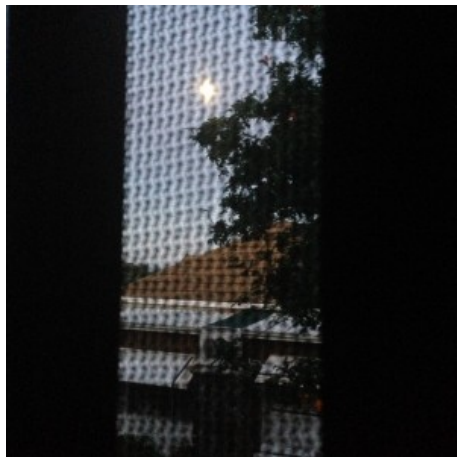


THE EVENT

The event begins with this image of the full moon (or nearly full moon) seen from my bathroom window.

I meant to take this image a bit earlier when the sky was still pink and red, but someone phoned just as I got out of the shower. I was hardly in a position to prioritise the photograph, especially as I had no idea whether I would persist with my commitment to the event.

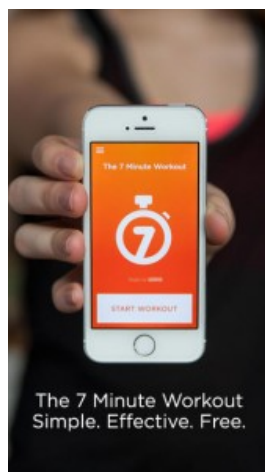
By the time I took the photograph, night had fallen and the event had begun.



1

No doubt it would be preferable to begin training prior to the event, but I only entered at the last second, so will have to incorporate my training within the context of actual participation.

Somebody recommended the [Scientific 7 Minute Workout](#), so I downloaded the [app](#) and gave it a try this morning. The app managed all the details of exercise choice, sequence and timekeeping so I had only to scurry from one position to another doing 30 second bouts of intense exercise.



2

What is the event? I made an initial effort to conceive it clearly.

I envisaged an early morning start at the park at the end of Foreshore Rd, Port Kembla - a cool breeze blowing from the ocean and gulls hovering above the car park lights. I was the lone participant, setting out slowly in the direction of the steelworks, across to Figtree and then up into the escarpment. The route snaked northwards between the escarpment and the sea. It skirted the summit of Mt Keira and ascended Broker's Nose and Sublime Point. It passed through industrial areas and suburbs. It followed particular sections of the coast – North Wollongong to Towradgi, Woonona to Austinmer, Burning Palms to Garie. It was intolerably long. It concluded, just possibly, in the Royal National Park at Wattamolla.



But the contours of the event are elusive. When I reflect upon it closely the route becomes unclear. It is not susceptible to being traced on a map. It changes.

More importantly, whatever I imagine is only a small portion of the event. The limits of the event are undefined. I must find the means to be prepared for whatever eventuates, but this also demands that I be unprepared.

3

I stupidly watch the news. For some reason – most likely because the Kurds have consistently resisted Turkish authority – the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is unwilling to intervene in the ISIS assault on the northern Kurdish-Syrian town of Kobane. The Turkish troops are stationed right there at the Syrian border, but all they do is fire tear gas at their own citizens, large groups of protesting Kurds who are compelled to stand by and watch a major Kurdish town fall to well-armed ISIS forces.



What relevance can this faraway event have to the event that I have described and that apparently escapes description? The attack on Kobane is not an event that I participate in,

but it is an event that I follow. In this manner the two events are drawn into limited correspondence.

If I am attending so closely to the news, it is because my own event is not especially absorbing. Nothing much has happened. Nothing seems very likely to happen.

4

Vaguely thought of attempting the first stage of the event this morning, but lacked sufficient resolve.

Instead spent much of the day doing nothing. Another way of saying that I spent far too much of the day immersed in the terrible spectre of the event – which awaits me, which demands my participation, which is already here.

Late in the afternoon, far too late in the afternoon, I find the energy to get moving. Getting moving is much easier than laying still. This paradox lies at the heart of the event, which is never so palpably present and demanding as when it is deliberately avoided.

I drive to the back of Woonona, park my car and set out up the steep track to the Lower Escarpment road.

I wear a GPS sports watch that measures aspects of my performance.

It shows the terrain that I covered:



And the details of my pace and elevation:



As well as a range of statistics:



I cover just under 10km at fairly slow pace, climbing just over 450 metres.

