

TO SET OUT FOR

‘To write as a question of writing, question that bears the writing that bears the question, no longer allows you this relation to the being – understood in the first place as tradition order, certainty, truth, any form of taking root – that you received one day from the past of the world, domain you had been called upon to govern in order to strengthen your “Self”, although this was as if fissured, since the day when the sky opened on its void.’¹

If an art-thing moves us, do we find, amongst other ‘effects’ (its generation of a certain unspeakable euphoria), that ‘movement’ troubling? Is the maker’s ‘being moved’ in the course of the making qualitatively different to the ‘movement’ sensed by a respondent, an audience? Does, can, should, art, the arts, still (for certainly they were accustomed to so doing...) trouble us as well as delight us? But is there such an identifiable ‘us’ and does it include the makers of art?

Or is what might just be now most troubling (but to whom, ...to the audiences, to the would-be makers?) about the arts and their things that they no longer trouble us, that not only do they not make trouble for us but that they are really no trouble at all?

Of course such questions can only be generated and offered from within specific ‘perspectives’, perspectives in whose assumptions, methods, languages and produced knowledges we feel confident and secure. Perhaps the responses offered would differ radically between (some) makers and (some) respondents, just as a potential art-thing’s significance for its maker would be irreconcilable with that for its audience. Both trouble and value vary with, are ‘in the eye of’, the beholder. We cannot assume that the arts and their things can be gathered to one site where differences between makers and audiences can be subsumed under some larger transcendent reconciling frame that would unite them within a sharable region of ‘feeling’ and ‘movement’.

Yet in contemporary culture the rule of ‘aesthetics’ is generated almost exclusively from within audience responses to art and its things. Such responses – critical-analytical-personal-institutional – to the arts and to the ever-expanding range of phenomena in whose production and representation aesthetic ‘concerns’ play an increasingly explicit and crucial part, now permeate many areas of our everyday experience. The assessments and judgments of aesthetics necessarily come after the fact of making. Constructed according to the interests and requirements of non-art practices, they are responses to different passions and needs. Troubles of making art are not reconcilable with troubles of relating to and of showing (through speech, writing, gesture) the qualities of one’s response to its things. Making sense of the arts and their things defines the work of an aestheticising machinery that is an embedded co-participant in culture’s ‘delivery’ of the arts. Aesthetics ensures that it has these things securely in and at hand, pinned down right there before it, in order to carry out its constructive operations.

Indeed the occasional, apparently ‘private’, character of such hypothetical ‘troubles’ would appear now, within the context of global representation, to be essentially inconsequential

¹ Maurice Blanchot, ‘The Step Not Beyond’, State University of New York, New York, 1992, p.2.

asides to the smooth running and development of the art-productive machinery within and through which the arts have their public 'life'. Whilst there are occasional shocks to the art-generating and sustaining machine (such as those produced by changes in the many forms of 'funding policies'), nevertheless, through the complexly intertwined and mutually supporting private and public capital investment, the arts' things and performances have been given a ring-fenced relative institutional, and thus less and less precarious, security. Reproduction of the arts, maintaining the flow of makers and their things, is the responsibility of institutions whose own long-term security becomes their prime requirement. Through this dynamic the arts are bound ever more tightly into those secular cultural processes in which institutional interests work to secure and maintain their own techniques of adaptation; the 'objects' which they reproduce to ensure their own reproduction (long life...) are simply one set of constituents contributing to the means they are constantly elaborating as their survival strategy. The challenges *they* face are management problems of control (matching productivity with investment, complexifying ties with other institutions, managing conflict, preserving accountability, developing adaptability through self-monitoring and continual modification of information-flow and so forth). What 'goes on' within and as their 'services' and 'products' (art-makers and their things) is, if not quite irrelevant to these challenges, only of interest as materials that the challenges can reconstitute as 'means' – means to self-renewal. In this reconstitution making-for-art is converted into 'art', potential art-things into 'works of art'. Troubles arise only when there are little ruptures in these conversion processes (bringing the things into representation); most of the time such representation is achieved routinely, without question, just as if it were no trouble at all!

