 'produced'. Differences of speed and intensity of concentration are acknowledged in the verbs associated with these different terms.

With Lecoq's idea, we are looking not for aspects of speed versus refinement, but fundamentally for notions of 'embodiment' - a bringing of the world to oneself - and then a creative redelivery once more in a sharper readable shape. The tendencies of drawing pursue both of these pathways: first, in offering an especially physical mode of observation/translation where what the eye focuses on is brought to heel by marks of the hand; and second, in resolving an idea or impression into an image that functions purposefully as communication.

made as if capturing televised documentary. What I am highlighting is the way an aesthetic identity can be woven more consciously by looking across a spectrum of historical modes, just as Lecoq did with his interest in archetypal dramatic territories.

¹³² Gombrich discusses this phenomenon in various insightful ways in *Art and Illusion*. His account of James Thurber's cartoon is a characteristically thought-provoking unpicking. Gombrich, 1962, 302.

Formally these approaches might be characterised as likely to encourage rather different graphic strategies.¹³³ The first might favour tentative, broken marks, positioning dots and stroking line-work; perhaps the rapid blocking in of tonal contrasts, concentration on leading lines rather than secondary, the presence of hovering, overlapping contours searching for accuracy. The second might gravitate towards well-digested summarising conventions; or, again, to the knowhow of developed personal shorthand - geometrical simplifications, diagrammatic formulae and symbols or exaggerating mannerisms that have crossed over from other visual data.

This offers very general schema for these two ambitions, and in chasing them into the context of a specific example it becomes easy to see that complicated exchanges and layering evolves between the two in practice.

Caroline Sury is a French artist who co-runs the edgy small press, *Le Dernier Cri*, based in Marseilles. Her own work is heavily based in a very direct drawing process that focuses on her own experience and context as its principal subject but readily weaves into this her lively fantasy life.

At first sight Sury's work seems to be very much an example of a mode of drawing that is typical of the first-stage embodying drive. Her travel diary, *Tourista Dubijos* (2004), was made seemingly *in situ*, its energetic line-work moving rapidly over the page as if eating up what is at hand.¹³⁴ This includes transient moments as well as principal events: reflected passers-by, foot shuffles and fingers fumbling chips in the image shown (Figure 97). Faces seem to shift within their compass - often more than one set of eyes is included. The disposition of space is made overt but also highly mobile by linear patterns that cover surfaces and structures - chasing across and around forms, and often importing the textures of closely-seen upholstery, clothing, chin stubble and all manner of hair. Typography and signage are as much visual infill as contextualising information, and bastardised or incomplete words (such as the station name included here) are a distinctive trait. In all these respects Sury seems to be feeling the mobile energy and physical presence of what she encounters during and through the process of drawing.

¹³³ Again, this anticipates the present and past-tense contrast of Chapter 3.

¹³⁴ This is published as Caroline Sury, *Tourista Dubijos*. Marseilles: le Dernier Cri, 2004. An image of the artist drawing outside come rain or shine concludes the sequence of images. Some of the scenes must necessarily incorporate elements of memory but the rapid-seeming mode of drawing is consistent even here.

However, we can also see the embodying drive going beyond the process of actually collecting data. A physicality of expression is happening as content is set down. What we see is a process of immediate translation arriving according to Sury's own graphic sensibility and visual coding, and this is apparent across her responses to entirely different subject matter. A pre-existing vocabulary shapes the mode of looking, filtering new details and sensations into a coherent arena that is her own manner of 'staging'. More free-wheeling imagery – drawing that is not based in activities of direct observation but also very much a feature of Sury's practice - shows many of the expected trademarks: scratchy linework variously fine or heavy, figures with childlike proportions bearing over-large heads and conspicuous eyes, preoccupation with texture and bodily excrescence and decoration, erotic and extreme situations lucidly encapsulated (Figure 98). Compositionally the imagined scenes are simpler, more fixed and contrived, often centring on a large single figure whose body is an archipelago of erotic invention and hairy elaboration, and it is this that tells that the scene has been conjured up rather than the broader structuring components of graphic language which carry across all of Sury's work.

It might be said that Sury's images formally fit the notion of a very active breed of improvisation. They seem to depend in a substantial way on a continual process of going out and seizing what is encountered, folding the detail of this into an extending bank of creative memory that is as much about aesthetic curiosity as it is about narrative content, and as much about spatial and physical feeling as it is a product of conceptualising or rationalising something witnessed. Much of the delivery happens even as the looking takes place, so drawing here is a form of mime that can embody even as it disgorges.

It would seem that Lecoq's two processes lie very closely together in Sury's work, and we might posit them as sometimes swapping places entirely, and certainly overlapping and intersecting continually until the time when the performance itself stops.

(iii) The Body as Narrative

Heinrich Hoffmann: *Struwwelpeter*. 1845; Chris Ware: *Jordan Lint*. 2011; Edward Gorey, *The West Wing*. 1963; individual images by Oskar Schlemmer, Saul Steinberg, and Roland Topor.

My negative comments on figure drawing in the field of graphic novels now need explaining more fully.

Generally within this field, the tendency has been to devise a way of drawing figures that sits within an overall language of expression used across all kinds of content. This may vary enormously in the detail of execution, as witnessed by Gorey's attenuated wraiths and Sury's big-headed exotics. A recent American anthology of graphic fiction reproduces eighty different artists using as many approaches to representing the figure.¹³⁵ In terms of commitment to direct observation, this also varies greatly: Robert Crumb's visual language has grown from decades of drawing from life, and his capacity to invent depends on this. The Canadian artist Seth drew from old photographs as a starting point for his distinctive treatment of light and shade but he has also borrowed physiological mannerisms from early 20th-century cartoons.¹³⁶ American Ben Katchor's distinctive system of watercolour wash over ink derives from Poussin, and the blockiness of his figures also seems indebted to 17th-century preparatory studies for paintings.¹³⁷ In Paris, both L'Association artists David B. and Marjane Satrapi employ their own versions of black-and-white rendering that seem aligned with the aesthetic of seminal European Expressionist storyteller, Franz Masereel.

This type of highly exploratory eclecticism is, however, still atypical across the general territory. Approaches to the figure growing out of a perceived need for a quick route to overall coherence is disconcertingly frequent, and this often means that younger artists resort to paper-thin stand-ins for characters, made of borrowed traits.¹³⁸ In teaching, this is tackled by encouraging constant sketching, but an

¹³⁵ Brunetti, 2006.

¹³⁶ See the interview with Seth on his inspirations in Hignite, 2006, 192-227. There are many examples of drawings from old photographs in Seth's sketchbook drawings, published in Seth, 2001.

¹³⁷ Katchor's conscious indebtedness to European painters such as Poussin and Rembrandt is well documented in online interviews: See <http://www.derekroyal.com/Katchor.pdf> Accessed 15.11.2012.

¹³⁸ Simone Lia and Tom Gauld are cases in point. Lia's work seems to be a variant of Satrapi's, Gauld's of Gorey's.

alternative direction is suggested by Lecoq's method - to use the body itself as a provocation for narrative enquiry, and to see what arises graphically as a consequence of this.

In commenting on approaches to the body in contemporary performance practice, Josephine Machon emphasises the directness and cross-sensual, non-rational diversity of its expressiveness. Her discussion builds on the analysis of Joanna Broadhurst whom she quotes here, but her observations are reminiscent of the way Lecoq worked for decades:

...it is often the case that, rather than supporting and representing 'something spoken' the movement and physical quality of the actual body in performance 'speaks' itself, 'leading to a free association of themes rather than linear narrative which can provide no answers in manifest or rational (or linguistic) terms'.¹³⁹

Lecoq had not the distrust of linear narrative that Machon and Broadhurst share, nor would he have gone along with their idea that using the body as 'direct working material' was to depart purposefully from ideas of representation.¹⁴⁰ Conflating the impulse to represent - to copy carefully, to work 'realistically' - with a lack of capacity to invent or even to appreciate depth beneath the surface of things, is a common misconception in the way creativity is currently couched and addressed.¹⁴¹ This flows over into analysis of drawing and illustration: in art colleges dismissal of 'literality' - which often stands for what is considered to be over-representational work - is a studio cliché.¹⁴² The shared attentiveness to physicality in Lecoq and current

¹³⁹ Machon is quoting Broadhurst's book *Liminal Acts: A Critical Overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory*. London: Cassell, 1999, 65. Machon, 2011, 64.

¹⁴⁰ For Machon's distrust of this, see *ibid.*, 64. These dichotomies are far too deliberate: linear and thematic structures are neither binaries nor mutually excluding, and representational delivery is hardly a matter of mere surface-play. Beckett's plays are filled with characters that combine very expressive realism - often in terms of what they say - with stark and poignant symbolism in how they broadly look (living out old age in a dustbin, existing as a floating mouth, living through the triggered remembering of a tape recorder, and so on). While their physical natures and circumstances expound rich and complex themes, these also betray the very credible detail of awkward lived experience - the backward loops of memory (*Krapp*), the tyranny of anticipation (*Godot*) and the unremitting present of psychosis (*Not I*). The psychological and the physical are inventively interwoven in Beckett's stagings but it is not easy to dismiss his characters as unconvincing or superficial.

¹⁴¹ For example: 'Furthermore, if we are concerned with imitating 'reality', do we mean more than 'surface' reality?' Pickering, *op. cit.*, 117. Pickering's scepticism implies that performance that imitates superficial aspects of behaviour will never touch the more truly 'real'. This is to overstate a metaphor (surface = false/ depth = real) and miss entirely the complicated exchanges between external conduct and internal negotiation that is the stuff of all human relationships and experience.

¹⁴² Again, 'literality' is a very misused term which etymologically denotes a relationship of exact equivalence, although in practice this is rarely possible. In the studio, 'literality' is taken to signify an unadventurous approach to drawing, and it can refer to quite a variety of supposedly flaky ingredients. It is especially used of students early on in their programme before they have been encouraged to 'loosen

performance ideology as a fundamental resource for generating and underpinning narrative is a creative insight that performance raises very compellingly, but it still depends ultimately on the impulse to represent. In the very best of graphic work too – where bodies are inevitably abundant – playful experiments with its representation are already a longstanding creative strategy.

Older work provides examples of a range of entry points. Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (1845), a famous early runaway success in children's book publishing, is usually appreciated as a simple, though disturbing education in basic morality.¹⁴³ Its images are recognised as direct and lacking sophistication but viewed through the filter of Lecoq's ideas it is possible to recognise their relationship with a physical performance tradition much like the older dramatic forms Lecoq himself took as springboards.¹⁴⁴ So, for example, the body is rendered as the window to the soul: unkemptness means serious trouble (Figure 99). Fatness is related to vitality and well-being, belonging with dancing and thriving, while sadness literally eats one up (Figure 100). Badness burns like a raging temper until it is finally washed out (Figure 101), and naughty boys turn to blackness, a black far inkier than the good little negro they dare to mock (Figure 102).

In these pictures the compression of action and meaning is given as a language of the body which has metaphorical potential at all turns. The stories themselves turn on physical traits, such as a tendency to fidget or to go about with one's head in the air, and they evolve through physical circumstances - overturning an orderly table to disrupt the world of the grown-ups, or falling, almost disastrously, into deep water.

These might be Lecoq's students' improvisations: clowns not looking where they are going as a metaphor for life, or a buffoon negotiating a radical change in body-shape. The *mis-en-scène* directness of the drawings - lucidity of colour, the simple, functional props, the design of the page to stage the moral message clearly - all give the bodies means and space to speak the stories.

up'. A typical example might be a life drawing that is rather predictable in its marks and ambitions - perhaps relying on contour lines and, despite a concern to get the proportions down, doing this poorly.

¹⁴³ For example Salisbury and Styles, 2012, 14.

¹⁴⁴ See John O'Brien's 'Pantomime' in Moody and O'Quinn, 2007, 103-114. 19th-century flyers depicting pantomime characters had much in common with the *Struwwelpeter* images: O'Brien reproduces one from 1812 on p. 110, showing figures symmetrically arranged, gesturing emphatically and ornamented with festoons of text reminiscent of the way that Hoffmann frames his figures to hold them within a scenic lattice.

Machon draws attention to the conspicuous visibility in contemporary performance of bodies that are not 'docile' (Foucault's phrase), by which she means that they are disturbing in their appearance and in their actions, challenging notions of the conforming bodies which Foucault suggested are representative of the modern industrial era.¹⁴⁵ She refers especially to bodies that 'transgress' in their physical appearance (such as those of the disabled-led theatre company, Graeae) and the 'shapeshifting' and tormented bodies of 1990s new dramatic writing. Performance art, of course, has had a notable concern with bodily abjection, sustained endurance, inflicted pain, and strategic, shocking disfigurement, throughout its evolution. It looks back in a way to all sorts of historical public spectacles and worse, and Machon's application of such a compressed timescale here is questionable. But what is valuable is the idea that distortion of the body – movement away from a perceived norm – is a starting-point for the imagination. Through drawing, these distortions may reach dazzlingly fantastical proportions and the sabotage of principles of normality approach the very darkest as well as the lightest of imaginary realms.

In my own survey, French artist Roland Topor (1938-1997) stands out in this respect, particularly in his propensity to deconstruct or dismember, slice open or rearrange physical anatomies. His drawings, often made independently - although there are sequential sketchbooks - release interconnected narrative associations when looked at as a body of work. These are suggestive of the dark world of European folk tales where dismemberment and cannibalism lurk at the edges of culture.¹⁴⁶

Distorting the human body fed Topor's drawings constantly, providing a sustained mode for philosophising the human condition and, as well, diverse incentives for graphic experiment (Figures 103, 104, 105).¹⁴⁷ His sketchbooks present sideshows and skits involving resourceful, playful bodies undergoing various acrobatic antics, traumas (Figure 106) and the inevitable erotic contortions. These are quick drawings, flights of fancy, but we see them feeding more carefully resolved final imagery (Figure 107). As with Lecoq's revisiting of old drama, Topor borrows from the language of early illustrations. Like Gorey (and also Maurice Sendak, Paula Rego, and Peter Till) his style of hatching and broader aesthetic choices show a 19th-

¹⁴⁵ Machon, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Marina Warner's has written extensively on these themes: see especially her 1994 Reith Lecture, 'Cannibal Tales: The Hunger for Conquest' in Warner, 1994. On Topor see Derouet, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Topor's work crossed over into theatre and film. His illustrations are one aspect of a rich and multifaceted career involving writing, stage and film design and acting, and he made many independent drawings throughout his life.

century proclivity, but this is not at all purist and his work demonstrates a very theatrical cross-period mixing of aesthetics – the costume details, for example, from different eras. There is continual experiment and eclecticism in the graphic language itself: soft crayon, spiky penwork, glittery hatching, cloudy wash. Form and content sometimes clash – soft crayon for unspeakable horrors (Figure 108), caressing marks shaping vicious implications – and there are also rejections of coherence in favour of a collage of styles (Figure 109). Ruminating on the caprices of the body seems to have offered a consistency of theme around which the vocabulary and grammar that was the mode of expression could be played with, extended, subverted, deepened, bearing fruit in the commissioned *Op Ed* sharpness which was the more public side of Topor's practice (Figure 110).

Saul Steinberg presents a lighter take in his interest in bodies, although, like Topor, his graphic language continually grew through variations on this central theme. He also made many independent drawings alongside commissioned work and many of these stand similarly as windows onto the imaginary world that fed his other outlets.

Against Topor's visceral sensibility, Steinberg's insights come much more from the head. For content he offers clever ideas – puns and paradoxes rather than scenes of debauchery or torment. Typically, for example, he depicts the differentness of people by giving them varying identities through diverse use of marks (Figure 111).

Distortions this time come through the marks themselves, or through replacing bodies or body parts with telling objects or signs to suggest wider associations or alternative meanings. A favourite device is to interpose aspects of written language or text: punctuation and numbers figure frequently, as we have already seen. The actions of drawing and writing are central metaphors for creating a life in Steinberg's world and his figures often enact their own restatement: a man draws his own future, completing himself (Figure 112). With an idea of drawing as tantamount to the life-force, more abstract pieces can also allude very clearly to the presence of the body. Figure 113, for example, reads as an abstract comic strip where various personages present themselves and interact.

Steinberg's marks often belong to the tidy world of drawing-office implements, but he was highly versatile and experimental in mixing effects, whether sharp ruled lines or playful but carefully placed ink-padded fingerprints. The actual language of mark-making is more assertive than Topor's, very much carrying what is said. Often

Steinberg's bodies have rather a neutral, unspecific identity except in the inky decisions that pull them away from being everyman ideograms (Figure 114).

