

## TO MAKE OUT UNDER REPRESENTATION: TECHNOSCIENCE AND THE TERMS OF ART'S SURVIVAL

‘A representation is a multiple reduced to the unitary. Any power is a multiple reduced to the unitary.’<sup>1</sup>

### **Making For Otherness**

Across the contemporary arts making is sustained by multiple, uncountable and felt but often unspeakable convictions. The congeries of conviction peculiar to each would-be-artist both arise from and partially constitute the individual's life-trajectory. But whatever the differentiating particulars of any one's circumstances, all are engaged in intense and continuing ‘dialogues’ with what they take ‘art’, as a possible defining site for their own living, to be. Each constructs their utterly personal sense of this site by conjoining biographical idiosyncrasies to readings of and feelings for both art-as-tradition-in-general and specific art-things. Within these orienting art-components (pointing vaguely to a ‘way of life’ for making...) the legacy of the modern arts still, though no longer emerging from present living conditions, permeates and shapes in complex and difficult to disentangle ways makers’ convictions and the ways they try to sustain them in their making activities. Contemporary culture's ‘taking’ of the arts, where and how it places and values them, although now paradoxically effected under institutional auspices absent in the emergence and heyday of the moderns’ growth, is continually under-written and thus shaped by our understandings of the moderns’ performance.

A response to its ‘moment’, as felt by the maker, the ‘point’ of the moderns’ would-be-art-thing was to put in question continuities between itself and its forebears, to effect an explicit distancing. Makers’ dialogue with preceding art obliged them to make things which forced and showed the difference between their and all past moments. This was one dimension of its ‘otherness’. But, as a realisation of the difference of each artist's ‘self’ (to be multifariously excavated under the moderns’ extrapolations from romanticism) the thing was to be ‘other’ to culture, to what the maker held in common with others as participants in a common culture. The arts’ things were to be threshold markers between culture and its absence, conduits to the a-cultural. Although modified by certain qualifications these concerns continue to surface as convictions sustaining making and preparations for entry into it. For the maker, the thing emerges from chance contacts with phenomena that are other to, not containable within, shared perceptions structuring commonsense. For the respondent to art, its potential audiences, the arts’ things offer possibilities of opening onto that which is other to and entails their suspension of the everyday experiences of the ‘willing self’.

And yet, and yet... today both this self, its experiences, and that other have been reconvened on a site very different to that on which the moderns managed so briefly to sustain their fragile project. And it is this re-gathering, of both making and the conditions under which its things become available for response, that generate the profound paradoxes and troubles now confronting making across the arts. For the hope of sustaining art's difference through subjects’ chance breakthroughs into otherness may founder on the transformation that has been wrought on Art's Body in the transition from modernity to its afterwards. Dragged ailing, fading, into the institutional clinic, the Body is operated on and monitored ceaselessly by the officially accredited (courtesy of the alliance of state, capital, and technoscience)

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Serres, ‘Genesis’, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 108.

aesthetic consultants. Subject to inner- and outer-organ transplants, skin-at-surface grafts, fluid and gaseous transfusions, multi-prosthetics, gene implants, injections and inoculations, drug regimes, logomachic therapies, weight-control diets, and strict nursing regimes, the Body slowly (so slowly we barely notice) mutates, becomes unrecognisable. It is allowed out but only on license, an endless parole, every move covered by a supervision order under the watchful eyes and words of see-see-tee-vee post-operative critique therapists on the look-out for the first signs of lapse (pro-, re-, or col-). This is the mutant with which, whether as makers or respondents, we have to come to terms. Our problems are compounded by the mutation's very incompleteness. Its re-modelling is, of course, still under way, constantly.

Necessarily lacking an identity, yet continuously re-named, slipping between pure transparency and great density according to therapeutic whim, it seems that the mutant in its very mutancy confronts us with nothing so much as uncertainty itself, its and our own becoming-confused. As would-be makers-for-art we (but who makes up a 'we' now...?) realise, haltingly, that art is no longer what it was, no longer that beautiful comfort we believed we could trust in its reassuring familiarity, but we cannot make out what it 'is', let alone whether it might still itself be trying to make out.

For isn't everything now contained inside? Isn't the whole point, the end, of the culture that now bears us along, to have everything in its sights, to frame everything within the information-spectacle that constitutes its and our everyday life? And if the latter's project is to render every 'thing' representable, as something that can be brought to book, voice and image, does not this entail the deferment, perhaps even the abolition, of otherness as other, the very 'thing' that is not-a-thing that the - *our* - moderns sought to install as the destination of their journeyings?