Certainly the seamless and seemingly inexhaustible flow-through of the arts' things generated and sustained by a complex machinery responsible for managing art's generalised representation suggests that art is now a trouble-free zone. Art's things are smoothly distributed across carefully preserved sites where they can be easily approached and sampled by anyone with 'interest' and possessing the minimal necessary funding (the amount required for 'access' varying slightly between the arts and their allotted sites). At last, it seems, the arts and their things have achieved, have been granted, a generally accepted security that apparently guarantees (some) makers (some kind of) 'freedom' to make whatever they want and to try to find outlets for their makings through the seemingly abundant available sites. Within this civilised and comforting zone the troubling has surely never been further distant.

Perhaps this should trouble us? But whether it does will depend to a considerable extent upon the ground from which one develops one's relation to art and its things. And perhaps there is a crucial defining difference between the grounds (or their very absence...) which makers seek to clear in order to make towards art, and those from which audiences – *and thus all interpreter-analysts* – reach out towards the things of art.

Diagnostic claims and descriptions that represent some 'state' of art, delineating what the arts 'are', what they do, and what they should and should not do, have, implicitly, to claim some privileged self-exemption from the very conditions within which art and they too are immersed. In such texts, spoken or written, art and its things have to be treated as 'givens', as completed identifiable objects (cadavers?) lying there awaiting dissection and explicit re-constitution through the methodic tools and rhetorics of analysis. The texts aim to convince through the confidence they can foster in the truth-representing capacities of their methods. So not only are they too (*like all texts, this included*) caught up in representation, they may even be paradigm cases of 'successful' representation, the representation-form closest to and most useful for the handling work of the arts' technomanagers.

And of course the representing texts of all forms of analysis (each with its own site and specific subject-matter, its different ‘take’ on and constitution of art as their ‘object of knowledge’) offer a valued resource for those responsible for the day-to-day placing, representing, and dissemination of the arts’ ‘meaning’ and value. They appear in forms (via concept-formation, the structuring of logically coherent narratives and syntactic conventions, and the support of empirical information) immediately adaptable to the needs of art-managing bureaucracies. Such text-work is given charge of the sense-making representing practices through which the arts and their things are framed and mediated. They offer seemingly trouble-free non-problematic accounts that can be selectively drawn upon in the continuous re-constitution of their products – the arts’ things as ‘finished articles’ set up and ready for dissemination in representation’s routine channels.

This is the problem that every form of analysis (including this present writing if it is taken as analysis *rather than an art-obsessed attempt on behalf of making-toward-art to go through and out of analysis’s framed demands ...*) needs to face about its relation to the things of art – that it too is part of the crisis of art’s representation. Locked into a dialectic of separation and aloofness, *such positions and perspectives on the arts (and everything else...) are constitutionally incapable of putting themselves at risk, of laying themselves open to whatever art’s things might offer*. For in doing that they might just be seduced into giving themselves up, into an absolution of their analytic responsibilities, and into placing themselves at least temporarily in the care of art’s things. And if the things are precisely attempting to perform otherness as the dissolution and undoing of analysis and commonsense, they pose something which no form of analysis can contemplate – the loss of its own self-control, the abandonment of the ‘ground’ on which it constitutes its worlds and its complex formulations: *the very place where it rests its case*. What has to override everything in analytic work (and that it is performed precisely as ‘work’ in relation to art is crucial to the present writing’s response to its role under representation) is faithfulness to the assumptions and consequent rules for concept-formation and interpretation of the knowledge-paradigm within which it constitutes itself and which sets up the possibility of analysis in the first place. *The art-thing’s challenge to all such positions is that of self-abandonment. No form of analysis can contemplate this.*

In approaching any writing that takes art as its subject matter we need (if we are to appreciate the ways it orders, represents, art for us) to ask ‘to what is it responsible and responsive?’. Its placing of the performance of art and its things, together with the qualities of its relation to them, are themselves indebted to and fixed by its own assumptions about the relations between thought-feeling, ‘self’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘world’, and, of course, language and the possibility of different kinds of ‘knowledge’. There is no ‘innocent’ writing (or speaking, discoursing, representing...). And if art-responsive writing comes from ‘outside’ art, from sites where something other than the making of possible art-things already frames and directs the perspective (the way of making ‘sense’), then the writing’s responsibilities are to the interests securing those sites.