One final example of very active graphic interplay with bodies are the drawings of Chris Ware – sitting, at last, firmly in the territory of the contemporary graphic novel. In narrative terms, Ware's bodies nestle at the centre of his stories, which tell of the slow awkwardness of people's lives with a very physical focus. Their bodies carry idiosyncrasies that make their characters interesting. Unlike Steinberg, Ware favours anatomical distinctiveness – a character with only one leg (Figure 115), or indications of spreading middle age, and excruciating minor clumsiness. But Ware also engineers a shifting viewpoint by quoting different sorts of graphic language in how he represents their existence. In *Jimmy Corrigan* he characteristically backtracks by suddenly flashing forth a précis of what has happened, reducing characters and their experiences to cartoon contexts (Figure 116). He thus provides a crazy-paced mockery of their real-time bulky sluggishness, and a dig perhaps at the absurdity of trying to relate a life at all.

The polyphonous texture of Ware's storytelling arising from these shifts in visual style is used very directly in describing a character's experience of physicality. Ware's equivalent of Lecoq's 'neutral state'¹⁴⁸ is his suggestion of a character's everyday identity and graphically this comprises simplified rhythmic shapes, flat colour, a few select internal lines denoting folds of flesh or wrinkles (Figure 117). Variation away from this style moves the character out of general routine dullness and towards inconsistencies of experience and, therefore, into states of heightened narrative interest. This is especially clear at moments that are fundamental turning points: where Jordan Lint, for example, at the outset of the eponymous book comes into being as a coalescing cloud of pinkish Benday dots and, at its end, departs the story - and his existence - with a symmetrical vapourisation (Figures 118a and 118b).¹⁴⁹

As with the previous examples, Ware's work shows how drawing can use the body as 'direct working material'. The motif and idea of the body is a primary focus in building a graphic language and centring the narrative focus for each fresh project as it emerges. The dance of its lines, its potential for distortion and irregularity, the tragedy and comedy of its pains and pleasures, its essential ambiguities (inside

¹⁴⁸ This is Lecoq's reference point from which all creative effort is measured, and the starting point for character formation. Lecoq op. cit., 36-39.

¹⁴⁹ Chris Ware, *Jordan Lint*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2011.

meeting outside, thought and flesh, age and youth) – all may draw out a creative body of work.

(iv) Text emerging from Image

Chris Ware; Shaun Tan; Andrzej Klimowski; Edward Gorey: *The West Wing*. 1963.

As has already been indicated, Lecoq gives a much broader idea of the notion of text than has generally been found in discussion of the graphic novel form, where the term is often restricted to the word-based component of the storytelling.¹⁵⁰ This narrower interpretation is counteracted by all sorts of ways in which ideas of text - and its reception - have been negotiated theoretically and across wider arts practices in recent decades.¹⁵¹

Within performance, Lecoq's formulation sits well with current interest in devising through processes that are only tangentially verbally led.¹⁵² Even where a performance is scripted, improvisation around this is common practice and where devising itself is concerned, this often takes place before a text that will consolidate the eventual performance has emerged, even in cases where a pre-existing text, which may not be a script at all, has suggested the central idea for the work.

A second complication has arisen with the theoretical idea of the unstable text, brought initially to attention by deconstructionist thinking, and discussed above in relation to translation in Chapter 1. This has given new relevance to the act of reception in how art and literature are treated and regarded.¹⁵³ Here a 'text' - in the narrow sense - is considered as only becoming fully meaningful in the act of being responded to: only then may it achieve some sort of potential in undergoing a

¹⁵⁰ This is partly entirely practical, of course, as a means of dealing clearly with the actual words that are very often present in the story-delivery. The situation is changing, and there are indications of more complex views in recent discussion. Thierry Groensteen has assertively challenged the widespread idea that stories in comics are carried principally by their words, seeing the process of narration as 'pass[ing] by way of the pictures'. This seems to link with Lecoq's wider conception of text in the sense of a central idea or meaning. Groensteen, op. cit., 12.

¹⁵¹ The wider intellectual context is outlined at length by Cunningham, op. cit. He tracks the expanded meaning of the word 'text' across the Cultural Studies platform and, equally, the extension of the concept of 'reading': 'Anything at all, in short, which can be thought of as if made textually, imagined as imagined, as narrated, as constructed language-like, and thus 'readable', is now being 'read'.' 26.

¹⁵² A range of contemporary techniques are surveyed in Mermikides and Smart, 2010.

¹⁵³ Ann Miller summarises this intellectual context in relation to *bande dessinée*. See especially Chapter 7, 'Bande dessinée as Postmodernist Art Form', in Miller, op. cit., 125-146.

direction for understanding. As part of this, interest in an audience's role in completing what is offered by a production has become very visible in how contemporary performers approach their work.¹⁵⁴ Experiments with unusual stagings are prevalent,¹⁵⁵ including explorations of mixed-media delivery which can be elaborate confections of technology. These consciously play with the idea that reception – including any shifting quality of perception that this entails - is part of the subject being explored.

In many ways this second idea seems unexceptionable in the context of graphic storytelling. The possibly shifting nature and certainly implicit significance of reader response is a premise on which communication art hinges, and in this respect the lineage from 2-D practice out into the wider creative arts is sometimes very clear. Writers on contemporary performance, for example, refer to 'collage' effects - relating to multi-media and multi-sensory delivery - and in the use of this term they acknowledge a type of aesthetic cutting-and-pasting that derives conceptually from paper-play.¹⁵⁶ Here, meaning is made up of fragments in a very specific way, and this whole perspective has its origins in the formal experiments of early Modernism which were famously demanding of their audiences. Aesthetic distancing - where attention is drawn to the artificial quality of fictional illusions, thus breaking the hold of credibility on the viewer – is usually associated with the radical dramatist Brecht, but an equivalent is found early on in comics: George Herriman has a character 'cutting' the surface of the paper on which he is drawn, pointing out the deception in the fact of his existence.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴This dovetails with theoretical concerns outlined by reception theory which have ultimately come down from literary studies (see Cunningham, op. cit., especially Chapter 6, 69-86). Ironically this body of ideas stemming from a consideration of *literature* has in certain ways destabilised the dominance of *writing* as a cultural mode. In performance this whole perspective has 'since around the 1980s, coalesced into a preoccupation with 'liveness' and with this, an emphasis on the 'reality' of audience, performer and their meeting in real time.' Mermikides and Smart, op. cit., 7.

¹⁵⁵ These can be chancy, appropriated and awkward spaces – even one-to-one encounters in hotel rooms: see Anthony Howell's discussion of performance artist, Claire Shillito. Howell, op. cit., 64.

¹⁵⁶ Alex Mermikides nicely distinguishes between performances that are collage-like, where the fragments retain a sense of separation, and those which more fittingly resemble the photographic term montage, where there is greater ultimate fusion in the effect. Mermikides and Smart, op. cit., 157.

¹⁵⁷ See Prosser, 2001. Miller discusses this type of self-conscious formal playfulness in comics as metalepsis, where characters are 'granted access to the level of the narration', often by violating the illusion of their world and acknowledging the process of their construction. She sees *Bande dessinée* as 'peculiarly suitable as a vehicle for postmodern narrative, since the enunciative apparatus constituted by the grid of frames is visible on the surface of the page, bringing the illusory world of the fiction in permanent contact with the two-dimensional surround and allowing for transgression of its boundaries to be similarly highly visible.' Miller, op. cit., 146.

Acknowledgement of reader responsibility for keeping the reading happening underpins longstanding mainstream formats such as the daily/weekly cartoon strip where there is a requirement to hold on to a plot that might be decades in developing. Chris Ware's recent state-of-the-art *Building Stories* offers a more concentrated equivalent of this in its centring on the experience of finding a satisfying reading from story fragments. This box of delights requires a journey of considerable puzzlement before the fourteen different kinds of image + text may be pieced together. It is a vivid enactment of the idea of narrative being in the hands of the receiver at the point of reception.

If an emphasis on reader-reception falls within existing conceptions of graphic storytelling, the first idea - that text itself may be more than mere words - is the insight that I want to pursue here and this has suggested two principal avenues of enquiry: first, cross-sensory attitudes in drawn narrative, where words are found to be more than semantic tools and pictures to carry resonances that exceed the visual; and second, an idea of text that is rooted in visual orchestration and so therefore capable of leaving behind word-based considerations entirely. Both have been addressed with the intention of foregrounding an attitude of openness and experiment in creating visual stories that is very much concerned with educational potential.

Vocal Drawings

That comics have a synaesthetic¹⁵⁸ drive perhaps comes from the formal collaborations (and collisions) that are involved in bringing together their different codings. Their graphic conventions borrow from readings across the senses.¹⁵⁹ So for example, an aroma may be pictured, *Bisto*-like, as a type of steam; or wild noise suggested by frenetic line quality as if everything is shaking. In both cases non-visible forces are given physical form, and one sense is carried over to become another: smell becoming visible; sound, tangible.

¹⁵⁸ I use the word not in its customary sense of a neurological condition where perception may trigger reactions through a sense other than the more expected one. My reading follows the deeper etymology of the word where the senses may be said to be working together. I am influenced in this by the writing on recent cross-sensory tendencies in performance of Josephine Machon who has coined the neologism *(syn)æsthetics*. Machon, 2011, 13-14.

¹⁵⁹ Just as linguistic clichés endlessly materialise sensation in collocations like 'frozen solid' and 'tickled pink'.

This is very close to some of Lecoq's exercises to encourage students to experience and represent the world across the senses. In his context of performance the body is the main interpreting tool and movement the primary mode of expression.¹⁶⁰ In drawing, equivalents are offered by material/physical qualities such as the emphasis and gesture of marks but also through these visual metaphors sitting within the image. We do not read the smell as actual steam but as something floating and dispersing just as steam does. We do not read the shaking as an earthquake but find it a compelling metaphor for the grab of noise.

Specific tendencies within 20th-century art and culture have opened up graphic possibilities for expressing and referencing different kinds of sensation in new ways. Film is often invoked as a key influence on sequential art, but generally this is in connection with compositional decision-making and issues of pacing. Of the wider senses, sound is a favourite focus in drawn narratives, and film's example has certainly played a part here, though this is a richly evolving area. Variants of a soundtrack emerge in graphic delivery in diverse ways - inflecting the actual energy of the drawing internally, as has already been mentioned, or expanding existing devices such as emphasising the formal as opposed to the semantic experience of any written text that does occur. So individual words may become devices of colour and shape rather than harbingers of meaning. They thus become more generalised: less containers of specific reference, more agents of energy, atmosphere or 'noise'.

Chris Ware's interest in sound was considered initially in Chapter 1 in connection with translation. His mixing of notions of 'personal' and more 'public' soundtracks across a story is certainly a filmic mode. More immediate and intimate sensations – a close focus on a hand pouring coffee (with attendant 'GLG GLG GLG'), then putting back the pot ('KNGK') – exists within the broader environmental soundscape which can still include tiny-scale detail – the clatter of coins through a hospital drink dispenser - as part of the public universe against which life is played out (Figures 119a, 119b).¹⁶¹ A clear hierarchy of sound is constructed by these means. For

¹⁶⁰ Colour, therefore, becomes action; changes of state (melting, evaporating) become motion. Lecoq, op. cit., 48-50, and 87-92.

¹⁶¹ These examples are from Ware, *Building Stories* and *Jimmy Corrigan* respectively. In the second instance there is not the close visual focus on the cause of the noise – just a general establishing shot. An even greater sense of remoteness is implied by losing the onomatopoeic referencing and reverting to textual, third-person, description, such as is the case, for example, with aspects of the dream sequence in the story of Jimmy's great-grandfather where sounds are labelled (the 'sound of Grandmother's breath') rather than rendered in ways that take them to bits. Even here there are scraps of onomatopoeic intervention ('SLAP') to denote sudden sound although this seems to be outside the dream and therefore awarded a different level of vitality).

example, Ware will lend greater remoteness to a specific noise by not including an image of its cause, but simply allow a textual indication to float into a picture to reference its off-scene status, away from the focus of the story (Figure 119c). This is in parallel with how film sound operates, varying qualities of intimacy and remoteness of sound around what is actually pictured.

In another direction, Shaun Tan's picture book, *The Arrival*, prioritises touch as the principal sensation filter for suggesting the bewildering experience of migration that is the book's subject. The destination here is a fantasy, melded from Tan's own travelling and particularly the sensuousness of the immigrant quarters of 1990s New York. The narrative is rendered without words through cumulative drawings that sport a rough-hewn photographic quality, offering their own feeling of texture but also evoking the effect of an old photo album. Although this is obviously physical drawing, Tan's mode of depiction does not carry anything like the energy of Sury's penwork. The weight of sensual referencing is carried by the focus within the images - on repeating body details and activities (Figure 120), for example, and varieties of surface, shape, and tonal richness coming quickly together (Figure 121).

Haptic mark-making inevitably carries its own cross-sensual tendencies and sometimes this can be assertive in conveying a dynamic quality to the content which can, of course, include words. Robert Crumb's 1960s comics elicited a continually hectic soundtrack by means of zig-zag contours, bulging eyes and crazy labelling, but also offered an implied internal buzz (Figure 122). Sury's predilection for signage can also be read as a texture of sound. Fragments of lettering depart from their original meaning to become odd half-words, complicating the surrounding energy of the drawing itself. The cool voice-overs that pastiche-documentaries have laden with irony are familiar from conceptual image + text work such as Sophie Calle's (Figure 123) but far more widespread in the work discussed here are 'dialects' of hand-drawn lettering, now everywhere replacing the old more uniform comics scripts (Figure 124).¹⁶²

Ware's structuring treatment of words reflects his musical conception of the comics form. Individual words – and these are often conjunctions, the sideline parts of speech rather than the core nouns and verbs – resonate visually against the drab

¹⁶² I refer to the neat hand-drawn script that dominated comics for the very good reason of legibility until very recently. Professional scriptors were employed to execute this skilled task.

detail of his stories (Figure 125).¹⁶³ This interest in small link-words recalls Serres's interpretation of prepositions as newly vital elements in contemporary language.¹⁶⁴ Pulling these out from the surface of the page, often with an appreciative cursive finesse and strong colour, shows Ware employing aspects of text, along the lines of Sury, as a considered formal accent but with much more development. He achieves a layer of commentary that stands out on its own and seems to question the embeddedness of meaning in logical readability or continuous experience. Rather, interruptions, pauses and hinges dominate the orchestration.

Silent Stories

Considering text more broadly as essentially lying within the general design of a piece is a particularly useful way of approaching that area of graphic storytelling that excludes words altogether: the silent story.

This is a tradition in graphic narrative often overlooked, and includes the very experimental work of early exponents such as Masereel who looked across to silent film, and also later abstract fantasies such as flowered from the pens of Steinberg and Crumb.¹⁶⁵

What is especially evident at the moment is a predilection for transitioning between silent (purely pictorial) episodes and those which recover connection with words and spoken language - and by extension, perhaps, ideas of logical meaning. Andrzej Klimowski's *Horace Dorlan* (2007) (Figure 126) is a case in point in its 'attempt[ing] to describe an individual's uncertain state of mind':

The book's form...reflects the [protagonist's] instability. Written chapters are interrupted by pages of images that follow a logic not recognisably part of the story and the ground keeps shifting under the reader's feet. The mixture of text and images addresses the complexity of language and how it affects perceptions of reality. While writing often corresponds to an internal monologue, pictures are more ambiguous: who is the real protagonist and what is actually happening here?¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ There are plentiful examples in *Jimmy Corrigan*. This technique has evolved in the current *Building Stories* so that adverbs are now being favoured and more specific disembodied phrases are pulled out of the base text like an overlying poem: LATELY...I'M NOT...FOR SO MANY YEARS...MOSTLY...GOOD LORD...I LOVE...'

¹⁶⁴ Prepositions are vital intermediaries in grammar. Discussed by Connor, May 2002.

¹⁶⁵ For Crumb, see Crumb and Poplaski, 2005, 301, 314.

¹⁶⁶ Description of *Horace Dorlan* as part of Klimowski's research activities on the Royal College of Art website:

Chris Ware, too, frequently uses quiet, if not entirely silent, episodes within the framework of a larger story that itself employs words to sophisticated and layered effect. He continually plays with varying levels of textual intervention, never settling for the straightforward dichotomy that Klimowski's formula (words as monologue, pictures as ambiguous) seems to present. Acquiring an idea of range in the case of both began for Ware with the experience of excluding one or other.¹⁶⁷ Klimowski's experiments, too, are driven by a research focus: '[i]n his own practice and in his work with students...to open up new forms for storytelling, both linear and fragmented, employing images, text and design.'¹⁶⁸ Figure 127 indicates the range of media Klimowski employs in his entirely text-free *The Secret* (2002) - a narrative that explores different qualities of perception in its fabrication as well as its elusive story.

There is a pedagogical incentive in stripping a form down radically in order to approach a fuller understanding of its different components. Working with pictures alone involves attending to foundational ways of constructing a narrative idea, and manipulating its flow without easy recourse to verbal explanation. This forces the creator back on ideas of essence – what is it that *must* be conveyed? – and urges creative invention. The rewards of each language are experienced very intensely in this way, but also their inevitable shortcomings.