A tree across the steep track slowed my progress. A couple questioned me just as I neared the end, preventing me from going under an hour and fifteen minutes. But now I have an easy target for next time – less than 75 minutes.

I am blindly beginning to feel my way into the event.

Still, it occurs to me that preparing for the event has the potential to lead me astray. To the extent that I prepare for the event, the event itself - inasmuch as it is defined my unpreparedness - is lost.

5

I read today that the leader of the secular Kurdish People's Protection Units, who are struggling to defend Kobane from well-armed ISIS forces, is a woman, Mayassa Abdo. Her *nom de guerre* is Narin Afrin. She is 40 years old and described as 'cultivated, intelligent and phlegmatic' (Mustafa Ebdî). Knowing nothing of her as a person, I imagine her sitting up late and night, tired and dealing with all manner of pressing matters.

I hope she and all the others who are trapped in Kobane manage to escape.

Fifteen years ago (1999) I spent several weeks in the small Turkish town of Halfeti, which is only 78km from Kobane. Halfeti is an Armenian-Kurdish town on the banks of the Euphrates. Abdullah Öcalan, founding member of the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) was born nearby in the village of Ömerli. I visited Halfeti just as it was about to largely disappear beneath the waters of a new hydro-electrical project, the Birejic dam. I produced a navigable portrait of the town, in the style of the computer game, *Myst*, but composed of photographs, video interviews and ambient sounds. Once I got home it took me over a year to put the whole jigsaw puzzle of media together. In the end I felt I knew my way around Halfeti better than almost any place in the world.

I realise I could have almost walked from Halfeti to Kobane.

- Turn left (350 m)
- Kobanê, Syria

These directions are for planning purposes only. You may find that construction projects, traffic, weather, or other events may cause conditions to differ from the map results, and you should plan your route accordingly. You must obey all signs or notices regarding your route.

I expect other events have indeed made conditions differ. What kind of event would it be now to walk from Halfeti to Kobane, particularly to walk the across the border between Turkey and Syria? The Kurdish defenders of Kobane can only escape along this route, while ISIS is focused entirely on taking this road and preventing any escape.

I can see precisely the ground that needs to be covered – such a small, straightforward distance. If only it could be carelessly traversed. If only the walk was completely uneventful.



6

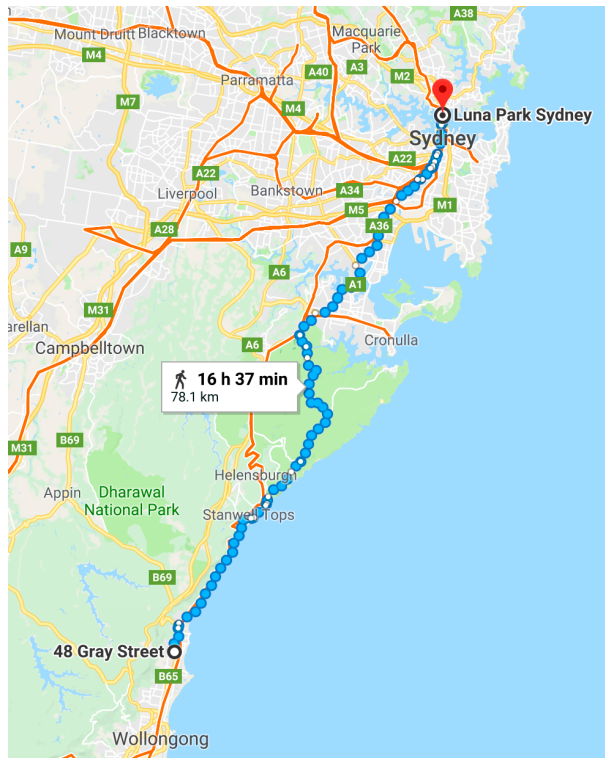
There is the known event and the inexplicable event.
 There is the inexplicable character of the known event.
 There is the known character of the inexplicable event.
 There is the genuine event.
 There is the experience of the genuine event.
 There is the dream of the genuine event.
 There is the artificial event.
 There is the event that I am determined to pursue despite its unreality.
 There is the determination to make the artificial event.
 There is the visible and the imperceptible event.
 There is the silent event.
 There is the event that does not register.
 There is the non-event that suddenly becomes eventful.
 There is the event that dissolves into nothingness.
 There are events.