To write-speak of art from ‘inside’ making’s concerns would require a suspension of the authority of those organising paradigms whose assumptions we ordinarily accept without question. This is how we ‘get by’ in everyday life; the order of the day is a relatively trouble-free transition between sites of sense-making, because we assume (we have to...) that ‘we know, more or less, what the other (person/representation) means’. Thus to write ‘for’ art-making and its things, rather than ‘of’ them from a some-where beyond their force-fields,

would, at the least, require suspension of the frames of sense and knowledge within and through which the commonsense world is routinely sustained. It would be to try to draw out of one's 'resources' (feeling-thinking-linguaging-sounding-perceiving...) whatever it is in the art-thing which seems to withdraw the confident 'one' of one-self out of its securities in the everyday world, what gathers it together as a one, towards other regions, other modes of becoming. To be drawn into becoming-other is already to begin the slippage into the open of a several. It is to approach the no-place, the a-zonal, where, as the condition of art's possibility (though not necessarily the guarantee of its realisation) the would-be-artist has already gone forth and multiplied.²

Clinging as makers-in-hope to our distantly selective memory of the moderns' revelations, we may be able to grasp the ways that the work of both analysis and generalised representation is a radical compounder of the problems makers face in trying to hold to the moderns' promise of otherness as an interruptive break-out into *whatever it is that is art's alone*. For to try to be nothing-but-art is precisely to be a trouble, to be troubling, for its attempt preserves the possibility of disturbing the terms of routine becoming on which our culture relies for its eternal reproduction. Every attempted interruption is defined by its putting into question the things and terms that want to make it reasonable, to hold it fast (represented) within the worlds of secured knowledges, to tie it to a knowing knowable subject and an extant frame of reference. These mark the boundary where art-as-questioning goes its lonely ways. Without such a questioning, making capitulates in advance to representation. And in contemporary culture that means it is already being shaped and distributed unbeknownst by interested forces beyond art.

To take art's 'side', to try to write 'for' art but aside from the representing machine's interests, might then be the challenge of finding ways of showing (in translations 'parallel' to the art-thing) how, in the attempt to share the thing's questioning celebration, the writer was simultaneously extracted from culture's binds. And in a culture where 'aesthetics', as the organisation of our responses to the sensuous, has itself both expanded way beyond the earlier pre-modern boundaries and been incorporated into the machinery of representation as a crucial reinforcing agent in the dynamic of consumption-production, the challenge to writing for art may be compounded by the need precisely to avoid such an 'aesthetics'. To be 'for' art, to be writing on behalf of the arts' attempts to celebrate art by questioning themselves out of culture, is to have to withstand and circumvent this generalised infiltration of aesthetics. Writing has somehow to distance itself from analysis (extant knowledge-paradigms), from an aesthetic adulterated by its absorption into the representation of consumption, and from other institutional interests seeking to incorporate the arts into their own projects ('entertainment', 'education', 'information', and 'heritage' for instance).

The self-interested in-gathering of art and its things by non-art institutions on their own terms converts them, as suggested earlier, into 'art' (itself to become soon enough 'art-lite') and 'works of art'. Perhaps the quotation marks here serve to remind us that the things emerging from artists' making only become 'art' after being subjected to the conversion processes of institutional representation. They enter culture within and on the terms of the latter's frames, interpretations, and management techniques. To write 'for' art in the midst of this cultural bind without falling prey to the seductions, promises and rewards of representation is to go at least some of the way towards taking on art's predicament, and through this sharing to try to

²² In the present context I would ask you to consider the terms that I introduce across the texts of Art's Plight not as 'concepts' indebted to some overarching analytic frame and method, but rather as 'notyets' bearing an allegiance only to art's entanglement with the infinitive.

resist and remove the effects of the quotation marks, to hold the things, however briefly, still, aside from representation's converting equipment. It involves taking on the challenge of showing how the engagement of the art-thing had induced a movement in the defining terms of one's 'own' becoming. The effects of such a transforming movement (the very *telos* of art for would-be art-makers and for the present writing...) is to remove one temporarily from the routine controls of the diverse analytically-generated knowledges sustaining our everyday lives. Responsive precisely to the ways an art-thing has shaken one out of one's 'own' world and into its worlding through its unique languaging gestures, writing's task may be to show this movement in its specificity, its difference. In taking on this write-out the writing necessarily engages, opens out, and thus writes for, the art-thing's difference from the gathering controlling practices of an aesthetics in the service of representation.