With this thought in mind, finally, the directing and expressive quality of design and form (Lecoq's idea of the implied text structuring the work) might therefore be very well appreciated in completely word-free narratives such as Gorey's continuously silent *The West Wing*.¹⁶⁹ Here, thirty hatched rectangles show inexplicable scenes of an antique interior. There are no words offered beyond the rather formal title which gives just enough information to suggest that these are of the same suite of rooms in the same country house. Within the pictures there are no hints of connected geography, though general aesthetic coherence holds the spaces depicted in a plausibly united framework.

<http://www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?ContentID=503214&GroupID508371&Contentwiththissection&More=1> Accessed 4.11.2011.

¹⁶⁷ Ware claims that this was how he invented his practice. Raeburn, op. cit., 8.

¹⁶⁸ Description of Klimowski's research interests:

<http://www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?ContentID=508371&GroupID=36764&Contentwiththissection&More=1> Accessed 4.11.2011.

¹⁶⁹ First published by Simon and Schuster, USA, 1963.

Formally and conceptually the work is broadly indebted to Ernst's *Une Semaine de Bonté*, and Gorey's wider expectation of narrative – manifest in his proclivity for illogical linearity – certainly sits comfortably with Surrealist interests in the creative use of the subconscious. Like Surrealist techniques for automatic writing, or the playful picture generation implicit in strategies such as the *cadaver exquis*, Gorey's chains of images have a coherent narrative intent only in the sense that they are purposefully baffling.

Taking apart the formal decisions that support this reading, there is clearly great regularity of visual approach across the work: thirty identically shaped, tonally harmonious images sharing a reasonable consistency of viewpoint. Gorey's characteristically intense hatching elucidates wallpaper, flooring, vases and shadows. The spaces shown are generally bare, but each time some 'thing' is shown, sometimes merely the space itself (Figure 129). There are vistas through doors, a reflection in a mirror, discarded objects, figures going about their improbable businesses, things floating or lurking (Figures 130-134). Sometimes Gorey offers full-blown Surrealism (cracks in floors or inexplicable interior sea floods). But he also touches on a more restrained aesthetic - the beauty of torn wallpaper (Figure 135), anticipating Francesca Woodman. There is something, too, of whimsy - pulling in aspects of his children's book sensibility, with a crawling child in one image and three abandoned tennis shoes in another.

There is no appreciable ordering here – although the first image (the bottom of a staircase) has an inviting quality that Bachelard would have appreciated. The last is of a floating candle – entirely unresolving, although technically the end point of the sequence. There is often a sense of narrative possibility: things half-seen that may or may not be on their way in; a face looking through a window; cloths floating in mid-air, possibly in flight or eternally suspended. This feeling extends to other formal puzzles. How tall is that step-ladder? Where does that plummeting flight of stairs descend? Is that an alcove or a blocked doorway half-way up that wall? And to issues of gravity – how might that delicate table support that boulder? The spaces, though in many ways clearly articulated and plausibly clad, at the same time do not sustain logical interrogation nor readily satisfy.

Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet* preparatory drawings eloquently articulate the space around the dancers (Figure 136). Gorey manipulates space to signify uncertainty, and places in it objects that are in transit or suspended animation. These are often

sharply realised as material forms – a strongly square package or tightly rolled carpet (Figure 137). Seeing the narrative in ‘things’, or their essential forces and identities (à la Lecoq), Gorey makes a great deal out of the pleasure of their possibilities, giving them a con-text that is there for the reader to dream.

The West Wing comprises a simple narrative/design structure involving clear decisions to ensure that logical expectations are constantly frustrated. As already suggested, Gorey’s works containing actual text offer an equivalent narrative strategy: the words that neatly subtitle the pictures are superficially compelling, formally elegant, but nonsensical when placed under scrutiny. The shape of Gorey’s distinctive foundational ‘text’ is always a long line of inexplicable, aesthetically luscious experiences. Flutters of stories arise from wondering about the strange relationships so precisely enumerated – between objects, bodies, spaces and – if present – words.

IV. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has gradually isolated various experimental strands for designing graphic narrative, using three focussing ideas from Jacques Lecoq’s method to establish a direction of play.

First, it has been proposed that drawing may be thought of as an equivalent to Lecoq’s version of mime as a primary process for generating an individual creative language. Lecoq places this in connection with what he calls ‘embodiment’, whereby experience of the world is made one’s own and out of which may be established an informed system of delivery and the roots of an enduring practice. The analysis of Caroline Sury’s drawings has shown that this may be complicated in individual instances but with interesting results – in her case absorption and reformulation of experience are not separate but instantaneous exercises.

Second, it has become clear that the body may be used as a key creative tool in specific respects that are potentially wide-ranging. Its anatomy can readily provide the basis for narrative ideas even through such simple strategies as graphic manipulation of its shape. It can also be used to harness a very physical type of wider engagement with the world, so that objects and spaces may be appreciated much more vitally as part of an overall narrative texture in the making of creative work. Again, it has been seen that the maker’s own body rhythms can be carried into

the drawing process strategically, allowing diverse graphic ingredients to achieve a rich state of eloquence.

Third, the very idea of text has been broadened to reference in very practical terms the underpinning structure of creative work. Concentrating on leading formal devices such as Howell's primaries in this connection may establish a beneficial clarity of purpose in devising creative ideas and also provide a controlling rhythm to play with formally. Where actual words are to be introduced to the mix, there are opportunities for challenging regular patterns of linguistic use, and this may itself open up exchanges with non-verbal elements in the interest of radical experiment.

Overall, the chapter has offered a raft of creative strategies - especially in the detail of the case studies - that may readily be taken into teaching undergraduate art and design. The body need not stay in the Life Room nor the ideas discussed remain outside it, and in my general conclusion I will consider scenarios for taking these towards other disciplines. The fundamental point here is that it has much more to offer undergraduate drawing and Illustration courses than is currently being acknowledged.

The next and final chapter moves the discussion now to the nature of graphic language itself, proposing and sampling a personal system for describing graphic range by means of an encounter with grammar.

Tense

Preliminaries

The third word in the trio is a complex one in that it grammatically refers to a very elaborate system. As defined by George Yule, tense is how a verb is inflected 'according to the location of a situation in time'.¹⁷⁰

A sense of the term's relevance to the study first arose through a conversation around drawings I had made, some of which follow on here, and also out of an awareness of my predilection for different sorts of graphic language in other artists' work that seemed difficult to reconcile. Chapter 3 deals at length with different qualities of mark, and this is the focus of the term 'tense' in the study: the word is used to indicate the way a sense of time is offered by the actual graphic language deployed. If the drawing is the 'verb', the energy and inclination of the mark-making is the inflection which I am here calling 'tense'.

This chapter, much more than the others, makes the case for running with a complex analogy as a way of greatly opening out awareness of tendencies in the practice, perhaps scarcely noticed at the outset. There was a great deal to run with in exploring the idiosyncrasies of the English tense system in relation to drawing - the future was an especially stubborn category to manage. Testing the terminology as it grew by considering it in relation to other artists' work became the key to recognising the level of complexity that always occurs in practice. This brought the chapter towards its ultimate position of acknowledging mixtures of 'tenses' as a highly productive status quo.

Ultimately the tense analogy need not stand as proven, for its purpose here is to show that the close application of a system of analysis, whatever this may be, brings out all kinds of insights that might have gone unfound simply because it intensifies the process of looking in offering new types of questions.

The following drawings lay out the contrast which I first puzzled over: four past-tense drawings (Illustrations 17-20), followed by four present (Illustrations 21-24). The chapter itself explains the nature of their differences. The effect of this process has

¹⁷⁰ Yule, 2009, 54.

been to give me a much richer sense of graphic distinctions altogether and a language for describing these, an appreciation of range within single drawings, and of the articulacy of marks across graphic delivery more generally. The present-tense mode has for the first time become a dominant and accepted strategy in my way of working, reinforcing a sense of the value of the 'thinking drawings' which have been such a feature of this project.