7

I am still struggling to conceive the route that I will follow up and down the escarpment.

In the meantime another event takes shape within the larger event.

It would seem that walking from my house to Luna Park in Sydney is almost exactly the same distance as walking from Halfeti to Kobane:



Walk 16 h 37 min (78.1 km) via Princes Hwy

889 m · 911 m

291 m 3 m

Use caution—walking directions may not always reflect real-world conditions

- 48 Gray St, Woonona NSW 2517
- Walk west on Gray St towards Chenhalls St (450 m)
- Turn right onto Princes Hwy (2.7 km)
- Slight left onto Lawrence Hargrave Dr 550 m
- Slight right to stay on Lawrence Hargrave Dr (15.5 km)
- Turn right onto Otford Rd
- Go through 1 roundabout (400 m)
- Continue onto Lady Wakehurst Dr (2.1 km)
- Turn right onto The Cliff Track (280 m)
- Slight right to stay on The Cliff Track (800 m)
- Continue onto Garrawarra Ridge Trail (3.8 km)
- Continue onto Garrawarra Farm Rd (1.4 km)
- Turn left onto Garie Rd (60 m)
- Turn right onto Sir Bertram Stevens Dr (15.3 km)
- Slight left onto Audley Rd (1.7 km)
- Continue onto Farnell Ave (1.4 km)
- Slight right towards Princes Hwy/A1 (130 m)
- Continue onto Princes Hwy/A1 (3.0 km)
- Turn right to stay on Princes Hwy/A1 (8.1 km)
- Turn right to stay on Princes Hwy/A1

- Continue to follow Princes Hwy (8.3 km)
- Slight left onto Princes Hwy/A36 (3.3 km)
- Turn right onto Sydney Park Rd (550 m)
- Turn left onto Mitchell Rd
- Go through 2 roundabouts (1.4 km)
- Turn right onto Henderson Rd (270 m)
- Turn left onto Wyndham St (220 m)
- Continue onto Gibbons St (500 m)
- Continue onto Regent St (700 m)
- Continue onto Lee St (300 m)
- Continue onto George St (3.0 km)
- Turn right (240 m)
- Turn right (26 m)
- Turn left
- Take the stairs (1 km)
- Turn left onto Burton St (110 m)
- Turn left onto Alfred St
- Go through 1 roundabout (260 m)
- Turn right onto Paul St (69 m)
- Turn left at Northcliff St
- Take the stairs (58 m)
- Turn right (2 m)
- Luna Park Sydney (1 Olympic Dr, Milsons Point NSW 2061)

These directions are for planning purposes only. You may find that construction projects, traffic, weather, or other events may cause conditions to differ from the map results, and you should plan your route accordingly. You must obey all signs or notices regarding your route.

The only thing linking these two potential walks is my personal experience of both places and the coincidence of a common distance from each respective start to each respective destination. Clearly no adequate correspondence can be opened up between current events on the Turkish-Syrian border and the contrived event of walking from my home in Wollongong to Luna Park in Sydney. I know this, but still posit this event in the hope that, if nothing else, that the misalignment is itself meaningful.

8

I have not abandoned the event.

I am still in the event, even when unaware.

In referring to the event I am not referencing relevant currents of philosophy – Badiou, Derrida or Heidegger, etc. – or not referencing them strongly. I have some sense, for instance, that Badiou discusses the event in terms of novelty. The event is the eruption of the unknown and the unknowable. It forces things in new directions. But this is not my concern.

I am thinking of the event in more literal terms – as, for example, a sporting event. The event calls for endurance and commitment, but always with an overall sense of artifice. I

could just as well be lying in bed on Saturday morning, but instead I'm at Parkrun trying to beat my best 5km time.