Once they have emerged from the making process, been cast out by their makers, the would-be-art-things' point is to challenge possible respondents to track and show something of the obsessive-compulsive passionate questioning that drove makers to try to maintain their making-trajectory (often in the face of no interest or response) *quite aside from the concerns of aesthetics*. For this drive, in its restless dissatisfaction with the 'what is' of everyday representation (its commingling of its gloomy diagnosis with its joy in essaying an other possibility), draws it through 'meaning' in ways which undo the latter. Its trajectory is that of a de-meaning, a dis-languaging that re-languages, *but always in a 'just this once' that, as a fragment or fragments, challenges the comforts and reassurances of our life in language*. Nothing could be further from aesthetics, in its current guise as server and re-fueller of the engine of representation, than this scattering of meaning in the name and as the project of arting. And, as art-making is unmodelled, is the very undoing of 'the model', so its things invite a writerly response which refuses 'models', which doesn't look outside itself for authoritative modes of writing or seek to found itself on something other than its own emerging felt-for responses to this thing and to language. Except, of course, that the art-thing itself may stand as partial model for responsive writing...

Following the thing's journeying, but held fast by language, such a writing condemns itself to hover in the gaps between the always specific erotic inflections of makers' compulsive passion, and the persuasive rewards of serving the representing machine within whose service it would be required to reconcile taste and knowledge in the service of allocating critical value judgments to the arts' things.

The point, surely, of such a writing-attempt aside from representation, would be to try to show what has been felt-learnt in and through the relation with the thing: to reiterate – how, through intense attention to the specific qualities of the relation to the thing, one had been transformed into more-than-one through transportation into the thing's elsewhere. This turning back into, through, and out of oneself at the thing's silent and thus ineffably weak behest, as a re-circling around often difficult hidden previously inadmissible 'parts' of the self, constitutes the relation to it as movement, as a transformation process: to have one's becoming uncontrollably shifted so that, in however slight a way, the one has been multiplied and fractured. By offering one's selves up to the thing's interruptive play, allowing it to toy with one's fixities, the one's continuities are risked, structural (machine-generated) connections give way to loose seemingly unmotivated juxtapositions. The self becomes a tenuous collaged collection-in-transit of temporary touchings and passings, rather than a coherent system that the previously convincing story-lines and narratives might have deduced to account for consistency of feelings, beliefs and relations. Coherence gives way to one-offs, singularities, tangential clashings, short-run re-patterning of unexpected associations.

Whatever the collection, the constituents will fail to add up to a new ‘whole’, a ‘one’ – the self becomes for the time being a play of open possibilities, of as yet unmotivated dispartes that may or may not ‘settle down’ into a new structured consistency. As a space-time ‘between’, this gap, throwing some relation out of joint, is perhaps the most pertinent effect of a transforming process. And it may be that this slide without security into an open where the one is undone marks art’s celebratory moment.

Responsive writing’s problem is how to hold itself within this openness without falling back on and into textual solutions underwritten by authorities whose constitution forbids them to have anything to do with self-dissolution; the transformative moment is entirely beyond their reach and grasp. And it may be that the ‘lesson’ of submission to transformation is that writing needs to find ways of giving in to and shaking itself out through fragmentation. Notwithstanding the moderns’ and their inheritors’ play with language’s possibilities (*‘Un coup de dés’*, Pound’s ‘Cantos’, Gysin’s and Johnson’s cut-up books, Sollers’ ‘H’, Cobbing’s sounding concretions...), writing generates, ‘lives’ by, continuity and is defined by the ways it constitutes associations through provoking little leaps across gaps (between letters, letters and words, words and lines, lines and sentences, sentences and blocks, all made possible by ‘spacing’ (in cahoots with ‘timing’) and aided by the constant intervention of punctuation marks, and so on...). Perhaps the gaps induced in the course of an art-thing’s fragmentation of our previously seemingly fixed chains of association and judgments (as in frameworks fixing the stability of the ‘personality’) may be exemplary for writing seeking to engage art-things on their terms. *Maybe the last thing would-be-art-things need is to be brought back into coherence as if their aim was a ‘being-’ or ‘becoming-at-one’ with either ‘oneself’ or a whatever else.* This may have been a dominant criterion of judgment in pre-modern response but it is no longer relevant to our experiences of would-be art-things in the wake of our moderns.