Illustration 17

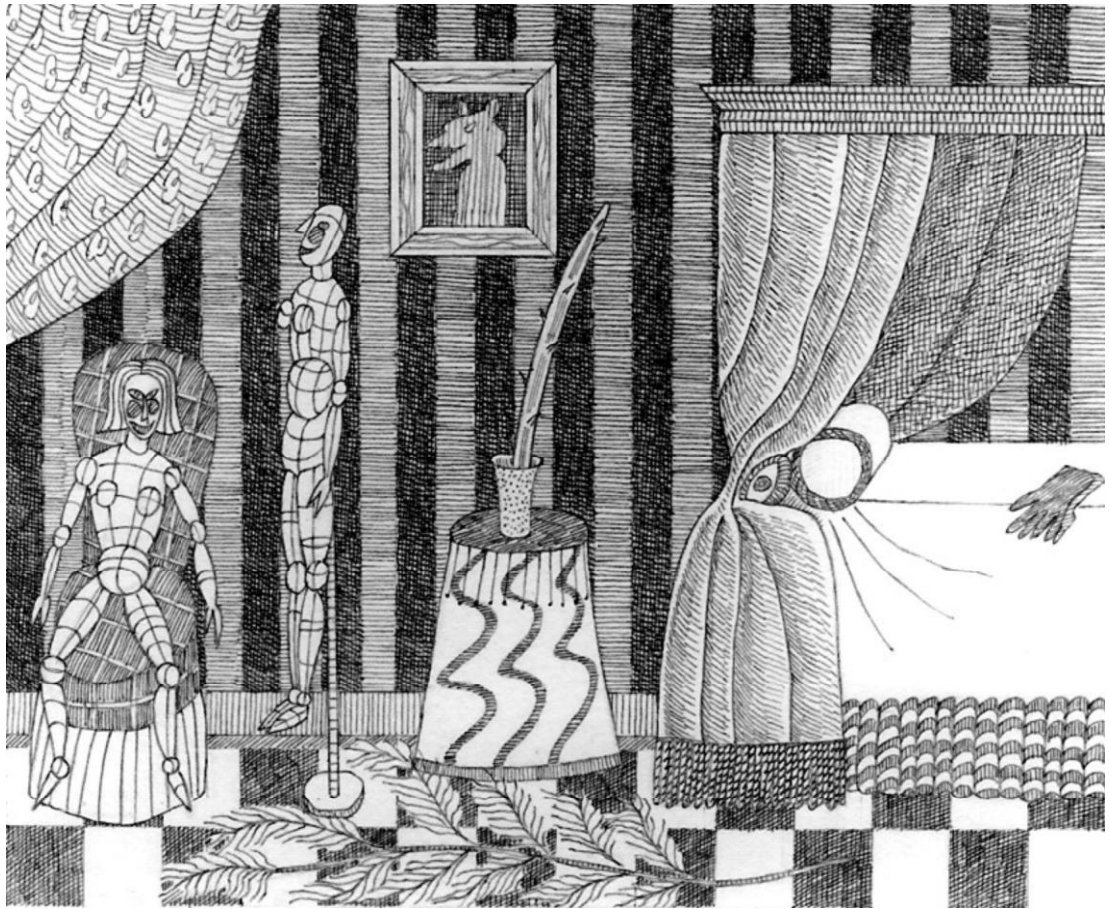


Illustration 18

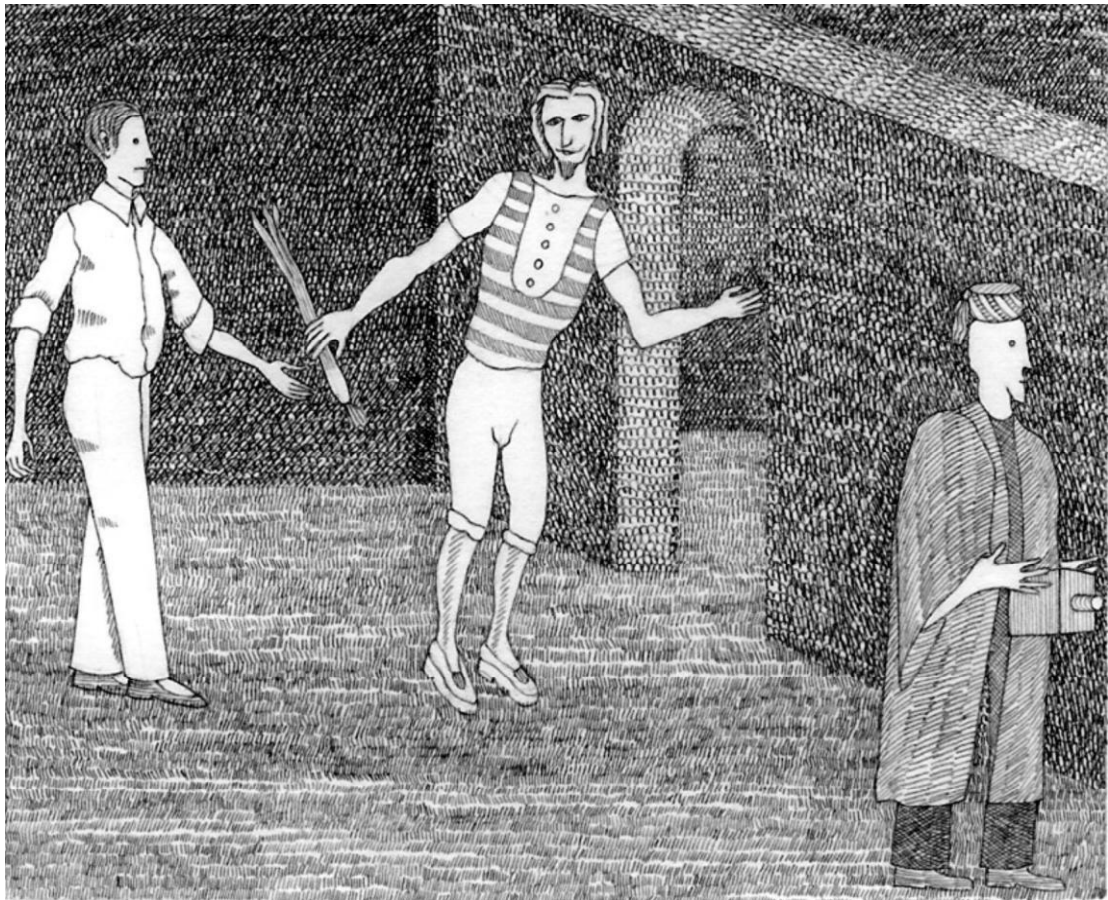


Illustration 19

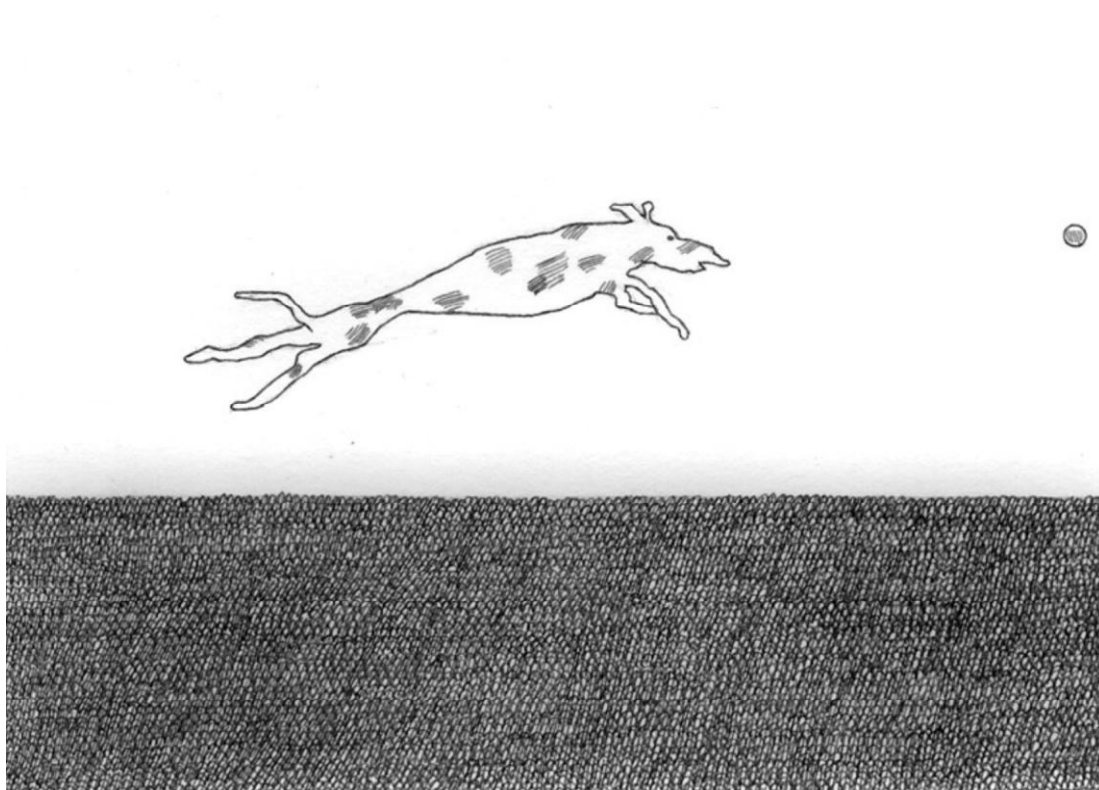


Illustration 20



Illustration 21



Illustration 22

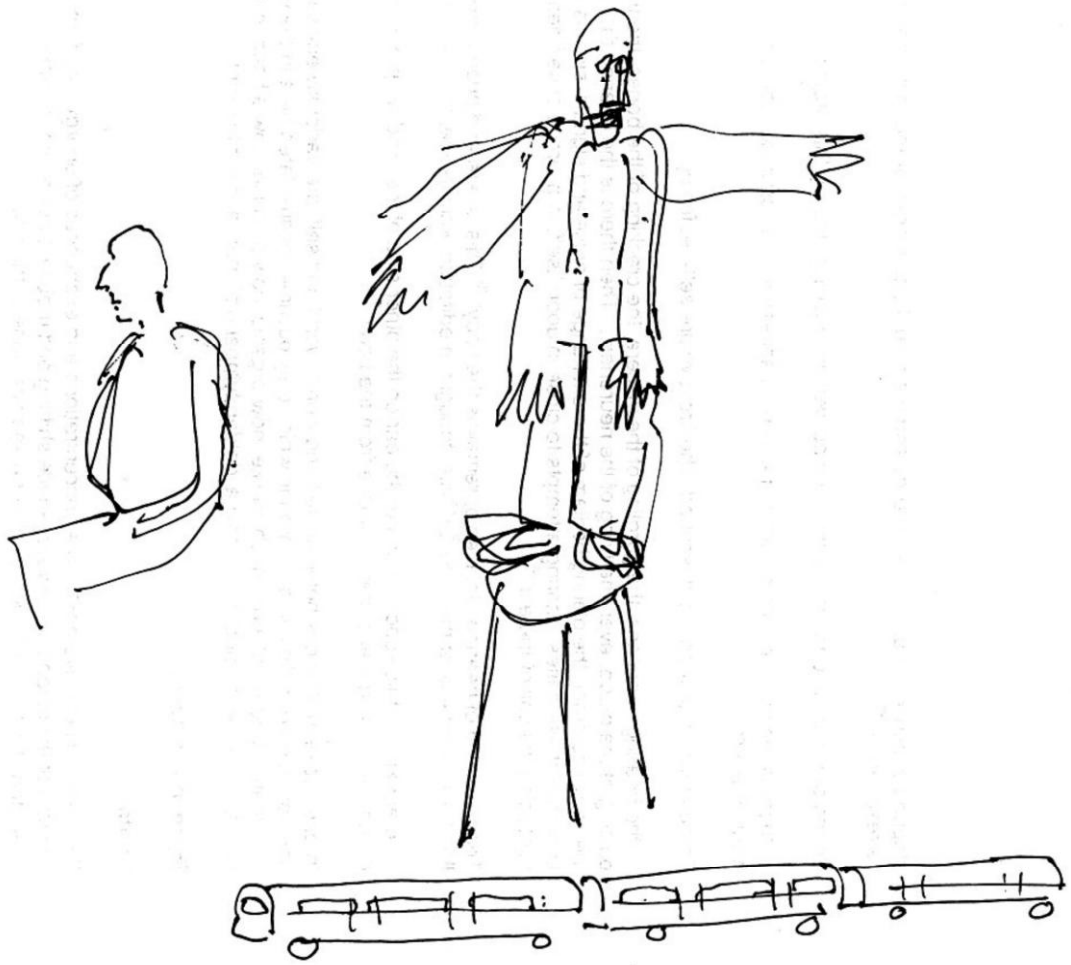


Illustration 23



Illustration 24

Chapter 3: A Speculative Graphic Analogy

I. General Premises

Capturing Thinking and Consolidating Thoughts

The thinking for this chapter arose directly out of observing a pattern in my process which became especially clear to me when I recognised that I was attracted to two very different approaches in other artists' work. During the course of my research I have come to call these present- and past-tense drawing, in keeping with the play on ideas of language that this enquiry has so often invited.

This chapter will look at these tendencies in some detail. Tendency is a good word as it reflects the opportunity for fluidity that always remains. Drawings can readily change direction and emphasis internally, and it is part of my objective to highlight this even in pursuing this broad contrast.

Put simply, the two directions identified are: in the first instance, drawing that is connected with an attitude that is in some sense 'in the moment' (and the connotations of this can admittedly take a range of forms, as what follows will begin to uncover). In my own case this is located in a way of working that runs with the flight of thought: drawing that 'discovers' an idea. The second approach operates much more consciously and retrospectively, working up an idea that is already largely identified. This is about careful refining and crafting. It operates strategically, considers detail in relation to overall design, runs through successive alternatives until a final distillation is sighted. Physically, in my own work, the first way of drawing is flighty and fast-moving, not stopping to think, but thinking as I go. The second is more considered or thought-through, the product of lingering decisions, imported judgements and steady adjustments.

Figures 138 and 139 will stand as examples of the two approaches: the first in rollerball pen, with shapes captured swiftly (often by overlaying contours), and marks falling out as a scene is searched for. Emphasis is established frantically and lots of space is left open, a context being only minimally acknowledged. The second drawing evidences much more planning (though it originated in a drawing such as the first). Compositionally it has a contrived geometrical underpinning and this has been played with consciously in the way that the design draws attention to the

triangle of light as pure shape. Context is constructed through variations of repetitive, decorative hatching, and a simple formula of layout that is consistent with the wider series to which it belongs. It is made with two sorts of pencil, one hard, one soft, and the quality of tone and marks belong to this wider graphic sequence as well. Many of my drawings feature a figure or figures on a ground, and narrative journeys arise from manipulating this combination. The two examples are representative of two stages of a process: first finding content, and then establishing a considered form of delivery to shape impact, to complicate and enrich with further layers of implication, and to relate the detail more coherently to a wider narrative trail.

Appreciating these stages of my process analytically has caused me to see a use for each tendency in its own right. Here the work of others has helped my ideas to crystallise around the concept of tense. Much of the discussion that follows chases the contrast between fast-flowing, actively exploratory forms of drawing (in-the-moment, present-tense drawing) and the consolidating, structuring energy of design (retrospective, past-tense drawing).

Analogy or System?

This categorisation suggests a framework for thinking about drawing that is in no way intended to be prescriptive. It is an analogy proposed for drawing rather as Anthony Howell uses psycho-analytical ideas to prompt sensitive questioning and dynamic enquiry around the elements of performance.¹⁷¹ It is offered as a means of discussing the usefulness of arriving at a personal system of labelling for different aspects of a practice with a view to opening out its potential. This relates specifically to philosopher Richard Rorty's advocacy of the development of a personal vocabulary as a key aspect of the creative growth of the self,¹⁷² and similarly to Italo Calvino's broader idea that each individual establishes a personal canon of texts in building an identity.¹⁷³ Part of the value of establishing personal terms of reference is the process of testing their aptness. This involves seeing how far they may be applied: pursuing nuances, revealing inevitable complexity and complications, exposing limitations.

¹⁷¹ See Howell, op., cit. xiii- xv.

¹⁷² Rorty is clear that this is never complete. Appreciating 'the power of redescribing, the power of language to make new and different things possible and important' is 'an appreciation which becomes possible only when one's aim becomes an expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions rather than The One Right Description.' Rorty, 1989, 39-40.

¹⁷³ Italo Calvino, 'Why Read the Classics?' in Calvino, 1999, 3-9. "Your' classic is a book to which you cannot remain indifferent, and which helps you define yourself in relation or even in opposition to it.' 7.

Applying analytical systems to drawing has a long heritage, and a little context will make clear my allegiance to the notion of creative comparison rather than directing principles. 18th and 19th-century categorisations of visual material were intensely systematic, outlining very specifically organizational principles for graphic articulation and composition that were taken by their definers as fixed laws of design. Deanna Petherbridge traces several of these, identifying on the one hand the influence of classical sources interested in verbal language (such as Latin models of rhetoric) and on the other a relationship to the Enlightenment propensity for encyclopaedic systems of explanation.¹⁷⁴ Despite the scientific intent of these ideas, from the perspective of this research they can now seem strikingly idiosyncratic.

The Dutch artist and scholar, David Pierre Giottino Humbert de Superville, for example, ties his theory of the behaviour of lines to aspects of the human countenance, and this is in interestingly specific ways anticipatory of Lecoq's idea of the body's 'rose of effort' which is his analysis of the body's options for movement: vertical lines are read as strong, horizontal as calm, and diagonal as dynamic (compare Figures 140 and 141).¹⁷⁵ Taken as poetic insight, the basis of de Superville's conceptions feels intriguingly workable as a way into creative experiment, and Petherbridge in fact links him sympathetically with much later and respected creative ideas such as Kandinsky's synaesthetic conjunctions of form and colour with emotion.¹⁷⁶

Importantly, Petherbridge's account indicates that aesthetic 'grammars' such as de Superville's did not typically allude to aspects of linguistics, though they 'grew out of the late 18th-century fascination with language and systems of grammar'.¹⁷⁷ So even here grammar is actually a useful foundational synonym for the idea of a certain type of system, providing a guiding light for analysis rather than a specific template. Throughout her own writing Petherbridge alludes metaphorically to once-buoyant 'syntactical systems'¹⁷⁸ in drawing which provided 'the invisible infrastructure of

¹⁷⁴ Leon Battista Alberti's influential analysis of painting was based on 'rhetorical models' and Humbert de Superville's 'ordering of pictorial signs into a categorical visual semiotics reflects a late flowering of the Enlightenment preoccupation with systems and 'natural logic''. Petherbridge, 2010, 186, 200.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 201. For Lecoq's discussion of the 'rose of effort' see Lecoq, 2000, 85-86.

¹⁷⁶ Petherbridge, *op. cit.*, 186.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

pictorial composition'.¹⁷⁹ She sees current trends towards 'intuitive and spontaneous sketching', or 'the co-option of drawing to computer-aided systems' or, again, 'the submersion of drawing into conceptual practice' as worthwhile in themselves but impoverishing in their '[swamp]ing' of 'formal issues', bringing a loss of range and 'resonance'.¹⁸⁰

This is very pertinent. The idea of a grammar that I pursue is intended to stimulate creative range in approach rather than to pin down process or restrict interpretation. Like Petherbridge, I would argue that contriving a personal system for describing drawing can instigate fresh attentiveness to formal properties that can be richly stimulating in terms of the detail of production.

John Berger has set down a further idea of tense as a creative analogy for different sorts of drawing in his essay 'Drawing on Paper' (1987). He indicates three attitudes of graphic enquiry: drawings 'which study and question the visible, those which put down and communicate ideas, and those done from memory'.¹⁸¹ These he allocates to Present Indicative, Historic Past, and Future tense respectively. His allocation differs from what follows in being concerned with an approach to a topic rather than a vocabulary of marks. My discussion is crucially concerned with form above content, and, in particular, with the role of the mark-making in affecting content in a specific way.

Tense and Graphic Novels

A further incentive to look at tense as a concept is the nature of the territory of this study. Tense is the fundamental way that language apportions events in time; it is the way we endlessly relate our experience to frameworks of chronology. In terms of their fundamental components, visual stories may be said to deal crucially in time just as in the last chapter I showed them to deal with the essential rhythms of bodies in space. As a structuring principle the linguistic system of tense construction is a rich opportunity for experiment.

Bart Beatty has recently described autobiography as now 'the dominant genre of independent comics' and, certainly, it has been a clear priority for France's influential

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁸¹ Berger, 2001, 561.

small press, L'Association.¹⁸² Artists specialising in autobiography - and in the related field of biography, and also with fictional variants of each - inevitably engage with notions of time very directly.¹⁸³ While comics have always playfully devised visual suggestions for time's passage, there is an incentive with the new prevalence of life-writing to survey the field afresh. Chris Ware's experimental work in this respect is already attracting insightful discussion, with two recent essays addressing his 'pursuit of slowness' and delivery of an 'art of memory'.¹⁸⁴ Ware's preoccupation with specific formal rhythms is linked with the nature of the lives he explores: incrementalism and fragmentation, for example, being characteristic psychological, narrative, and design interests.¹⁸⁵

Michael Sheringham's survey of two centuries of French literary autobiography provides an indication of the complexity of the autobiographical process that is readily extended to a visual approach:

Self-scrutiny, at any rate, seems to engender self-estrangement: a focus on the self may be to fossilize or transmute so that it becomes something other. This leads onto another sort of otherness – that of the self as 'textual' construct. First, to embody oneself in a book is to deal with extremely heterogeneous materials: public and private, subjective and objective, ancient and modern, trivial and monotonous; incidents, memories, encounters, turning-points, anecdotes, personal legends and apocrypha, documents (correspondence, publications, diaries) widely discrepant in vintage and relevance. To sift, order, and classify, as the autobiographer must, is in some measure to appropriate and to harmonize... Second, the autobiographical self is constructed in language: as a linguistic performance autobiography relies on various kinds of discourse, style, and literary convention; as a genre closely associated with narrative, it obliges its adherents to come to some accommodation with the commitments – to sequence and concatenation – which narrative has tended to imply.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Beaty, 2008, 12 and 29-30.

¹⁸³ There is tangible interconnectedness between these different focuses on the self and other, and between fiction and non-fiction, in graphic novels as well as in their literary counterparts. An example of the former where fiction and non-fiction frequently collapse boundaries is David B.'s *Epileptic*, discussed above in Chapter 1. Dominique Goblet's *Semblant C'est Mentir* moves from first-person autobiography into more overtly fictional interludes including an extended passage written by Goblet's partner, though illustrated by Goblet. Both were published by L'Association. This sort of fluidity is characteristic of the territory at the moment. In the wider context – academic departments specialising in this area are found at King's College London and the University of Sussex - this whole field of literature is now termed 'life-writing', indicating just how far the blurring of distinctions has proceeded.

¹⁸⁴ Georgiana Banita's 'Chris Ware and the Pursuit of Slowness' and Peter R. Sattler's 'Past Imperfect: "Building Stories" and the Art of Memory', both in Ball and Kuhlman, 2009, 177-190, 206-222.

¹⁸⁵ Banita, *ibid.*, 206.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Sheringham, 1993, viii.

Sheringham helpfully outlines two layers of activity here: a gathering of disparate elements and a composing of these by means of media (language, narrative) that have their own agendas and perhaps wilfulness. In each case there is an awareness that this will be a complex interweaving of different elements and constructs associated with time: *memories*, *turning-points*, *apocrypha* – all psychologically charged recastings of mere ‘incidents’. This happens by way of organisation: *sequence*, *concatenation* – interpretative arrangements of events, alluding to notions of perceived or imposed causation and linkage.

An indication of the relevance of this analysis to graphic delivery comes with Sheringham’s own account of literary examples which employs such suggestively visual terminology as ‘the chain of Rousseau’, ‘the superimposition of disparate temporal frameworks in Chateaubriand’, ‘the piling up of incidents in Green’ and ‘fragmentation in Barthes’.¹⁸⁷ Among recent graphic novels, Seth’s *George Sprott*¹⁸⁸ is a pseudo piece of research into a dying ex-TV personality comprising a sequence of page-long visualisations of different sorts of memory as it accumulates an impression of this effectively vapourising life. George himself remembers; a bed-ridden fan ruminates; a daughter spits out her hurt (Figures 142, 143 and 144). Visually, and in the drive of the narrative idea, the work depends on the illusion of a memory archive and sets out the multiple inconsistencies and the ugly collisions of past and present that come with lived experience. A ‘chain’ but also a ‘superimposition of disparate temporal frameworks’, a ‘piling up’ but equally a discourse on fragmentation, the work shows how visual ingenuity can strike up overlapping associations very succinctly. As part of this, technological evolutions of the 20th century that have impacted on our processes of recollection – paper-based documentation, photography, the culture of radio and TV, and finally the Internet – take their place as significant voices in the shared forgetting of George (Figure 145).

II. A Little Grammar

Past and Present, with Future Complications

Scott McCloud’s analysis of the depiction of time in comics concentrates especially on how the treatment of the space of the page can be altered to indicate changes in

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., ix.

¹⁸⁸ Seth, *George Sprott 1894-1975*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2009

the pace of events or to shape how the experience of time within the story is perceived.¹⁸⁹ In both cases the effect of things slowing-down or speeding-up is essentially a perceptual focus and it is a key part of the narrative dynamic.

At a basic level, time in narrative can be offered in a predominantly linear way and this is a longstanding compositional strategy with much to recommend it that is embedded in the conventional language of storytelling (*Once upon a time... It happened that...many years passed...And they lived happily ever after*). In the context of visual delivery, Rodolphe Töpffer's pioneering image-strips of the 1820s immediately grasped the potential for indicating physical endeavour, journeying, changes in quality of motion and, on the back of these, slapstick humour - to name a few of the many implications that came with bringing time to images by sequencing them (Figures 146, 147, 148, 149).