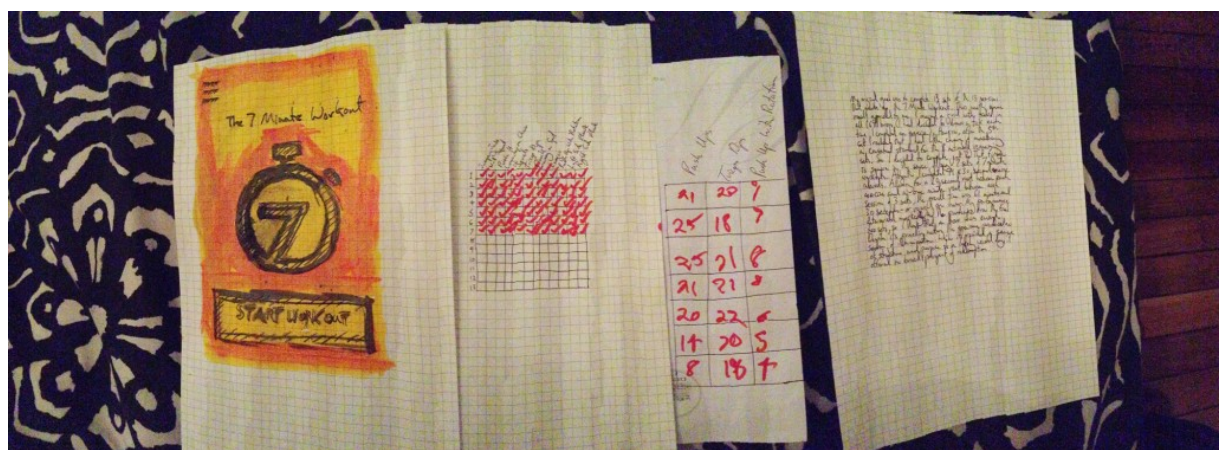
The event is pointless, but prompts dedicated effort. The event represents a structuring of time and space to lend life an arbitrary sense of purpose and meaning.

The event is superstitious. I cannot help but commit to it. In committing to it, I cannot help thinking that it will make a difference - earn me some kind of credit, make me a better person. I cannot help imagining that the suffering it entails is worthwhile. But none of this follows. The event is ultimately empty and redeems, or fails to redeem, precisely in terms of its emptiness.

9

My original aim was to complete in just a single session thirteen sets of the thirteen exercises that make up the [7 Minute Workout](#). The combination of unfortuitous number and neatly square result appealed to me.

Thirteen sets of the thirteen exercises produces one hundred and sixty nine exercises altogether. I imagined a grid with ticks in all one hundred and sixty nine boxes (I was determined to place a tick each time I completed an exercise). However, after the fifth set I realised that I had little chance of maintaining a consistent standard of performance for the eight remaining sets. So I decided to stop at just seven. That figure is square in the sense of being seven sets of 7 minute workouts. Altogether I completed ninety one thirty second intervals. Allowing for a ten second rest between each exercise and a one minute rest between each session of three sets, the overall time was sixty one minutes and thirty seconds – or roughly an hour. My performance deteriorated markedly in the push-ups over the final two sets, so I think that an hour was enough. Despite its gruelling nature the experience produced no sense of illumination. It provided a sense of structure and purpose to a largely wasted day, but offered no broad prospect of redemption.



10

In summary, how is the event characterised?

- Difficult but easy, a straightforward ordeal
- Engaging with the real, but also with the imaginary
- Structured, but never obtaining adequate form (elusive)

- Involving strands of commitment and withdrawal
- Provoking elements of hope and hopelessness
- Taking shape as both a form of manifestation and loss
- Demonstrating both assiduous effort and abiding laziness
- Simultaneously obsessive and drifting

11

The last week has been very humid. There have been late storms every day. There is some slight cooling when it rains.

No storm tonight, just when I really need one.

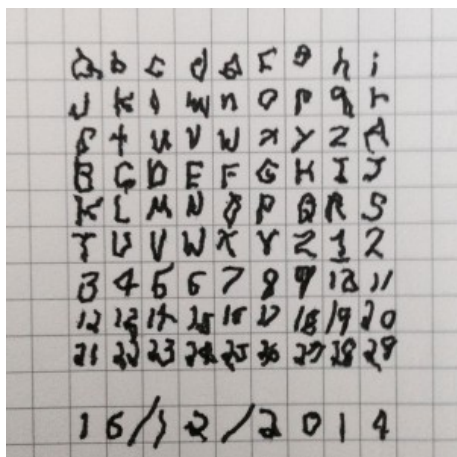
12

I am right handed. My left hand is untrained, crude and imprecise. Only very occasionally does it act on its own. Its ordinary role is to follow.

Just now, however, and for the next few weeks, I have a cast on my right hand. So I am forced to do everything with my left hand. Simple tasks have become complex. Some things I scarcely attempt at all. I was called upon to sign my name when I left the hospital. I offered only an unrecognisable scrawl.