If writerly responses are to submit to the play of the things then fragmentation may be the provocative and disquieting condition of the writing, just as it is of art-making itself. Far from being a goal, narrative continuity - the development of a coherent, and thus more convincing, according to ordinary criteria of ‘rational accounting’, story about a topic – may stand in the way of attempts to show a thing’s latent transforming energies. If responding, in trying to find ways of showing the quality of its own movement by an art-thing, of showing how it provoked an un-becoming, takes the thing itself as in some way a ‘model’ (a ‘go and do thou likewise’) then there are close affinities with the practice of translation. Translating ‘literary’ texts (poems, novels, plays and so on) is premised upon a commitment to some sense of faithfulness to the original. Despite very different approaches to the demands of translation, this is a defining ethic. Thus to translate, say, a poem into a different language is to seek to put oneself in the service of the text in ways which, hopefully, allow one to follow one’s own conversion by the text. Translation requires attentive submission to the text’s moving energies, living through some of its transformative potential, and a concomitant search for the terms that might sustain this potential within the new language. This has to be done within an acknowledgment of the original text’s elusive difference, its inimitability – the recognition, thus, that translation has to begin and end with a founding sense of its own limits, that every translation is never more than the trial of one possible link in endless interpretive chains. Being borne across into the poem’s languaged ‘world’ and re-constituting this through essaying gestures of ‘equivalence’ (the hopeful offer of an attempted ‘equal-value’ by proximity rather than the re-production of a copy, of an identical experience) seems close to, if not quite a model for, the responses to art’s things that struggle to disclose an art-thing’s moving potential. In the gap between authoritative paradigms of accounting and the art-things

themselves response can thus find the display of an exemplary relation to art's things, and thus a possible ally, in the practices of translation; for the latter has to perform the most acutely reflexive of searches and re-constitutions. In the subsequent consideration of making as 'performing' I give this relation to translation an idiosyncratic twist by taking it on a detour through transliteration.

Differently reflexive, but also floating in the space-time between art-things and knowledge-conventions, are artists' own words and writings around their projects. Quite apart from the ways their things are constituted in and perform specific relations to makers' visions both of art as living traditions and of potential respondents, the enormous range of supplementary materials generated in the course of their making-life offers a further resource for responses seeking to find and hold to the specificity of each such life. Aside from, though occasionally touched by both analytical paradigms and the knowledge and belief frames of everyday life, these supplements may be approached as, in some sense, 'tactical' materials. For, while they may be texts generated within and in response to diverse situations and demands (from personal reveries/reflections, through letters and interviews, to formal public speeches and essays), they invariably address the issue of 'place' – the maker's senses of how their things might be positioned in different networks (whether art-historical, socio-cultural, political, or personal and the links between these).

Within the systems of representation which, since the advent of modernity, have ever more extensively set up the terms of our routine experiencing, would-be-artists, irrespective of medium, have had to become active participants in those systems. As literate, articulate and, by definition, reflective 'thinkers' about their own intense involvements with art, they are already important textual resources for the representing institutions themselves in the course of the latter's gathering and controlling activities. However reluctantly, makers are pulled into representation in ways which demand their textual participation. Even those who very occasionally strive for anonymity and seclusion, or, *in extremis*, opt for silence, may enhance their 'celebrity' status *in absentia* through facilitating the development of media myths about their literal absence from the scene of representation (always assuming, of course, that the actual reception of at least one of their things has established them as figures to be feted and fantasised).

Once pulled into the machine-generated and -sustained play of phantasmagoric culture, everything pertaining to a would-be-art-maker's life becomes potential material for this mythic construction. The maker is re-constructed as an entertainer-performer; life becomes a performance, any element of which may be picked out and stitched into the mythic representation. It becomes impossible to approach a maker's things outside the web of texts and images constituting this mythic construction. Boundaries between the art-thing and its outside are dissolved. The frame (culture) drifts into the thing while the thing's fragments drift out into the cultural surround. Each thing can be approached only through the figured mesh of machine-controlled representation which picks up anything it needs to keep the thing active, in play, making its small contribution to the phantasmagoria. It is the very density and complexity of such constructive work that any response trying to isolate the art-thing in its specificity is up against.