This construction of time as 'an ever-unfolding chain' - to borrow Peter Brook's expression for the essential structure of a story or piece of drama¹⁹⁰ - parallels how the tenses are widely perceived as being 'points on a simple timeline'.¹⁹¹ But as McCloud has indicated, looking at time or tense more carefully takes us straight to the detail of viewpoint, and this itself has extensive narrative potential.

George Yule's illuminating discussion of tense in *Explaining English Grammar* considers the principles of tense through a model that makes a great deal of sense if set alongside the shapely constructions of Chris Ware's graphic stories, where time seems to wander in every direction, and congeals as much as flows. Ware – like Seth – is crucially concerned with perceptions of time as a fundamental topic in people's lives. Reflecting aspects of consciousness however irrationally, all the tenses may operate, quilt-like, on a single page to condense many moments into one (Figure 150). Time may suddenly feel crushing and instantaneous, rather than stretching back into the past or out into an endless future.

Yule summarises the linguistic tense system very simply as essentially relating to feelings of closeness and remoteness:

¹⁸⁹ McCloud, op. cit., Chapter 4, 94-117.

¹⁹⁰ 'The Golden Fish' in Brook, 1993, 83.

¹⁹¹ Yule, op. cit., 58.

The basic tense distinction in English is marked by only two forms of the verb, the past tense (*I lived there then*) and the present tense (*I live here now*). Conceptually, the present tense form ties the situation described closely to the situation of utterance. The past tense form makes the situation described more remote from the situation of utterance. There is a very regular distinction in English which is marked by *then* versus *now*, *there* versus *here*, *that* versus *this*.¹⁹²

The ideas of the present and the past are the significant concepts here and, for Yule, most of the other tenses concentrate around this central duality of now/here/this and then/there/that. The future, however, is an entirely different category, introducing the important quality of the hypothetical:

Situations in the future are treated differently. They are inherently non-factual, but can be considered as either relatively certain (i.e. perceived as close to happening) or relatively unlikely or even impossible (i.e. perceived as remote from happening). The verb form that is traditionally called 'the future tense' is actually expressed via a modal verb which indicates the relative possibility of an event. This modal also has two forms which convey the closeness (*I will live here*) or the remoteness (*I would live there*) of some situation being the case, viewed from the situation of utterance.¹⁹³

This has suggested to me an entirely different overall model for experiencing time to the pedestrian timeline, which transposes vividly into visual expression and is ripe for exploration. Yule himself pulls in a suggestive immediate metaphor, posing a concentric arrangement for tense: 'the time of utterance (speaker's now) at the centre and other referenced situations being viewed as extending in different dimensions of time or possibility away from that centre'.¹⁹⁴

All of this might be summarised now as follows.

Tense is always to be viewed/constructed from the situation of the point of utterance/viewpoint, and its essential categories may be broken down thus:

Present: non-remote, factual

Past/ Perfect: remote, factual

Future: non-remote, non-factual

Hypothetical: remote, non-factual

¹⁹² Ibid., 58.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 58.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 61.

This basic central duality of non-remote versus remote seems to relate well to a construct of present versus past-tense drawing: the one translating thought and impulse in the moment, the other allowing distance to bring an idea towards a settled, more constructed form. Here was a possible key to the perceived dichotomy in my own work.

But this is, of course, just one reading. Concentrating on wider visual possibilities, graphic devices for suggesting degrees of closeness to a subject might involve a host of other inventive manipulations: change of scale is an obvious one – indicating a quality of greater or lesser focus on a topic – or, again, pushing towards or pulling away from an impression of clarity of definition. Conversely, a sense of distance might actually inject a quality of vagueness rather than clarity, even when firm ‘facts’ or actual events are being recalled. Certain aspects of a scenario might also stick in the mind more completely than others, so gaps therefore might ‘truthfully’ be taken to inhabit a memory-image. And what of the aspects of present and of the past that are not about fact at all? My own drawings invariably carry hypotheses, being fantasy or memory or idea rather than observation. They call up entirely different time frameworks according to their content. How does any of this relate to the above? It is clear in any case that the future is not the only occasion for speculation.

Aspect: Being on the Inside or the Outside

Yule goes on to investigate the grammatical concept of ‘aspect’. Here the sense is about whether something is couched as complete or on-going, and this is distinguished grammatically by perfect and continuous tenses respectively. This is a very interesting idea in relation to creative work since it seems to allude directly to process, and I have come to develop it in my own terms. To be clear, the continuous form (*I am drawing, I was drawing*) establishes a sense of being ‘inside’ a situation that is yet to finish, whereas the perfect (*I drew, I have drawn, I had drawn*) is viewed externally and necessarily retrospectively: the activity is complete and therefore must be viewed from a vantage-point that is outside its duration.

In verbal language a continuous tense is less stable than a simple one – whether or not complete. So *I am drawing* (present continuous) is located in an evanescent present and is assumed to be ephemeral. *I draw* (present simple), by contrast, may be an eternal truth (just as *water boils* and *life passes*), not necessarily located in the present moment very directly at all but in essence unchallengeable as an idea.

Visually a sense of the present continuous might, therefore, arise from the staging of a credible illusion of being inside a situation. This might allude, for example, to the creative process itself: a drawing in the actual act of making might be such a case. An incomplete drawing set to one side, however, might be judged to be *perfected* if its incompleteness can be judged to be now established, and time to have moved on.

Peter R. Sattler's essay on Ware's depiction of memory in *Building Stories* claims that the artist deploys the continuous past visually as well as conceptually: 'repeated actions' are 'bundl[ed]...into single multi-image actions' and the 'landlady's ninety-year old voice...emerge[s] from the minds of her younger selves', creating an effect of disconcerting simultaneity (Figure 151).¹⁹⁵ Certainly, Ware is preoccupied with imagery that signals extended repetition, and the staircase that provides the backbone of this strip is itself a symbol of lifelong daily passage and incomplete business. Sattler credits Ware with inventing an imperfect tense which he reports the artist to have claimed that comics lack.¹⁹⁶ I would argue that in the settled nature of the actual drawing language (the definite quality of Ware's linework, the formal simplifications and overall sureness of architecture, the knowing interweavings of eclectic graphic elements, and so on) Ware is much more a past-tense artist, sitting outside his story and formalising its impact very strategically.

Sattler's point, however, is still weighty. Ware's stories do convey a continually mobile lack of progress: lives that go nowhere, restlessly. The visual qualities Sattler identifies are well-seen. What is happening here, perhaps, is a mixing of effects. If the drawing language expresses typical past-tense qualities (remoteness, factuality) other visual elements such as the way different elements of content are organised, and the symbolism of key features such as the staircase here, or the bed in Figure 150, inflect this to establish repeating rhythms and overall lack of closure. So we have a story that feels compellingly located in a believable past but that is very much about incompleteness.

This sort of compositional mixing is, as Yule points out, typical of linguistic patterns too. The present perfect tense in the continuous form combines internal and external perspectives by mixing elements of other tenses with differing implications: *I have been drawing* establishes non-remoteness (using the simple present form of *have*)

¹⁹⁵ Sattler in Ball and Kuhlman, op. cit., 217.

¹⁹⁶ Sattler's endnote records that Ware 'erroneously identifies this mode of expressing habitual past actions as the "subjunctive"' but 'his point remains clear'. Note 34 in Sattler, op. cit., 221.

but the experience is still held slightly at arm's reach and so 'outside' the speaker (compare the continuous *I am drawing* which takes the speaker inside the activity). On top of this, however, is layered a progressive/internalising aspect by means of the continuous 'been drawing'.

Complicated textures such as these are readily reflected in the various formations of the tenses surrounding the foundational ones of past, present, and future. And further layers again – contradicting, supporting, qualifying or enhancing the initial meaning – are imposed through other modifications of the verb or other parts of speech. 'Mood', for example, by means of an auxiliary modal such as 'might' or 'must', can indicate varying qualities of certainty. The notion of 'evidentiality' (found in native American and Australian languages) alters a noun or pronoun to communicate that the speaker can actually see what is being spoken of.¹⁹⁷ This latter idea transfers well to drawings where there is a palpable sense of observation actually taking place in the way that the image has been fabricated, and this is a sub-category within the present-tense type of drawing that I postulate. Caroline Sury's actively searching linework described in the previous chapter might be said to be a variation of 'evidential' present-tense drawing. Accidental incorporation of weather - the rain in Thomas Hennell's war reportage - is another. Splashy or frozen rain marks integrate with Hennell's questing penwork and his variously completed figures to trap the action of process into the drawing very vividly (Figure 152).¹⁹⁸

III. Dense and Shifting Tense: Drawing Time

Exploring these key points of grammar has indicated some useful basic starting points for thinking about drawing, and I shall now turn to specific examples to test their aptitude and appropriateness. It is already clear that verbal language is much more fluid than the notion of a grammatical 'system' might suggest. What we may well find in pursuing the analogy further in graphic terms might be equivalent compositional complexity and layering of syntactical textures.

The following analysis speculates around the idea of a graphic tense system with this likely proviso in mind.

¹⁹⁷ See Swan, 2010, 29.

¹⁹⁸ Hennell's wider collaboration with weather is identified in Macleod, 1988. See the sketchbook detail in Plate 47 (107). Macleod comments: 'Even a slight and ill-organized Hennell sketch always announces: 'this is happening'. He worked on the spot so that actuality would wash over him uniquely and unpredictably while he painted'. 105.

Gesture versus Diagram: Present and Past

Different densities in a sense of tense being offered, and shifting qualities within an individual drawing, rapidly come to the surface when these ideas are looked for in images at a detailed level. Moreover, there is clearly a great variation of possibility already to be found within the categories that have been suggested.

Precise description, therefore, soon inspires some inventive blends of terminology.

(i) Presenting Pictures: Rodolphe Töpffer

Rodolphe Töpffer's drawings characteristically offer some very obviously present-tense qualities. A free drawing such as Figure 153 is a mixture of relatively open pen-play, improvised fantasy and more solidly informed character/caricature sketching. In terms of the graphic language applied, even where the figure work is very developed (for example, in detail of costume and with specifics such as animal anatomy), shading and infill invite more spontaneous digressions. In the panel bottom right, this involves calligraphic flourishes around lettering, and curlicues in and around the various heads and grotesques. The one full figure (bottom left in the same panel) is almost entirely a rapid fire of marks.

The idea of creating a sequential story might have grown from the habit of dividing a page in this way to make room for each new idea – in effect a form of visual paragraphing. Figure 154, by contrast, is a consciously panelled narrative sequence which offers a different flavour of present. Each of the figures is carefully positioned in the act of fleeing, in mid-air splits underscored by a scribbled shadow. The energy of continuing action comes through the linework itself, particularly in the afterimages that accompany figures four and five. The internal linework of these two figures is also more freewheeling than before in exploring the progress of the forward movement. The final panel, 'les animaux domestiques', transfers this energy into the contours that define the forms so that there is a racing continuity across their separateness. There is past-tense control in the overall composition combining with present-tense surface energy, but the degree of repetition throughout and the way contours give ground to broken marks allows the drawing to resist stability and closure. Overall, we might postulate 'aspect' that is more continuous than perfected.

Sequences of simultaneous events - or more correctly different considerations of a single event – as is seen in Figure 155, creates a similar effect in the topic, holding viewpoint within the duration of the action over several panels. Töpffer often underlines this by allowing his marks to assume their own dance, and here a spinning ship is viewed in ensuing panels through various sightings of its shockwaves. The rapid rhythms established between contrasting black and white shapes (panel 1), between and within juddering objects (panel 2), and the carousel of hectic flecks and dashes (panel 3) are born of fast penwork that minimises any sense of separation between scenes. The fourth panel has a more settled quality with its more individualised elements and thoughtful variation of marks; it introduces, moreover, a very obviously externalising viewpoint through its content. In contrast with the previous scenes, it relies more on readable detail than abstract rhythm, and though the mark-making still has rapid, present-tense passages (for example, in the background figure), this is tempered by the comparatively solidly realised principal character, seated on an ornate seat on a stone-clad viewing-station. Overall, therefore, this is perhaps moving towards a perfect–continuous effect: the event has distinct continuity of action, but the fourth panel establishes a finalising idea of remoteness and reflection - both in what it shows and in how this is orchestrated.

(ii) Past Master: Edward Tufte

Edward Tufte's rich thematic surveys of information graphics provide a stimulating journey across diverse forms of graphic delivery.¹⁹⁹ His image-collections - crossing several centuries and pinpointing many astute though sometimes bizarre comparisons - are a gateway to thinking about varieties of past-tense drawing modes.

Tufte approaches information graphics through practical questions. He focuses on certain patterns apparent in how information has been communicated across entirely different contexts and functions, and monitors especially how these have been (and could be further) refined to produce elegant, efficient, creative systems of discourse. His observations explicate individual attempts that often depend on inherited knowledge of graphic possibilities but that also readily establish their own variations on a given theme. These images are highly processed on several levels, being

¹⁹⁹ Tufte's three volumes, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1983), *Envisioning Information* (1990), and *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative* (1997), have greatly helped me to situate graphic storytelling within a far wider graphic framework than is often considered meaningful.

inherently thoughtful and calculated - often tried-and-tested. They typically manifest graphic features such as the conspicuous use of geometry, formal systems of coded meaning, graphic simplifications, indicative keys and labels, and an expansive repertoire of conventions for organising the whole such as sequential or layered boxing of component parts.

Tufte himself has recognised the condition of interplay and exchange between visual storytelling and wider graphic communication.²⁰⁰ He illustrates a great many graphic alternatives and variations, all with implicit distancing qualities and thus in some sense past-tense in flavour, opening up some very expansive possibilities for approaching narrative drawing.

Figures 156 and 157, for example, show some very recognisable formatting. Both offer statements that might be termed narrative in that they articulate a journey of some description; the second is a narrative about the idea of narrative. Both are securely past-tense drawings in the ways described above. The first is a familiar, scientifically famous diagram of light's passage through successive prisms; it depends on a flattening and labelling vocabulary that is now an easily readable shorthand. The second is Tufte's own visualisation of an idea that shows narrative as an intervention across a series of streaming verbs and nouns to capture a specific cross-section or 'plane of events'. This is a sophisticated generalisation of how a story might be thought of, offering a far-ranging view of an illimitable process rather than documenting a repeatable scientific experiment, as does the first. Tufte has bent the basics of the earlier model to fit his function: he introduces a 3-D quality to the perspective, lending space as well as time to the proceedings; he gives the journeys of the travelling elements an array of colours, and allows them to sway with graceful energy; he places points of red to signify a moving situation, perhaps implying sudden fluxes of significant detail.

Both of these drawings state a case. The first, though graphically past-tense in its detail, carries a simple present meaning in offering a theory for how things are (*light does this*). But as we have already seen, the present simple is a peculiarly timeless tense in the sense that it deals with what is both near and far together, representing what we take to be eternal truths, now and forever. What this diagram is doing is saying that this event has happened - that is, it happened in the moment of the

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Chapter 7, 'Visual Confections: Juxtapositions from the Ocean of the Streams of Story', in Tufte, 1997, 121-151.

experiment that launched the theory - but also that it is sufficiently certain that this is a fixed process, and that it will go on happening whenever these conditions occur again. We touch here on how past-tense graphic language contains the function of future prediction. A future prediction is in fact a variant of the present simple in verbal usage. This seeming confusion makes a sort of sense.

The second image in employing aspects of conventional scientific vocabulary places what is actually an imaginative speculation within a framework of earlier established delivery. The depiction perhaps lends playful status to an idea that is attempting to generalise in an essentially poetic, enjoyably grandiose way. Certainly it provides a tight conceptualisation of key narrative ingredients – space and time, things and actions - offering a rich and insightful idea of these, but it also leaves entirely open the multiple possibilities that might bring these various elements together. The scientific remoteness of the visual language signals that what is offered is a considered and informed generalisation; but the immeasurable openness of the specifics of content ('nouns' and 'verbs') makes it impossible that this be taken as an uncomplicated attempt at prediction. Although this is a past-tense drawing, because of this openness of content its overall implication remains speculative, refusing to close the topic down.

In the case of both of these examples there is nothing in the overall visual language that ultimately pins the meaning down in terms of embeddedness in actual time or even in establishing a relative state of proveness or a necessarily completed status. In both cases a feeling of remoteness and also something of authority is carried by an approach to design which has strongly fixed associations in being bound up with ideas of explanation and tested proof, but meaning in the second example is still heavily affected by floating factors such as context (we know, for example, when we meet this image in its text that its maker is entirely in a position to approach his rendition with knowing panache). Slight but significant internal modifications amount to subtle triggers in destabilising or subordinating what otherwise might read rather straightforwardly. In other words, all is always very much to play with. In these instances – although figuring similar basic compositional patterns - one image asserts a scientific principle that is grounded in specific past observation while the other floats an interesting idea that has diverse application in the present on an abstract and speculative level.