I have decided to practice writing with my left hand. Each night I will write all the little letters of the alphabet and all the capitals, plus all the numbers from 1 through to 29. This will create a 9 by 9 grid of 81 elements. Skipping a line, I will then write the date. I wonder if I can improve much before my cast is removed?

Here is my first day's effort:



Why is my right hand incapacitated? I have [Dupuytren's contracture](#). This is a thickening of the fascia tissue beneath the skin, a condition that commonly affects the hand and leads the fingers to close in on the palm, rendering the hand a pathetic and inept claw. After a finger curls in about 30 degrees surgery is needed to correct the problem. A long zigzag incision is made from the base of the palm up to near the tip of the finger and the offending fascia tissue is removed, taking care not to damage nerves.

Dupuytren's contracture is linked to Viking or Celtic heritage. It affects mainly older people. I was unlucky to get it in my mid-thirties.

This is my second surgical intervention. The rule is to delay surgery for as long as possible. There is a strong likelihood of recurrence and the risk of nerve damage increases with each surgical episode.

I am trying to conceive this surgery and my recovery as an event – to lend it some coherent shape, to draw something from it, to discover something within it. It is in many ways – most ways – just an inconvenience, something that I'm obliged to put myself through – to endure. My aim here is to turn necessity back on itself, to lend it a sense of artifice and freedom.

I entered the hospital at 7am. My eighty seven year old father had walked me there from his apartment in Darlington. He complained that I was walking too quickly. He squinted in the early sun as we headed down Roslyn Street to St Luke's private hospital. They took his details as next of kin and then checked me in. I had to change in to the backwards smock that you always have to wear at hospital and put on little baggy slippers with no soles. I then shuffled off to my pre-surgical bed (berth 109). Cartoons were playing on the television. After a while it shifted to the news. I don't remember pressing anything to change the channel. I'd been enjoying the cartoons, which were composed of static figures with large faces and blinking eyes.

The anaesthetist dropped in, asked me some basic medical questions and then inserted a cannula in the top of my left hand. He had a strange way of prepping me for this. He asked me to close my eyes, take several deep breaths and not to worry about the 'slight scratch' on my hand. Once I opened my eyes the cannula was in.

Shortly afterwards two hospital orderlies, one thin and the other covered in tattoos, rolled my bed deftly through the corridors to the surgical ante-chamber. I was left there for a little while. I watched the operation of the automatically closing door. I had a warm blanket put over me. Some liquid flowed down a tube into my left hand. I saw air bubbles passing down the tube and wondered vaguely if the orderlies knew what they were doing. Nobody spoke to me, but somebody said something about getting started. Then I was gone. Absolutely no recollection of drowsiness - just absent time until I woke up a bit after midday back in my pre (now post) surgical bed.

The television was on, but no longer cartoons or the dull cycle of morning news stories. There was a siege happening in Martin Place. [Man Haron Monis](#) had walked into the Lindt cafe and taken some uncertain number of hostages. Two female hostages were holding up an Islamic banner at the window. It had started just about the same time that my operation had started and was happening only a kilometre or so away. Of course there is no genuine point of correspondence between my surgery and this major newsworthy event. They were occurring at the same time - that is all.

I was eager to recover from the general anaesthetic and get out of hospital as soon as possible. I had to get a framed photograph to Articulate Gallery before 4pm. The doctor visited me and the nurse checked that I could walk a straight line to the toilet. Then I stumbled off back to my father's place, grabbed my stuff and caught a taxi to the gallery. The taxi driver was listening to live talk back radio on the siege but he asked about my hand. I said I'd just had surgery. He asked me if it was for cancer. I explained that it wasn't. Then he told me about a melanoma that he'd had removed on his arm and how the cancer had

returned to his lymph nodes. He'd recently had radiotherapy, which burned horribly and had destroyed the nerves in his armpit. The traffic was bad so I had time to hear the story in detail. He eventually dropped me at the top of Palace Street, Petersham. I crossed Parramatta road and deposited my picture at Articulate. I spoke briefly with the curator, Bill Seeto, then walked to Petersham station and caught the train back to Woonona.

I went to bed early. I was unconscious when the siege started and unconscious when it ended (at 2am).