To try to respond to and write for art alone, when the thing's aloneness has been cut up and scattered across multiple sites of figuration according to the diverse demands (display, critique (aesthetic value), accounting (economic value), news (value), entertainment, education, and so on) of representing agents, may appear to be a hopeless task of

resuscitation. After all we cannot return to the moderns' passing moments of near-freedom from 'interference'. Yet without the attempt to find what it might be that still makes makers make, in hope, for that which is other-than-what-is, response will remain entirely bound to the requirements and solutions of an aestheticised culture. If would-be-art-makers still seek to secrete a gesture for otherness somehow, somewhere, within their things, while borne along by and within the permeating trajectory-defining cloud of representation, then response (and the writing that follows it) should at least try to do justice to this struggle to preserve art's difference. To make for art alone while recognising its impossibility under making's current conditions generates a troubled and paradox-laden project. It is, perhaps, precisely this trouble and its paradoxes that writing needs to pursue if it is to respond to what keeps makers going in the face of the appropriating forces that re-constitute everything they do. For what keeps such making searching for ways of surviving nearly intact, of trying to preserve Art's distressed Body, is the moderns' essential and unavoidable question of what differentiates this Body from everything else.

If, in clinging to this legacy, subsequent making-for-art across the arts has sought to turn itself into a reflexive celebration of its difference, making's moving effects for response and its writing would inevitably reverberate through writers' relations to language. To write for art (alone) would then be the performance of a kind of memorial to, a remembrance of, the ways this singular legacy had been clung to and exemplified by each particular art-thing under the most trying conditions. For aloneness is exactly what representation uses all its powers to try to rule out in gathering everything to itself. In art's case the means for this gathering is a generalised discourse of aesthetics that has been brought into play across the spectrum of cultural practices. It is operationalised universally now through the merging of all forms of 'engineering' with the aesthetics of design in the service of the calculative management of consumption. The arts, Art's Body, offer themselves as easily absorbable (because both weak and paradoxically seductive...) entities that can be rapidly assimilated, re-formed, packaged and sent on their way in the service of designer-culture's unsatisfiable needs. For a would-be-art-thing to move an attracted respondent out of this packaged overcrowded destiny and towards the acultural, it would need to both secrete and reveal something of its aloneness, to show its specificity's indebtedness to whatever might still potentially cut it off. Responsive writing might then search for ways of translating the terms on which this excision had withdrawn it from the extant frames and vocabularies of aesthetic conventions. It would face the challenge of trying to find ways of exemplifying an art-thing's disruptive interruptive effect in its own response: how to show the quality of the leap that had to be made from the everyday world into art's other. The authority of the dominant forms of writing (aesthetics as an analytics) and discourse would be set aside in the course of the writer's search for terms for translating the felt specificity.

For the response would find itself being drawn into an elsewhere where what language 'is' and 'does' are themselves in question. In their quest for the 'things' that go through and beyond our and their languages' current terms of performance (what languages are made to bear for us every day without question), the arts in and after modernity take their relation to language as making's generative question. That is, they search for ways of constituting themselves as a distinct *genus, a genus-without-precedent*. Whether from within one medium or a combination of media, art-making finds its own possibility, its opening and its closure, bound up with and to the unknowability of language. Despite the enormous range of analytic-scientific, empirical and practical researches into language as an 'object of knowledge' which, in some ways, defines modernity itself as a project, the contemporary arts insist on approaching language differently. For them, their becoming, their possible sustenance as still,

hopefully, open projects, is vested in a 'vision' (it is far more than an 'assumption' or even a 'world-view') of language as the (their) unplaceable untouchable source, that which gifts their possibility. All attempts, performed in art's name, to make towards it are ways of taking on this gifting as the unavoidable question. The very carrying through of the questioning that is the track of making, performs the hope that the reaching out for otherness embeds. Making-for-art performs and embodies the hope that it can show art's difference in its very concreteness, *its becoming just this very thing*.

And it may be (could this be art's now half-secreted wager?) that art has become, perhaps, our (but who might figure as this 'our'... could there be such a 'we' now?) last hope - though the 'perhaps' is inserted only to allow for the faint possibility of an alternative to art, despite there being no hint of any such on the horizons currently penning us in.

But hope in the face of and for what?