That diagrammatic language need not relate to time at all is well exemplified in Chris Ware's graphic storytelling. Ware is singled out among contemporary graphic novelists by Isaac Cates for asserting through his work 'a basic connection between the grammar of comics storytelling and the grammar of information display'.²⁰¹ This touches various aspects of approach including the simplifying aesthetic of a drawing style which includes the 'uniformity of [his] line, the openness of his visual forms, his flat fields of color and the simplification of organic background elements like trees and bushes until they resemble symbols on an architect's plan'.²⁰² Inventive layout is another key borrowing. More expansively, according to Cates, Ware's whole 'comics poetics' is in sympathy with some of the multifarious ways that diagrams orchestrate variables, and generate, in their own way, eloquent metaphorical associations. In fact, he discusses Ware directly in connection with Tufte's ideas, showing the artist to flout the 'rules' of good design proposed by Tufte in order 'to ratchet up the visual discomfort' of the reading.²⁰³ Diagrams offer a 'graphic semantics' that often focuses on

...non-chronological juxtapositions, sequences of images that are related in ways that have less to do with time than with other interrelationships of meaning: metaphor, options and potentialities, thematic synopsis, spatial relationships, and many other unplumbed possibilities.²⁰⁴

So past-tense drawings can clearly still be very adventurous with time. They may even set it to one side, prioritising other determining ingredients in the driving of stories.

Prediction and Speculation: Angles on the Future

Yule's classification of the future tense highlights speculation as its function, with two essential variants offered: the relatively certain as opposed to the unlikely, with the latter moving through to the impossible. Whole categories of drawing such as certain forms of maps and diagrams work with a quality of speculation or hypothesis as their intention, and in this sense they may be thought to acknowledge a future-tense meaning implicitly.

²⁰¹ 'Comics and the Grammar of Diagrams' in Ball and Kuhlman, 2009, 96.

²⁰² Ibid., 97.

²⁰³ Ibid., 98.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 99. Cates discusses in this essay how in *Jimmy Corrigan* Ware uses diagrammatic interludes to develop important metaphors that underline the quality of his characters' emotional life and to extend the focus of the story outside their knowledge and consciousness. These function outside the tense of the narrative journey, visual equivalents of literary digression or asides.

Saul Steinberg's predilection for quirky mappings in contemplating social *mores* sits on the fantastical side of this equation, although there is invariably a rootedness in real-life observation in both his conceptual and visual detail. Figure 158 represents an individual's perception of a life spent in transit across the Atlantic, and rises above the trappings of specific timings strictly speaking. In topic it is close to a present-simple categorisation in that it identifies a relatively unchallengeable status quo: this person *lives* like this; he *will go on living* like this. It maps not only a contemplation of the idea of such an existence (posing a metaphor for how this particular way of life might feel) but also articulates a fairly safe prediction of future events in a general sense. Thus different aspects of future meaning are touched in one go: speculation (a putative lifestyle) as well as, within this, what is very likely to keep recurring.

In terms of my two-way, past-present classifications of graphic language, slightly variant signals are achieved in this image, although there is on balance overall coherence in the direction of formalising past-tense tendencies. This is seen particularly in the knowing nod to generic mapping conventions but with telling alterations, the easy spatial sophistication in the curving away of the horizon suggesting movement over land and sea, and the considered decision-taking in the detail (for example, the diagonal relationship given to the islands of *Here* and *There*). At the same time, the approach picks up - in its scribbled tones - on the notion of an improvised sketch map. Steinberg has notably avoided the more developed processing of his other famous maps such as the 1976 *New Yorker* cover which showed New York's egotistical conception of the rest of the world.²⁰⁵ But this seeming casualness needs itself to be seen in the context of the artist's own highly developed propensity for graphic conceit. This looks like an improvisation, but the effect is adding to the joke.

In fact, Steinberg's graphic instincts show past-tense leanings across the board: this is the case even in his initial development of ideas. Figure 159 is an early developmental sketch for a newspaper advertisement. It shows the artist flattening off a street scene by constructing a viewpoint that maximises graphic symmetry within a square, and clearly enjoys orderly black and white contrast. It is strikingly resolved right at the point of conception. Figure 160 is an observational drawing, also from the late 1930s, showing a more questing approach with chancier mark-making.

²⁰⁵ Published 29 March 1976.

Even here, however, Steinberg is pulled by pattern and surface rhythms, and specific content is treated to some of the confident formal simplifications associated with his mature style.

So Steinberg is already a complex case in his capacity to tackle his visions - whatever their scope, dreamt or seen - quasi-instinctually with a past-tense filter. Drawings that superficially carry much less stylistic verve and that are especially functional in their intention – manual illustrations, instruction leaflets, charts offering predictions of consequences – might be expected to have developed design tendencies that place their meaning more emphatically in a future zone, but we find in effect the same formalising tendencies readily occurring, often very resonant of a past-tense drawing mode.

Figure 161 is a 1932 pictorial instruction for a magic trick: showing stages of before, during and after the event. The third stage - what is anticipated as an outcome, the future event in this particular sequence of actions - is depicted as already complete (the glass has *gone*). The whole performance is constructed with a largely consistent simplifying clarity, and in the way that it is drawn the 'future' is given almost the same status as the other points on the timeline. The one deviation (beyond the loss of the shape of the glass at the final stage which is obviously a telling loss of content) is the floating quality of the word 'gone'. Radiating lines created by the implied creases on the cloth assist the irregularity of shading on the word to lend a more mobile quality to this final moment. A quality of sudden mobility – here a shimmering mutation in the handling of tone – is characteristic of images that would highlight an idea of change (perhaps with a whiff of surprise). An expectation of change is one of the few pin-downable associations that accompany thoughts of the future, and a repertoire of visual clichés such as this one (and it is a device that is common in comics, of which this drawing is clearly a close relative) have evolved to deal with this idea. These take many localised identities – as here where the radiating lines are held within the idea of the handkerchief's folds - so that the graphic energy is often contained within the image pictorially speaking.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Radiating lines which draw attention to a focus of change in an image's narrative are a common device. Tintin's creator, Hergé, famously used sweat drops, radiating stars and question marks to indicate quivering moments of suspense, surprise or anxiety as a character 'pauses' between the present and an implied future, appreciating that change is occurring/has occurred and that unknown consequences will follow. More widely, dotted lines (which have their own shimmering quality) are a common diagrammatic device for speculative change or projected movement.

A more widely established ideogram signifying an intention of change through physical movement is of course the arrow. The isolating redness of the arrows in the instructions for marshalling signals in Figure 162 pinpoints very clearly the actions of the body to be taken in each instance. Dance diagrams necessarily articulate intended movement and they are a rich source of evidence for the way graphic vocabulary evolves to suit specific content. Part of this is communicative. Figures 163 and 164 identify pathways for the moving limbs of the dancers but there are striking examples of graphic invention across the genre. Figure 165 shows the choreography for four dancers, dancing simultaneously, running beneath the musical score. Cursive simplification of the body's movements in each case produces a form of annotation sympathetic to the shapes of the notes of music but fluidly alluding to the physical rhythms and turns of the dance itself. As with the other examples, this is actually a very formalised and calculated mode of drawing – more past-tense than present in its intrinsic consideredness. But the energy of the gesture of the hand that set it down seems contained in the springy suggestions of a twisting nib. There is something of the quality of hand-writing here, the hand flying with thought, and therefore a leaning towards present-continuous sensibility in the marks achieved.

This fluidity of expression even where precise instructions are intended makes it clear that there is always room for graphic vagaries in drawings that 'intend'. In pursuing thoughts about the future, drawing tends to try to pin something down – often opting for a past-tense mode even in pulling in ideograms and clichés that signal uncertainty or change. So an attitude of speculation does not drive graphic language away from the past-present alternatives already outlined. Each occasion creates its own confection, so that a particular option is made more or less sure-footed in its overall articulacy, and this is then ornamented according to the suggestability of the local content.

IV. Confections: The Usefulness of Blends and Hesitancy

The idea of images that are 'confectured' has been suggested by Edward Tufte's categorisation of 'visual confections' for images that tailor meaning by virtue of combining different image-elements. Mixing ingredients that establish multimodal emphases can be directed to many different ends: 'By means of a multiplicity of

image-events, confections illustrate an argument, present and enforce visual comparisons, combine the real and imagined, and tell us yet another story.²⁰⁷

Tufte's idea of the visual confection offers a framework for considering very different types of image across time, and he identifies Renaissance titlepages, with their boxed compartments of regimented symbols, as well as Constructivist collage/photomontage, with their no less list-like interweaving of disparate associations, as pertinent examples. The function of combining different elements is to arrive at a complex whole, enabling non-linear reasoning by modes such as analogy or juxtaposition and typically establishing layered implications and nuanced emphasis, or perhaps floating irreconcilable questions. Hesitating about the possibility of certainty – as we have seen in discussing the function of a future-tense mode – is a crucial need in dealing with many aspects of meaning.

Tufte's confectionary model is helpful in pushing further the scenario of an interweaving of ideas of tense within the vagaries of individual drawings, as I shall now explore.

Autobiographical Weavings

Returning now to the territory of visual autobiography - and within this to how experience of time is located in connection with thinking about a life - I will look at two examples of work from the past that accompany unusual instances of life-writing. These have been chosen for the integrity of their intent: they were each produced as a part of processes of piecing together recollections and/or understandings of experience. Neither were made as image-based narratives in their own right, but rather as drawings that, in the first instance, served the instincts of memory to find order decades later, and, in the second, attempted to net its bizarre riddles even as the experience that was being documented was being lived out. A detailed consideration of examples of drawings follows a brief overview of the approach taken with each project.

Stendhal's *Life of Henri Brulard* was written in 1835-6 and is a memoir of the author's life that occupies a highly visual series of notebooks now housed in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble. More than 170 'sketch-maps and diagrams' accompany the

²⁰⁷ Tufte, 1997, 121.

written account, 'far from incidental to the main text in establishing the writer's private cartography'.²⁰⁸ These were drawn as the text was written and clearly functioned as a mode of prompting and perfecting fragments of memory to feed the composition of the narrative.²⁰⁹ Stendhal, famous for the realist quality of his writing, took drawing lessons in his youth (these are frequently featured in the autobiography), and his drawings encompass the past-tense graphic conventions of his age – including cartographical formulae and the vocabulary of established architectural draughtsmanship. But there is also a richly spontaneous quality in the nature of the pen-marks deployed, where scribbles, flourishes, blots, hesitations, amendments, and vagrancy of detail suggest a present-tense sensibility closer to the nature of the author's own handwriting.²¹⁰

The second example, Surrealist artist-writer Unica Zürn, made series of drawings from 1953 when she first met Hans Bellmer, and she continued to draw during severe bouts of mental illness from 1957 until her death by suicide in 1970. An unpublished sketchbook/manuscript made in 1963-4, *Oracle and Spectacle*, is such a case, and the title – which is Zürn's own – gives a hint that the artist saw her efforts as rising above time in touching a type of visionary energy.²¹¹ Indeed, her understanding of the experience of drawing as somehow a way of escaping time - or keeping it going unnaturally - is in sympathy with the repeated inclusion of linework that seems itself never to end.²¹² Zürn's drawings are generally formally evocative not of linear sequences or separable points of consciousness or attention but of

²⁰⁸ Introduction to the text by its English translator, John Sturrock. Stendhal, 1995, xi.

²⁰⁹ This is apparent from the physical situation of the images around and within the handwritten account, as well as from analysis of their formal approach and the detailed treatment of their subject matter. The images are often amended in their detail (sometimes even more than one option for events is presented while the author puzzles the story out), or they are redrawn over again as a 'memory' becomes more focussed and integrated with competing ideas. Michael Sheringham goes into the nature of the drawings and their roaming intentions in his consideration of 'Diagrams in Stendhal's *Vie de Henry Brulard*'. Sheringham, op. cit., 67-96.

²¹⁰ A digital scan of the entire manuscript can be viewed online at the Bibliothèque's website: http://stendhal.bm-grenoble.fr/moteur/ms/299_1/index.htm Accessed 15.1.2013.

²¹¹ Images have been viewed at <http://50watts.com/Unica-Zurn-Oracle-and-Spectacle> Accessed 17.12.2012.

²¹² In *The Man of Jasmine*, Zürn records a conversation with a doctor about her attitude to space in her drawings. Asked why she had covered the entire surface of a particular drawing, she replied: 'Simply because I couldn't stop working on this drawing, or didn't want to, for I experienced endless pleasure while working on it. I wanted the drawing to continue beyond the edge of the paper – on to infinity...' Unica Zürn, *Man of Jasmine*. 1994, 103. Zürn saw illness, like drawing, as creatively enriching and as a way of slowing time down, and drawing itself as a way of carrying on being ill: 'Since yesterday I know why I am making this book: in order to remain ill *for longer than is correct*... And I shall remain ill just as long as I keep slipping in fresh pages which then have to be filled.' My emphasis. Zürn, *House of Illnesses*. 1994, 45. So this is an example of drawing keeping time in present-continuous aspect.

entangling nets and endless folds, recalling Michel Serres's depiction of experience not essentially as chronology but as unending dance and convolution.²¹³

Zürn's interesting commitment to avoiding time through drawing is slightly modified by the sequence of images considered below that came to be published with her account of delirium, *The House of Illnesses*, which seems to have been written during the latter stages of a fever brought on by jaundice in 1958. These have a certain explicatory quality in being specifically connected with passages of the writing that goes with them. Their more formalised nature - integrating labelling and aspects of geometrical ordering, for example - separates them out from much of the rest of Zürn's production and takes her visual language towards something more approaching past-tense than is her wont. There is still a dainty tendency to present-tense dot and dash, fly and quiver, however. In the exotic blend that results, as with Stendhal's annotated musings, Zürn achieves a version of future that is her own knotting.

In both cases, these series of drawings were prompted by the tasks of autobiography to combine tenses as their way of speculating (with differing degrees of certainty) around reflections that in the doing stimulate fresh and living feelings. Consequently, the drawing language shows qualities of all three foundational tenses, Future, Past and Present.

(i) Stendhal: *The Life of Henry Brulard*

With Stendhal, the technical conventions of a mapping draughtsmanship locate his childhood and youthful memories in respect to his feelings as a now mature onlooker. In terms of the detail of this visual language, it is in fact subtly shifting across different sorts of memory. On the whole, viewpoints are familiarly aerial or sectional (for example, Figures 166 and 167), dealing with overviews that belong out of doors as well as in, so that chains of rooms, for example, synchronise locations with specific incidents (Figure 168). But, more idiosyncratically, the labelling itself charts smells, triggers renewals of tears, advances sudden gusts as well as persisting gaps of recollection. The mapping constantly generates an active state of

²¹³ Serres sees the modern era as more fluid than solid, to be linked with imagery such as 'veil, canvass, tissue, chiffon, fabric, goatskin, and sheepskin... all the forms of planes or twists in space, bodily envelopes or writing supports, able to flutter like a curtain, neither liquid nor solid, to be sure but participating in both conditions. Pliable, tearable, stretchable...topological.' Some of these ideas seem resonant of Zürn's aesthetic. Michel Serres quoted in Connor, May 2002, n.p.

enquiry and the actual language of the drawings responds accordingly, words and image integrating as the labelling dives off into reverie and the pen bends towards suggesting the gesture of a moment or a flash of light. In Figure 167, a flourish of ink moves from defining a tree into expressing a tantalising ‘thrush’, about to be shot – and the thought of this provides Stendhal with an ecstatic rush of feeling. In Figure 169, a striation of lines stands for a strobing rhythm of benches regularly experienced in a remembered college interior - a type of memory that is more of a texture against which life was carried out. The marks here are more spontaneous and digressive, departing from the careful orderliness of the outline mappings to suggest present-tense interventions.

Michael Sheringham writes of Stendhal’s general reluctance to adhere to ‘causal hypotheses’: in his take on autobiography, ‘Stendhal adopted an interrogative stance, seeking to find out rather than demonstrate who he was’,²¹⁴ and Sheringham sees his very use of images in constructing the work as part of this openness of attitude: ‘The image [as opposed to the word] can be interrogated but it cannot reply. Like an old photograph, it can be pored over, speculated upon, compared with other images, examined in different lights but it is impervious to explanation’.²¹⁵

Moreover, ‘numerous’ aspects of Stendhal’s literary style are similarly evasive and indirect, ‘mak[ing] it difficult to identify a stable authorial stance’ and ‘constitut[ing] a space in which antagonistic modes of self-understanding find a way of asserting themselves in an unhierarchical and open manner’.²¹⁶ Sheringham sees the text’s ‘persistent but enigmatic visual dimension’ as part of this: a form of ‘inherent ambivalence’.²¹⁷

Elements of graphic ‘ambivalence’ might be seen as specifically carrying this attitude of interrogation - and also its connected aspect of unyielding secrecy. Enigmatic shorthand for agents and objects, for example, is frequent. Individual letters for people’s names and abbreviations for figures and movement abound. A drawing of the experience of a mathematics class, where Stendhal felt dwarfed by his cohort of aristocratic peers, is conveyed by ink ‘stabblings’ to represent the rivals curving

²¹⁴ Sheringham, op. cit., 69.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 70. As examples Sheringham gives ‘digressions, anglicisms, parentheses, addresses to the reader, consistent irony’.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

around a large capital 'D', the tutor Monsieur Dupuy, 'with his big cane, in his vast armchair' (Figure 170).²¹⁸ A second image (Figure 171) opts for a side-on view, magnifying the sense of the boy's climb – with its accompanying anxiety – to the blackboard. Stendhal's drawings in several cases develop sequentially as happens with this example, as the writer seems to find himself getting closer to the feeling of the event in the remembering, and documents this changing perspective. Here, what starts as a mapping with the first image ends pictorially with the second: the right foot of the boy is still emerging from his reluctant climb, right hand hovering in front of the board at the maximum point of discomfort. The eloquence of the gesture of the drawing in conveying the isolation of the boy caught between two actions suggests present continuous: the drawing capturing its own action; the boy locked in the middle of the act.