If the clinic manages to contain, to eliminate even, the mutant's previously enlivening drive towards otherness, does this not confront every maker who seeks to sustain something of the moderns' vision of other possibilities with the impossibility of their project? For somehow this hope for, and the promise it holds of, the other, would have to be sustained (in the face of clinical operations whose very point is to suture all ruptures and splits) by banking on the off-chance that something of, from, the Body might bleed into its, and thus culture's, outside. It would have to be held to in the realisation that the moderns, whose legacy it is, have passed away, killed at the last gasp by a strange mixture of powerful over-protection and possessive knowledge (a perverted unknowing cruelty-to-be-kind).

For has it not been the kindness and generosity of capital and state that have resurrected Art's Body, albeit as a seemingly healthy but genetically unplaceable mutant, and made it universally available through the skilled attentions and management of its clinicians? Could such strange kindness be rewarded by, does the mutant still have the heart for (or is this already an accomplished organ-transplant too far?), some obtuse and stubborn (the institutional benefactor might even see it as a perversity requiring punishment) clinging to a feeling for otherness? Could it still muster some slight will-less will in its weakness that would allow it to slip away, unnoticed perhaps, out of representation?

Makers - the charged particle-wave(r)s of Art's Body - who cling to such a hope are faced every day with the several consequences of mutation, prime amongst which, perhaps, is the merging of making's things with all other objects produced for consumption and effected by the alliance between technical knowledges and capital's promotion of a general aestheticisation of 'our' (though 'we', being the State's possessions, do not yet possess them)

living conditions. Clinging to shreds of the moderns' legacy, and especially its self-critically reflexive turn 'inwards' as the (almost?) last hope in the face of appropriation, making cannot avoid ironising itself in its hyper-conscious sensitivity to the bind in which it finds and loses itself. For it is now both within and outside the legacy, brought face to face with its limits by the reflexive turn in which it sees through to the conditions of its plight, its apparent limits under aesthetic consumption.

Where the memory of the legacy partially directs the making it induces, almost inevitably, a melancholy of uncertainty, for, by still clinging to it, it cannot quite grieve for it as a now already lost cause. Making, across the arts, continues to operate under an 'as if' where the 'magic' of the moderns works itself out as a reminder of the singular virtues of its lost moment. The melancholy of mourning is made even more complicated by the almost universal institutional (via academy, museum, mass media, state and global info-machinery) celebration of the moderns' 'heroic' achievement. Modernity's epoch is now so well represented, so well capitalised, so thoroughly mapped and brought under the control of the knowledge-machinery that it is difficult to mourn for its passing. As it (some of it...) goes from strength to strength in our culturalised memories it is hard to recognise it as the site on which the weakness of art's difference, the impotence of an art finally coming into itself-alone, was celebrated. For, thanks to the recuperation machine, it has truly lost its 'outsider', its 'stranger', its threshold, its 'innocence', status. Is it not, for makers trying to cling to the moderns' inner charge, precisely its promise of itself-alone – itself as, at last, *nothing but art*, that has been diverted and reconstituted in the course of its clinical transformation into a cultural 'good'? For, in the 'care' of the clinic's institutionally ordered hands art is anything but alone.

And if, in the face of this incorporation and its necessary (for institutional reasons) fêting of art-as-power (by association with the real power of its managers), makers still try to hold to a vision of art's fundamental impotence, its giving up of power as we know it, then the challenge of keeping this alive as art's only hope will generate forms of making that can only survive in tense and paradoxical relations with the penetrating all-enfolding power-clinic. If that which art-things are trying to perform (and thus offer to others) *as an absolute condition of their making*, is a confrontation with the 'matter' of their own impotence, then this can only be done in the light of *a recognition (via makers' reflexive turn) that all institutional involvement delivers, condemns, them to power*. Not that this necessitates avoidance of all institutional inveiglings but, rather, it may endow certain forms of suspicion, hesitation, reticence and withdrawal with primary roles in making's relation to its task.<sup>2</sup> For institutions are the only available destinations for art-things now. The arts survive institutionally. And what institutions offer and tempt with is a particular form of social success and a possibility, however short-lived, of security.