Perhaps in the face of those now dominant modes of 'becoming' within which our everyday lives are systematically set up and 'lived' out? What these modes face us with is an increasingly confident promise of a continuous movement, an unbroken transition from this 'present' that we (most of us for some of its time) struggle to survive, to a 'future' of no-difference, a fast-tracked evolution into sameness. Our becoming is subsumed within, shaped and destined by, a calculability working itself out, staging itself, with us in the bit-parts, as a world-information-spectacle-without-end. And we 'live' in and on its terms in the course of our utterly routine activities. Calculability's vehicle, what ensures its daily delivery of itself (and thus us) in the shape of values (materialised and figured in 'goods' and 'services') and means for assessing their application, is the now unstoppable performance of technoscience that draws everything else along in its wake. Even the groundless roguery of capitalism's insane 'spirit', which realised itself most explicitly in the epoch of modernity through its alliance with the emergent technoscience, now finds its drive for excess, for the endless production and appropriation of surplus values, partially restrained by the demands of calculability.

Though they are the very embodiment of capital's point, the global corporations responsible for its (and our) movement are now absolutely dependent upon the continuous hyper-development and pan-application of calculability in the prime effort of securing, local 'crises' and the earth's degradation notwithstanding, their own long-term survival. How we keep on becoming the same as that which we already are is thus the achievement of a technical management process now in spate. We are the managed outcome of, accepting willing (though not always unequivocally so) participants in, the constant reiteration of calculative thought across all areas of social life (the arts included). Caught up in this flow, we are now inextricably indebted to and dependent upon the infiltration and application of technoscience to all our relations to 'living'.

Life, how we form the relations between our living and its other, is now set up for us, before all 'politics' or 'ethics' as a fundamentally 'technical' question. Our forms of life are underwritten and guided, sent on their ways, within frames constructed through a technoscientific appropriation of what we regard as 'our world'. This 'world', though itself in the throes of a slow death (albeit on a time-scale beyond our everyday comprehension) is represented to, by, and for us as a world-without-end whose maintenance (the apparently permanent interval that we 'live' through) is to be assured through our now almost exclusive focus on the 'means' developed by technoscience. These means have become our only end.

As the energised means for practically effecting calculability, technoscience, with its whip-hand over capital, routinely defines the ‘what’, the ‘how’, the ‘when’, and the ‘where’ of our possibilities. The struggles of everyday life occur within parameters maintained by ordinary technoscientific practices to which all forms of thinking-doing and questioning are subordinated. And because the calculation of means can only occur to one side of ethical-political considerations its predominance carries within itself the ever-present threat of violence, violence to peoples, to cultures, to interests, to desires, to bodies, to matter. Everything is co-optable, usable... including aesthetics... *and perhaps especially aesthetics.*

For in the current epochal (an epoch that seems to do away with the potentiality of its own end) form of technoscience’s projecting – the world-infotech-spectacle – aesthetics has been precisely what it needed to incorporate and machinise to ensure its own seductive generality. To reproduce itself, the technoscientifically dependent info-spectacle³ has to find ways of making the routine consumption of a continuously transformed production an utterly seductive process, so seductive in fact that no alternatives to it can even be dreamed of. It has to reveal and represent consumption-to-excess of the everso slightly different as an unavoidable condition, the defining process, of ‘living’, of ‘life’ itself, as the most attractive and most ‘natural’ thing in (as) the ‘world’. We (every new emergent possible ‘we’...) have to be able to see and be persuaded to develop an irrecusable taste for consuming the same kind of thing over and over again as the ‘point’ of living. Every made-thing has to be made attractive through the intertwining of its performance with its sensuously apparent qualities, so that its constructed image, its representation, can draw us into its consumption. Anything that is thought to be a possible aid in the construction of the seductive images will be drawn into and out through the machinery that aestheticises consumption. This obviously includes the arts’ things both as aids to consuming other things and themselves as potential consumables, things that, irrespective of their makers’ attempts to situate them aside from consumption, can easily be transformed into consumables.

Would-be-art-things, precisely through their exploration and offer of the interplay of the sensuous, the imaginative, and the thoughtful, lend themselves to selective adaptation for and insertion into the consumptive processes. In the face of this relentless appropriation it may seem perverse to propose art as any kind of ‘hope’ at all, let alone *our* (an ‘our’ lacking any ‘we’ for the foreseeable future...), perhaps, last hope. To hope for something that ‘hopes in the face of’ is to presume, clearly, that hoping hopes for something very different from whatever it is in the face of, something now concretely unimaginable, so far beyond, aside from, us as to be almost also beyond hope’s bounds. And yet it may be that the arts’ things do manage to secrete, here and there and quite unpredictably, something that performs and thus preserves a re-animatable residuum of such a hope.