In other instances Stendhal embeds uncertain recollection in the images with a more clichéd recourse to dotted lines for putative happenings, or alternative versions simultaneously plotted. His reaction in being overcome at the sight of a delectable actress in the Jardin de Ville one morning is translated into a series of fleeing dotted lines labelled 'F' for 'fuite' (Figure 172). Some drawings are practically illegible with scrawling penwork, crossings-out and overdrawing. Figure 173 shows an *al fresco* party, the ladies tipling on ratafia, 'there were no glasses, out of the lids of tortoise-shell snuff-boxes'.²¹⁹ The clarity of Stendhal's detailing in the labelling is contradicted by almost impenetrable visual coding, though the labels identify the triangle as the house and we can proceed from this to discern the ladies sitting on the slope 'from B to C'. Such images particularly suggest that what is being visualised is Stendhal's questing memory, the pen groping for, rather than defining, the content to be expressed.

(ii) Unica Zürn: *The House of Illnesses*

Zürn's engagement with drawing was far more sustained than Stendhal's, although her formative expressive mode, like his, had been writing.²²⁰ Informed by Surrealist strategies, her output in both directions - again echoing Stendhal - shows her trusting

²¹⁸ Stendhal, 1995, 247.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

²²⁰ In the years before 1954 when Zürn migrated to Paris to live with Hans Bellmer, she wrote short stories and reviews for Berlin journals, serials and radio plays, and sketches for the cabaret, *The Bathub*. See Barbara Savarova's 'The magical encounter between writing and image' in *Unica Zürn* (catalogue), 54-61. Her drawings invariably include writing physically among their tendrils.

to process to generate or uncover hidden meaning. Words and images are equally implicated in the ongoing project of self-discovery that is her body of work, comprising automatic drawings, anagram poetry, and longer autobiographical texts. Across the board – and her illness was interesting to her in being a strangely elucidating context for this²²¹ – she conceived of working as a way of releasing the authentic part of herself:

'If woman is to put into form the 'ule' [Greek: matter] that she is, she must not cut herself off from it nor leave it to maternity, but succeed in creating with that primary material that she is [...] Otherwise, she risks using or reusing what man has already put into forms, especially about her, risks remaking what has already been made, and losing herself in that labyrinth.'²²²

The House of Illnesses is an aspect of this endeavour, and on one level it seems to document Zürn's need to keep herself intact through the experience of illness and to express directly what she encountered in this state, best described as visionary. The account is written, seemingly, concurrently with the experience, using a present-tense voice and relishing the extraordinary images that the delirium conjures up:

From the hall of bellies one can hear the noise of indecent flatulence and soft, slapping, sucking and puffing sounds. One can imagine what's going on in there without looking...But I have discovered a new set of stairs at the back – by which I can reach my rooms while avoiding the hall of bellies.²²³

In fact, Zürn's method of composing the work seems to have offered more retrospective strategising than some of its terms of reference suggest.²²⁴ The second section of text, for example, seems to announce the intention of the whole, allowing

²²¹ Illness is a seductive and delicious state, fed by working on her book: 'I can slip in a fresh page each day. It can keep on growing fatter and fatter if I want.' 'Forgetting one's duties has for me the taste of sweet cream.' *House of Illnesses*. 1994, 45.

²²² Zürn cited in Suleiman, 1990, 26.

²²³ *House of Illnesses*. 1994, 37.

²²⁴ The last section moves from 'This evening, the last I spent in the House of Illnesses' to 'I left the house at dawn' which makes the temporal span of the writing here difficult to specify. It is perfectly credible that either Zürn's awareness of time was disrupted and that this is being reflected in the description, or that she wrote the text in a very fragmented way so that the terms of references faithfully echo the nature of the stop-start writing process. Individual sections – perhaps 'The Trapper' (25-26) - might have been written at the time as a form of diary, suggesting the structuring divisions of days of the week which persisted into the final assemblage. It is accepted by the book's publisher in English, Atlas Press, that the account was written 'during' the illness (http://www.atlaspress.co.uk/index.cgi?action=view_backlist&number=15 Accessed 20.12.2012). This is also Zürn's own claim in a final note to the text although her figures do not add up: 'I began this book on the 12th day of my illness: on Wednesday, the 30th April, 1958. I have finished this book on the 21st day of my illness: on Friday the 9th of May, 1958.' 54.

for the possibility that the decision to write was post the event: ‘Some strange thoughts had occurred to me, which I shall attempt to put down here.’ Again, she claims that during the actual convalescence she was ‘so preoccupied with the thoughts and images which never ceased to stream into or rise up inside me, that I was loathe to pick up anything or look at anything.’²²⁵

Already, therefore, a confectionary text in its internal mixing of time frames and unstable perspectives - and as well in its uncertain status as document or fiction - *The House of Illnesses* also interweaves visual among its written elements, and here again its textures are complicated.

Set against others of Zürn’s drawings, the majority of these seem more restrained and thus comparably more focused in their narrative suggestiveness. This is not in the sense that they yield ready meaning since their symbolism is highly idiosyncratic and the articulation unconventional, but rather in the way components of imagery are held apart as distinct and as potentially readable. These are also situated in contexts that are sympathetic to the themes of the work in its entirety. A key aspect of the work is the confusion that takes place around the idea of body and sanatorium, for example, and successive images conspicuously play with this idea, chasing allusions to a hybrid building/body structure (Figure 174). By way of contrast, the later sequence of drawings found in the *Oracle and Spectacle* notebook relate better, for example, to the more tangled aesthetic of Zürn’s written anagrams.²²⁶ These are tighter stand-alone images where scraps of readable detail surface from an overall filigree to give the suggestion of shape that is perhaps a figure or animal form (Figure 175). This has its counterpart in the puzzling verbal threading of Zürn’s anagrams that cohere during reading into a sort of sense but never a clear idea.

Zürn’s approach to drawing more generally seems in certain respects heavily present-tense in orientation. The quality of surface energy and questing line in Figure 176 is very typical. Closer inspection, however, reveals calculated choices taking place, controlling or varying the aesthetic impact. Here there is a layering of a journey of darker ink over a diluted under-course, and elsewhere similar strategies

²²⁵ *House of Illnesses*. 1994, 17. Zürn’s other autobiographical texts, *Dark Spring* and *The Man of Jasmine*, were written retrospectively.

²²⁶ Nine of Zürn’s anagrams translated by the American poet Pierre Joris are accessible online: <http://www.pierrejoris.com/blog?p=1225> Accessed 20.12.2012. Originally published in *Sulfur* (Fall 1991), no. 29, 67-104. Some of Zürn’s drawings physically embody textual anagrams: for example, the drawing ‘Avec l’anagramme *Le quatre-vingt-dix-neuf est notre chiffre porte-bonheur*’ (1958) reproduced in *Unica Zürn* (catalogue), 130.

such as introducing an additional colour or areas of black infill raise a shimmer or deepen the surface suddenly.²²⁷ Over Zürn's career, her graphic language became very confident and she was knowingly adventurous in pushing materials to achieve fresh combinations and effects: even when she is seemingly operating on automatic pilot an informed sensitivity guides rapid choices and engineers shifts of direction. Like Caroline Sury's drawings, Zürn's have a surface energy that belies their implicit thoughtfulness: instincts are reformulated and redirected in the actual process of drawing, reflection happening in the intrinsic evolutions prompted by sequential making.

Looking for past-tense elements within Zürn's overall visual language, these are less obviously visible than Stendhal's cartographical geometry, being intrinsically more playful. With Zürn, in many cases the structural underpinnings and inherited ingredients are much more completely transported by her fluid netting. Hans Bellmer's recognition of her 'remarkable talent for automatic drawing' when he saw her 'sketching absentmindedly (like people scribble when they are on the phone)' gave Zürn an esteemed context for what she had already fallen upon.²²⁸ Her drawings, as doodles often do,²²⁹ seem typically either to have grown piece by piece to cover the space available, or quickly to have established a large shapely contour which was then methodically filled in. An infilling vocabulary of tiny repeating circles, spirals, commas, dots, wavy parallel lines, fringes of ticks, and so on, is already apparent in the drawings of 1953 and 1954, among the earliest that have survived.²³⁰ This quickly formalised language of marks continues in the ensuing years, mutating and spawning variants.²³¹ The hovering quality of Zürn's designs seems to imply mobility of concentration but there are in fact many instances of a settled language being redeployed and subjected to permutation.

²²⁷ Ibid., 122, 141, 180 reproduces drawings using selective use of colour; while 154, 157 and 160 use sudden bursts of black.

²²⁸ Bellmer's account is quoted by Safarova, op. cit., 56.

²²⁹ The formal qualities of doodles are discussed by Maclagan, 2010.

²³⁰ *Unica Zürn* (catalogue), 110, 111, 113.

²³¹ Placing Zürn's drawings formally, David Maclagan sees her work as evolving internally and organically rather than pursuing a Surrealist agenda: 're. Zürn. In my book [*Line Let Loose: Scribbling, Doodling and Automatic Drawing*. London: Reaktion Books (forthcoming: April 2013)] I talk about how there is a continuous spectrum, from more or less sophisticated doodles, through what I call 'meta-doodles' (extended in time and space) to the full complication of (some) automatic drawing. There is an increasingly complex feedback between the drawing process itself and the final result: hence there are a number of characteristic features of automatism, ranging from the self-evidently free-wheeling and impulsive, to the intensely elaborated. Zürn's drawing fall into the latter category. It is true that Bellmer said she was doodling when he first saw her at work; but the length of time spent and the incestuous complication of most of her work is very different from the immediacy of, for example, Surrealist automatism.' Pers. comm. Email 24.12.2012.

Aspects of a larger structuring wavy geometry – including box-shapes, circles, ellipses, triangles and spirals – are also characteristic. These hold the internal fields of repeating marks in place. When Zürn's images move in the direction of more intentionally readable picture-making - as they do perhaps in *The House of Illnesses* - the structuring devices are shapes that echo already ingrained tendencies. So circular fields and rectangular or square frameworks still lend a characteristic geometry (Figures 177, 178, 179) and other more improvised shapes recall more casually the defining boundaries of earlier automatic drawings (Figure 180). Much more variation between the actual shape and substance of individual images is found in this more narrative work overall, however, as if Zürn was moved to think about composing each 'vision' more strategically. In one image different types of 'visions' are laid out like precious stones in a museum cabinet (Figure 181); another frames her persecuting pursuer's eyes within a keyhole (Figure 182).

Future-tense traits surface perhaps particularly in professedly speculative images such as 'A Portrait of a Whispered Message' and 'In a Whirlwind' (Figures 183 and 184), where dots and dashes signify flimsy energies of sound and moving air. In one way these very much relate to wider graphic clichés, and in this sense they are past-tense details. But in the context of Zürn's mark-making overall it is clear that they have been bent to her own aesthetic drives in the way that they manage to 'suggest' a sensation that is coherently part of her own created world. From this perspective it seems she has speculated around problematic topics within the framework of her own visual vocabulary to come up with genuinely hypothesising inflections.

More broadly, all of these images in denoting 'visions' might be suspected to have had an intrinsic interest in a speculative mode from the start. Zürn's graphic inventiveness has certainly worked out a very specific idiosyncratic iconography, often focussing on fragments such as body parts or floating symbols or objects (Figure 185). She herself is sometimes shown within the images, a small childlike figure, a voodoo doll or simply a head looking on; the theme of looking on or through, or being looked at, is a recurring one and it affects the designs formally: windows, openings, eyes, and vistas are played with as dominating shapes, within which connecting tracking in the form of marks or vacillating text establishes movement around the spectacle's space.

The initial 'Plan of the House of Illnesses' (Figure 173) is the establishing image of the work as a whole and it is a good place to sum up the nature of Zürn's

confectionary drawings vis-à-vis Stendhal's. As in Stendhal's autobiography, her narrative is here given its own cartography; but whereas Stendhal borrows from the mapping conventions of his day, adding the occasional flourish of his own, Zürn deploys a lively and varied graphic vocabulary that has a far wider range of associations and depth of confidence. She embroiders a fluid inventory of her sensations (indeed several of her images have the quality of woven improbable lists) while Stendhal encompasses events within secure more formulaic contexts. Both sets of drawings contain present-tense modes in their passages of energetic surface treatment; both also structure their content within thoughtful, controlling shapes, more past-tense in their redeployment of older conventionalised strategies such as diagrammatic labelling; both, too, envision autobiography as a creative, speculative, and therefore future-tense act, requiring gaps and dotted lines to keep uncertainty truthfully in the mix. But Zürn goes much further than Stendhal in making her subject not so much the external events of her life as the trickery and honesty of her inner feelings and sensations. In this area too, visual ideas of tense can operate in the language of drawing to bring about a suggestion of the emotional side of lived experience that is detailed, idiosyncratic and often indeed fantastical.²³²

V. Conclusion

This chapter has speculated around the idea of a basic tense system for graphic language, developed initially out of George Yule's two-fold conceptualisation of linguistic tense, past/present, with its helpful adjunct, the speculative future. Arising from direct experience in drawing practice, the distinctions made have been found to achieve complicated and layered expression in the case studies. Far from being problematic, however, the fluidity and intermingling that has been seen to take place in practice becomes a clear invitation to embrace the idea of the graphic confection, offering extensive options for texture and nuance in drawing through consciously contrived shifts of emphasis according to the models suggested.

Educationally, this chapter has offered a developed example of how a personal system of terminology (there is much more than a single word at play here) can significantly heighten awareness of detailed tendencies within a practice, as well as

²³² Zürn's visual approach in *The House of Illnesses*, focussing entirely on a fantastical underside of experience without imposing explanation or context sits well with her interests as a writer from 1949 even before she began drawing in earnest. She specialised in short fictions, described as 'modern fairy tales in an expressionist style' (Victoria Appelbe, "Du wirst dein Geheimnis sagen" ("You will reveal your secret"): Anagrams in the work of Unica Zürn.' in *Unica Zürn* (catalogue), 34.

opening out a sense of further possibilities and options. The strategy puts in place a basis for raising targeted questions by making feasible a process of searching description at the level of technique. There is no requirement, of course, to stick with tense as a central concept. As I have already indicated, the principle employed is comparable to Lecoq's *Rose of Effort* or Howell's trilogy of primaries, discussed in Chapter 2, and it seems reasonable to think of this as an endlessly renewable system of practical personal labelling which different considerations (life experience, content, context) might pull productively towards other banks of words.

The chapter has also raised broader general questions that might usefully input into considerations of drawing in the training of illustrators and other creative disciplines. A greater focus on qualities of graphic language at a foundational level might facilitate fruitful discussion of facets of detail and elements of structuring within images much more generally. In terms of practical delivery, I have mentioned Deanna Petherbridge's lament of the loss of interest in formal systems in contemporary drawing practice, and although my own research comes from a different direction it is sensitive to this ambition for range and variety in emerging work. Its own contribution is to suggest that this may be assisted by the pursuit of idiosyncratic systems of description as part of training. Indeed, the formal systems of the past – de Superville included – read very much in this light in the context of the study's reflections.

This chapter concludes the study's exploration of its trio of chosen terms. Wider application of the research's ideas and analysis is considered now as part of the general conclusion, once the findings of the individual chapters have been laid out in connection with the original stated objectives of the research.

Conclusion

In its concern throughout with languages of expression used in graphic novels the study offers a number of new pointers to those engaged *practically* with the form's further development – be they artists, students or educators. In considering in this conclusion the usefulness of the research presented, I will review in the first instance the freshness of what has been discussed with this audience in mind. How might the discussion in these pages pertinently inform those involved in the practical exploration of narrative drawing at undergraduate level and beyond?

Creative Education: a Gallery of Examples

In broad terms the study has put forward three extended examples of experimental engagement with the visual territory examined, borrowing from other disciplines in its use of enriching terminology and adoption of unfamiliar analogies. In this respect, it offers itself as a detailed example of the creative strategy that is at its heart: namely, its advocacy of the pursuit of a system of personal labelling, causing the researcher to look outside of an established or predictable disciplinary framework for words that encourage initial hunches to achieve sharper, thoughtful, actively creative identities.