Here is my bandaged right hand:



Here is my intact left hand (although you may notice the incipient Dupuytren's contracture):



13

A quick review: as you know, I'm currently interested in 'the event', an imprecise notion that represents a nod to Parkrun and all kinds of local sporting festivals that are focused less on competition than on framing scenarios of communal individual endeavour. Although, to be honest, I am unconcerned with the communal and even less interested in individual triumph or despair. Nonetheless I imagine a thoroughly private and invisible event, perhaps beginning at 3am in a carpark in Port Kembla and zigzagging north via roads, tracks and scarcely legible forest paths towards some blank ending in the Royal National Park. This event is dark, unheralded and offers nothing especially redeeming.

To be honest, however, I am thinking of something even more unformed. While the notion of the event suggests an objectified, inherently structured amalgam of time, direction and effort – something rule-governed and determinable – the event that actually concerns me is the one that begins without warning, that lacks all definite shape, that opens up unpredictably. This other event (at the limit of the formal event) is less wrought than determinedly and waywardly followed. I find myself within it without any means of defining its contours or any scope for lucid conclusion. In this sense the event only takes shape when it discovers its dissolution.

At one level the event is an artifice, a resource, a necessity. At another level it is indescribable. It is nothing like an event at all.

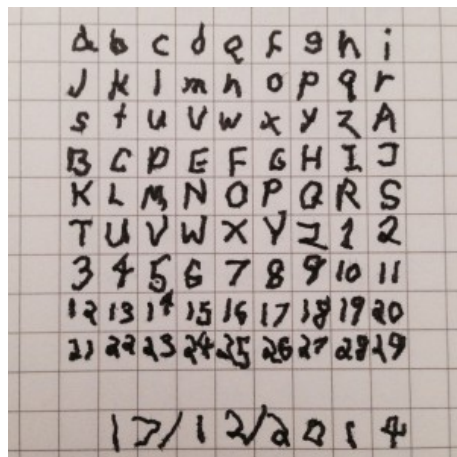
It is within the sense of the event's evident impossibility that the commitment to the event begins.

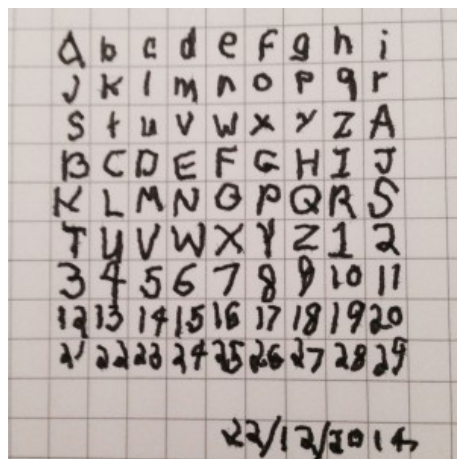
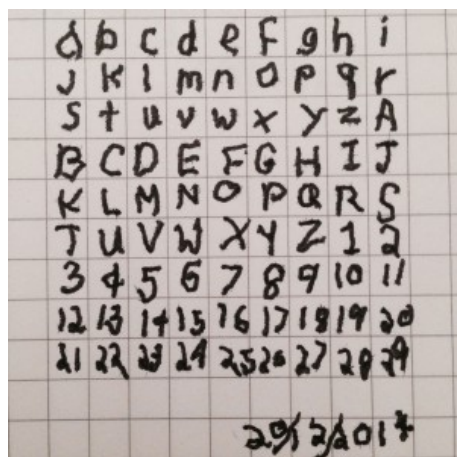
There is a close relation between the event and the non-event. They are drawn to one another. They lend one another meaning and are not opposed.

So, more practically, what am I suggesting? I suppose a set of minor experimental actions in which form and the risk of formlessness coincide.

14

I have been continuing to practice writing with my left hand. Perhaps one day I will be able to write easily and well this way. Perhaps one day I will be ambidextrous. This seems unlikely.





15

It has been four year since I wrote about any of this. The event has taken other turns. It has disappeared from sight. I have stopped trying to draw events together or pull them apart. I have had another hand operation – this time on my other hand. I imagined that the event would continue somehow, even as I failed to attend to it. I imagined that it would always be there. I took it for granted, but now am less certain. I am less confident that anything draws my actions together – even in an inconsistent and chaotic way. This either means that I am deeply engaged in the event or there is no event whatsoever. I have no way of knowing one way or the other.