Perhaps it is this hope, only ever intricated in the concrete thing, *the discrete art-thing whose particularity hopes desperately to offer everything and nothing simultaneously as its infinite*

³ This term is, of course, indebted to Guy Debord’s development of his ‘society of the spectacle’ (1967) as now an ‘integrated spectacle’. My concern here is to emphasise the defining role of technoscience as the instrument of this integration and to explore ways in which making-toward-art’s plight is constituted precisely in the course of its relation to representation’s integrating work. See Guy Debord, ‘Comments on the Society of the Spectacle’, trans. by Malcolm Imrie, Verso, London, 1990, especially pp. 11-13 where the ‘integrated spectacle’ is introduced. It is worth noting that as a film-maker (as well as a writer and Situationist-strategist) Debord knew the workings of both art and the spectacle from the inside.

ambiguity, that generates something like a setting where the performance necessary for such intrication might just get under way - *but only in the infinitive...*⁴

a might-be-art-thing – utterly concrete in its dedicated aspiration for its difference

an unfixable aside – a slippage – hovering as the site and moment of tension between two trajectories, the one a maker's abandoned thing falling away behind and after the making, the other a possible but unanticipatable animation-to-come

this slippage reminding us of the irreconcilable difference between the two while itself performing a tangential conjunction of their outsides

this thing, marking a fault-line between the trajectories of two diverging passions that cannot coincide, will not be reconciled, nor is it the reconciler, the unifier, of the two

where the thing makes tangential contact with the outer surface of the animation-to-come it is agitated by the friction of an intense struggle between animators trying to secure the thing within and on animation's terms

this thing's fate – an either/or disappearance: either it falls away from animation's outer surface into a nameless oblivion, or it is dragged through animation's surface to disappear into the world of representation where it reappears under an alias, an allocated name, identity and an everyday life

no longer on its own the appropriated thing survives only through its insertion as an additional connector within a network of connectors comprising animation's transformer, representation's all-consuming machine

among us here now, an 'us' still only gatherable as a plurality of disconnections, animation's terms invest the thing in its endless traversing of the network with traces of power that bear no relation to the trajectory of its making

somewhere 'within', all over, throughout, the thing, ghostly reminders perhaps of the maker's brushes with an un-figurable outside, vestigial traces of patent weakness, displays of its externality to the transformer's overpowering forces

and yet, this thing, through the dormant vestigial traces, as still the powerless possibility of a simultaneous seemingly impossible double movement away – in no-time-at-all and out-of-place - towards...

⁴⁴ Does not giving making over to the infinitive stop, stall, interrupt, the lapse into tense, through a de-tensing that seeks to hold to a tension entirely its own? Let us extend Blanchot's description of literature to the performance of all the arts when he writes that Flaubert '...has only one subject... The horror of existence deprived of the world, the process through which whatever ceases to be continues to be...'. In this defining (!) ambiguity he seems to offer us making-toward-art as cessation and continuity at one with each other. See Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in 'The Work of Fire', trans. Charlotte Mandell, Stanford University, Stanford, 1995, p.334. Elsewhere Blanchot offers 'to write' as '...infinitive in which the infinite would like to play itself out even to the neuter: to write does not depend on the present and does not make it raise itself.' Rather 'to write, if it is not declined,... tends to maintain itself in a conditional without condition...'. See his exploration of to write/writing in 'The Step Not Beyond', trans. L. Nelson, State University of New York, New York, 1992, pp.53-57.

the elsewhere where making-for- art writes to become only infinitively...

to write

to split

to be carried off-and-away

to ambiguate

to infinitise

- *sustaining infinitives written across making as it waits inertly for it to take as long as...*

Such awaiting, the infinite destiny of making and its things, may seem interminable but it is already the forming and performing of its disappearance. Every making-for-art offers itself as the infinitive through which it has not yet realised itself: always unrealisable, making witnesses the failure to which Beckett riveted our attention - to fail ag