In a more focused way each of the chapters examines, in addition, various modes in which narrative drawing may find an inventive focus and a particular quality of delivery though targeted aspects of process at the point of generation. My analysis has concerned itself with how exceptionally creative work gets off the ground and – in diverse cases - how process impacts directly in awarding an idiosyncratic eloquence. The range of methods unpicked in the case studies has clear potential application in art and design education where creative experiment is by definition a core strategic objective.

The first chapter, concerning translation, evolved out of an initial notion that graphic storytelling is effectively about text-image negotiation, becoming a much more complicated acknowledgement that, in practice, different varieties of transfer take place on different levels throughout the form. Text-image relationship is but an aspect of this, although this too has many eventual possible qualities. Visual translation is itself interpreted as a generative, dynamic activity, offering in Matsumoto's case, for example, seeming contact with a stream of thought that can also spill over into words. Overall, the chapter's argument is in tune with recent

interest in a creative interpretation of the act of translation put forward by Translation Studies. In being taken into an arena of visual delivery, this offers a highly transferable approach - and framework for discussion - to those involved in art and design teaching.

The second chapter made the case for a greater emphasis in art and design contexts on studying the body and prioritising physical readings and renderings of the world as a way towards establishing a foundational repertoire for a practice. Across the case studies drawing was seen (with Topor and Steinberg) to be a key tool in pushing the body as narrative content in extraordinary directions. Other artists (Sury) were seen constantly to embrace a highly physical understanding of the world within the formal components of their graphic approach. The chapter builds on ideas and strategies used in performance teaching, but offers drawing as a central device for pushing imaginative development in related ways.

The third chapter focussed on graphic language in a very detailed way, using analogies from linguistic grammar. The other chapters touch on its central idea of fast streaming versus more considered drawing modes, but here this contrast was explored in depth and tested against specific examples of autobiographical drawing. The Stendhal and Zürn case studies showed a mixed approach, 'confectional' drawing, taking place on the ground. The chapter's findings offer a specific idea for teaching drawing focussing heavily on its fabrication, wherein similar speculative oppositions might be devised and then explored in detail through creating different blends, informed at the same time by careful scrutiny of other artists' work.

The study also offers two distinctive broader ideas as worthy for consideration in the context of teaching undergraduate creative disciplines. The first relates to mixing words and images. The research rapidly moved away from an initial premise that *image + text* would be a likely central topic, but it grew to advocate a policy of *drawing + close description* as an informative collaboration for educational enquiry: the study itself embodies the results of such an approach. Ideas that have been subjected to extended written analysis here have been prompted by, or followed on from, acts of drawing, and only in the light of these ideas has it become possible to see other work formally in a changed way. In substance, this is not a radical discovery, and it fits with the commonly expressed wider experience of how making a drawing enhances acuity in looking, and how the process of writing unlocks thinking. But this particular strategy of repeatedly passing between the different qualities of

consideration that drawing and writing elicit, and firming up a response in so doing, is offered as a direct technique for application in creative education, intended to enhance existing approaches to primary research.

Moreover, the research has drawn very fundamentally on exceptionally creative educational work in training for performance. It has suggested by this means a second distinctive pointer to wider art educators: providing a basis for orientating the teaching of drawing to take on core ideas (such as a focus on the body, and the development of primary experimental grammars) presented by innovative educators in the field such as Lecoq and Howell. In this respect the study argues by its own example for a more conscious adoption of hybrid approaches within art and design education at undergraduate level, moving away from too rigid an emphasis on the integrity of single disciplines. It invites greater recognition that student practice may grow inventively through fusions. Already in the visual work discussed, artists such as Ware and McNaught have shown fruitful interest in the potential for subtle synaesthetic referencing in the graphic novel form, and their work has been discussed here in relation to sound-mixing and documentary and film modes. In Chapter 2, Cruikshank's and Gorey's work was shown to have adapted older performance tendencies very specifically within their graphic frameworks, and across the chapters, drawn narratives were seen to have readily borrowed and combined approaches in engineering their formal mixtures. Matsumoto's criss-crossing between writing and drawing, between English and Japanese, and metaphors and recordings, and Spiegelman's integration of memoir with fable, and – further back - Stendhal's eloquent equivocation between drawing and writing, may all be read in this light.

Relevance to Other Disciplines

So far, these are grounds on which the study's findings might input into ideas about teaching in an art and design context. They may be taken as being especially relevant to Illustration courses, but not exclusively so. The research has concentrated on drawing because of my own teaching experience, but also because – and there is a clear parallel with Lecoq's preoccupation with mime – drawing is a foundational mode of visual research and expression. Its habit of directness and its strange thinking-bodily nature makes it potentially congenial to all sorts of other subject areas and purposes, and it seems possible to speculate that - with further pedagogical research - aspects of the study might be taken towards wider

application. Indeed, a little of this has been sampled already during the course of the project, and I will mention three relevant examples to indicate possible prospects.

First, I was involved as collaborator and model in an experimental life drawing session with undergraduate performance students at the University of Reading. This was undertaken to stimulate a different sort of relationship with the core ingredients of their practice – taken, very simply, as the body in context. Because suddenly obliged to express directly the range of different qualities in what they saw - not in words which was their usual mode, but in marks made by themselves physically - they were taken back to searching for their own first principles: what is the equivalent of a movement out there set down on this piece of paper? What is important in this sense of confusion before me and in me? What, therefore, may I edit out and leave in? Further work along the lines of this PhD might introduce, for example, alternate experiences of writing and drawing as a way towards devising performance ideas, exploiting the insights that the crossover might provide, and reflecting on what grows in translation, and what is usefully lost, as part of the learning process.

Second, building on this experience, I worked with my own drawing students, taking the role of model and using the space in a Lecoqian way so that the familiarity of the Life Room was lost. The key strategy here was to make the students take account of the space itself much more physically through my presence, and I concentrated on articulating its substances and obstructions by interacting with it. Again, taking this further, the sessions might become still more performative occasions – an arena for narrative generation and active experiment - involving perhaps the students' own movements or their considered interventions. Drawing the body might thus become an opportunity for researching a condition of active physical awareness, and for implementing and testing personal terminology as it grows.

Third, early on in my research I participated in a workshop session for English Literature students at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, where Professor Lucy Newlyn was bringing her academic students towards the practical experience of writing poetry to extend their capacity to write critically. Newlyn's initiative was thoughtfully praised by the students, and their poems, as well as their reflections on how this impacted on them educationally, have been published in two research publications.²³³ There is a documented precedent here that validates bringing creative practice towards

²³³ Newlyn and Lewis, 2003 and 2004.

academia. Introducing other forms of creative engagement to such a context might particularly feed disciplines where cross-sensory perception is a focus (as with poetry's visual and auditory qualities) or where broader, non-linear processes of thinking seem to offer a helpful adjunct. As this study has made very clear, the graphic novel form particularly invites renditions of autobiography, and this in itself suggests it is ripe for adapting to contexts such as Life-Writing where making sense of a life, or more broadly a history, is the task. More closely aligned to Newlyn's precedent, where there is a need for critical writing about imagery, as with Art History and Film Studies, a mixture of drawing and writing might readily be employed as a formative research experience and developmental tool.

These are just three ideas for applications of some of the approaches discussed in the study, and they may be offered in a context where interdisciplinary engagement, as I said at the outset, is now part of the wider academic culture in significant ways. Importantly, even small inclusions such as cross-disciplinary workshops and floating taster sessions such as I describe might realistically enhance existing curricula even as they stand. These would act just as technical workshops and Life Drawing currently supplement seminar and tutorial sessions within undergraduate art education. In the context of a large university, students might readily sample exotic vocabularies through being exposed to other disciplines as temporary 'interns'.

The Language of Drawing: an Alternative Framework for Interpreting the Graphic Novel?

There is also the territory of the practice that focuses my title, the contemporary graphic novel, and it seems important to home in on this once more, and establish where it ends up as a result of this analysis. What might be claimed in this respect?

The visual work discussed in the study has been viewed through the filter of three freshly found themes as an example of how unfamiliar terminology may direct awareness away from habitual readings. The chapters focus on aspects of graphic storytelling that bring this subject area into contact with new bedfellows, performance studies, translation theory, and linguistics. In each case the work discussed is refracted through the theme to concentrate on aspects and qualities that have not been aired in this way before. The analysis also engages directly with emerging and dominant topics and content – the appearance of new technology as subject matter, preoccupation with incidental sound, autobiography as a diversely innovative

category of drawn narrative. The study as a whole shows how the form of the graphic novel is evolving in very specific ways visually, and also in its treatment of text, to deal with the varied layers of image and sound, and complex notions of individual identity and public-private encounters present in daily life.

In its overall approach the study moves away from other analyses of the graphic novel in the broader literature, arguing that it is the practice of *drawing* that plays a fundamental role at each stage of the construction of these works – in distinguishing an underpinning narrative ‘juice’, in evolving central content, and again in establishing subtly articulate confectionary energies in the final delivery. This has been looked at across the chapters in detail, focussing renewed and timely attention on the narrative potency of drawing as an expressive form. With many of the works considered, graphic inventiveness rather than image-text negotiation is in fact the generating drive, and the presumptuous old hierarchy, text leading to image, may be reformulated very straightforwardly with the added help of Lecoq’s wider conception of text, as image giving rise to text. In this respect the study has made its case for drawing’s continuing educational relevance even within a fast moving technological context, with its implicitly formative capacity to move the first sensing of an idea towards articulation.

Here the study has inserted itself consciously between other approaches of analysis that dominate the field: between the European focus on systems of delivery (semiotic coding and filmic, episodic sequencing) and the American interest in its relevance as a symptom and device of popular culture. As indicated above my concern throughout has been to demonstrate the intrinsically creative bent of the form’s potential, to determine it as an area of experimental versatility rather than to categorise and solidify well-known habits. This has meant a preoccupation with process and graphic versatility and a roaming analysis of a range of different methods for evolving and shaping narrative ideas. The overarching context offered for the work discussed is the history of drawing – with recourse to various of its creative byways - rather than the accepted idea that the graphic novel is out on its own in some way in relation to other art practices and easily pigeon-holed as a special case. Here, where drawn narratives employ verbal language this has been analysed in terms of a focus on somatic energy or a type of creative physicality, relating it back again to performance and ideas of the expressive qualities of bodies. So once again the mode is positioned as intersecting with other creative disciplines, rather than in isolation.

The case for the form's connectedness with the wider long-term history of drawing and an interest in generation of ideas in the first instance steered the research away from considering the impact of new media on the form *per se*. Where technology has entered the frame of discussion, it has been in terms of investigating a stratum of new content being inventively deployed – considering how artists are depicting technology's new-felt ubiquity rather than looking at technology's new agency in the delivery and distribution of work. The interest throughout has been in how low-tech graphic expression continues to evolve even in a high-tech environment, and this has stemmed from the belief that the basic elements of drawing will continue to underpin good design in whatsoever format it ultimately emerges.

A Contribution to Wider Debate

In terms of its detailed consideration of the qualities of drawing itself, the study has made a fresh case for valuing physical immediacy as a highly responsive (though still undervalued) mode of receiving and processing experience. This is significant in its relevance to a wider debate impacting on scholarship across the humanities, as I indicated in my introduction with reference to Cunningham and others in connection with the notion of 'close reading'.

Graphic novels have here provided stimulating food for thought precisely because they are concerned so often with the telling of life experiences. By focusing on how specific graphic works seem to embody processes of thought - and even, as has been shown, activities of cross-sensual perception - the research has suggested that drawing may be viewed as an especially valuable foundational mode for capturing detailed observation and analysis, ranging readily onto emotional and sensual territory. The discussion of autobiographical works (especially Matsumoto, Stendhal, Zürn) in Chapters 1 and 3 makes this point particularly well, where very different qualities of experience seem present in the graphic language arrived at. The potential transferability of this special sensitivity to research activities within other (non-arts) disciplines again offers grounds and a possible focus for systematic pedagogical research in the future. Indeed, Social Anthropologist Tim Ingold's radical recent initiative at the University of Aberdeen in including drawing and making within the framework of academic courses of undergraduate and postgraduate anthropology has already made a beginning in this respect.²³⁴

²³⁴ This initiative is described and contextualised in Ingold, 2013.

In this connection, the study makes its own contribution to the wider discussion of what in some circles has been perceived to be a situation of over-theorisation. The counter argument advocates a return to greater directness of encounter with primary material, promoting a highly attentive quality of encounter between researcher and a given object of enquiry, rather than one that is constantly being mediated and deflected by the circulating discourse(s) of the day. In posing combinations of drawing and writing as a double-edged tool for investigative research activity, the study makes a particular bid for a form of close reading that does not stop at words. In part - as already stated - it is itself a demonstration of this. The role of practice in this research has been to spark its questions and to awaken a quality of searching sensitivity in the close analysis of the visual work engaged with. Making drawings initially was where the thesis's central themes were found but this has ultimately opened up fresh angles of thought on the type of practice which is the chosen territory. Surveying the project from its end point, it is clear that a small group of drawings at the beginning yielded a great deal of thinking and reflective analysis, itself offering an intriguing pause for thought.

New Knowledge

The above sets out some general ways in which the study may be said to have introduced new possibilities for engaging with its territory, with some wider relevant pedagogical concerns coming into view. I will end by reviewing the specifics of this research's achievement, detailing its contribution to new knowledge. This might now be summarised as follows:

- (i) In surveying the field, the research has suggested pertinent new lines of enquiry with a view to understanding the contemporary graphic novel as a creative form. The analysis identifies in action conspicuous recent tendencies both in terms of narrative content and formal delivery. Variants of autobiography (pp.131-140), intriguing exploratory interest in qualities of noise and the narrative implications of this (pp.36-41, 94-100), and also the ubiquity of new technology in the stories being developed (p.49) have each been investigated in connection with the study's three central themes.
- (ii) The study pursues some very specific interdisciplinary exchanges of its own (pp.23-26, 67-71, 117-122) and, in doing so, provokes new questions

for the subject area investigated. The three chapters provide an extended case study of the consequences of channelling research by means of terminology derived from an interdisciplinary approach. As a potentially transferable research method, the study offers groundwork for further pedagogical work to determine the wider productivity of this method.

- (iii) By centring on the role of drawing in devising and delivering visual narratives (pp.31-36, 78-100, 122-130) the study has taken an independent stance from other dominant readings of the graphic novel form. The study sets itself apart, on the one hand, from European preoccupations with codes and formal systems and, on the other, from the American focus on the historical growth of the form out of newspaper strips of the late 19th century. Furthermore, it concentrates – against the grain of current discussion about the graphic novel’s future – on physical drawing as an enduringly transportable generative device, even in an age where new technology is affecting distribution and sponsoring global exchanges between artists very conspicuously.
- (iv) Again, the study challenges some widely accepted assumptions about the verbal-visual partnership in graphic-novel construction, identifying what is in fact a fluid and highly dynamic relationship across different varieties of work (pp.31-36, 94-97). In doing so, it complicates existing readings considerably. In positing that in this context words and text are never entirely preoccupied with semantic meaning, but act as carriers of somatic energy in their own right - being very well-equipped to convey cross-sensory allusions - the study pushes expectations regarding text’s function in contributing to graphic narrative delivery considerably.
- (v) Finally, the study advocates (and itself enacts) a method of direct engagement with primary data for carrying out advanced research: it has centrally deployed a type of analysis that combines drawing and writing as mutually illuminating investigative tools (for example: discussion of my drawings, pp.111-113, and then Stendhal, pp.133-135, and Zürn, pp.135-140). In this respect it makes a distinctive contribution to a wider academic discussion which is taking place, re-floating the advantages of direct as opposed to theory-driven encounters with research material. It should be said that theoretical writings have in no sense been avoided by the study but that there has certainly been continual recourse to this double-stranded form of close description for gathering data and supporting reflection around it. Again, this is offered potentially as a

transferable technique with scope for further pedagogical research across creative disciplines and beyond.

Thus, in terms of subject knowledge gained the study has opened its field to unfamiliar questions, and demonstrated how these may be used strategically to illuminate a range of existing work in searching ways. In aspects of its methodology also, the study offers ideas and approaches with potential for future research and wider development. In both of these respects the study has championed the principle of generating an unfamiliar encounter (through borrowed terminology and the drawing-writing filter) in order to complicate settled assumptions and defy subject-familiar patterns of enquiry. This research has paid considerable attention to younger artists as well as to well-established exponents, and it has constantly returned to the question of how narrative drawing achieves a particular identity through the negotiations of processing: it has looked characteristically for traces of *beginnings* and remnants of *devisings* in the finished works considered. In keeping with this interest in processes of generation, its concern in the final analysis has been to offer a series of ideas with a view to stimulating those engaged in research (and art after all is a variant of this) to engage with *openness* of mind and *creativity* of intent, whatever the nature of the reader's educational or professional engagement with the field examined here.

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