Once drawn into institutional 'life' art-things are permeated by and reconstituted through injections, suffusions, dressings and wrappings of power. Becoming-powerful is the institution's 'gift' to art-things in a culture where success is defined in terms of claims to specific kinds of symbolic and material power. But in appropriating conditions of power, social success may precisely forebode artistic 'failure', a discarding, draining away, of its possibilities of otherness. The fall, out of power into impotence, depends upon the maintenance of the possibility of privacy, of separation and isolation, as the condition for a

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in the essay already quoted, Christopher Middleton suggests that the arts, in the face of the surrounding 'Megaglitiz', 'might be due for a change of function' in which 'they could reinstate reticence as a prime cultural value'. Op. cit., p. 3.

relation with the art-thing, whether as maker or respondent. But institutional appropriation deprives the thing of this possibility. For the relation one can have with it is defined by the fully social (language) life by which the thing is made to hang on in, and on the terms of, the institution. Once gathered in, the thing cannot be left to itself. It is never again on its own.

Wherever makers seek to hold to the commitment to otherness in the face of the current real destiny of the arts' things, a certain schizoid melancholy inevitably seems to haunt the making and to infect its things. Melancholy, because the powerful terms of recuperation cannot be brooked – everything, potentially, is representable and thus powerful. Schizoid, because it is 'only human' (conventional) to be, at the least, somewhat pleased with the rewards of bestowed success (oh...if only we could free ourselves of this little pleasure...!). This is art-making's ontic trap. For it is very difficult to go on in and as weakness when it becomes all too clear that making can be consolidated, given a stable foundation, by following the terms and conditions of its appropriators and new owners.

Future-directed institutional power seeks to ensure its own continuity through trying to control, to predict and provide for the flow of its inputs and outputs. It thus requires consistency of performance and regularity of output from its suppliers (in- and out-of-house employees). Under these terms making-for-art is transformed into, made accountable as, 'production', making-for-institutional-need. Art-making is steadily re-figured as a specifically sited form of 'cultural work' and its things as 'works' of art. Entering everyday life in this mode of indifference the things are circulated through the cycles of exchange alongside and indistinguishable from all other work-derived products. With this mutation as their real destiny the fate of Art's Body, its performance and its things as offerings for otherness, hangs in the balance. And, of course, there are multiple ways (as many as there are makers...) of surviving, living with(in), the melancholic all-too-bright darkness of this precarious suspension in-between.

Necessary participation within representation generates response-tactics that, as part of the art-making, are absolutely particular to and intimately intertwined with the very 'subjectivity' risked in the making. To appreciate what making comes up against in trying to both sustain itself (that strange combination of erotics and tactics) and redeem elements of the moderns' legacy, an exploration of the relations between representation, the arts, and everyday life is necessary. If representation is our lot, is the defining condition of our living, then all the arts, whatever the specific demands of their particular media, will find that the quality of making's 'life' is itself fundamentally dependent on how its relation to representation is negotiated. Making now has to be through and through self-critically tactical. But the situationally specific tactics have to be developed out of the love for art that inaugurated the making and provoked its attempted, hoped for, affiliation with Art's Body as a still open possibility.

### **The Moderns' Fragmenting Legacy**

It may just be that the arts that have come towards us from and through modernity, precisely through their manifest plight, have at last brought us as close as we, foreseeably, are likely to get to a realisation of what art is 'for'. So proximate are we to their plight, and so closely is this plight bound up with our own fate (what we are even now falling into, beginning to see only too clearly as our seemingly unavoidable destiny), that, in opening out art's plight, we might also catch sight of what we are being turned into.

We now take the arts to be comprised of things striving to be about, to show, to perform 'essentials' about our becoming. Critical aesthetics, our education and surrounding media

have taught us as much. And we have also learned that they try to do this in their own ways, ways that, precisely, cling to their difference, make this difference their point, their main pitch.

What the modern arts ‘taught’ us, what we have already drawn and are still drawing out of them, was that art had at least (and at last?) arrived (or so they themselves thought-in-hope) at the point where they could and would be detached, sufficient unto themselves. Whatever their medium they would no longer be subservient to, under the control of something (the power of interests) outside themselves. In this supposed ‘free-state’ they could at last be ‘true’ only to the needs of art as experienced by each maker; their things would thus ‘speak’ for nothing else. In trying to hurl themselves down the path of independence and difference they immediately raised the question of how they were to be taken and responded to.

If they were made only for themselves, for their own and art’s sake, what kind of relation did they offer to non-makers? Perhaps they were constitutionally uninterested in this question? And yet, inevitably caught up in the ‘dynamics’ of socio-economic exchange, it was an always unavoidable question because, for others, art-making had always been a form of ‘work’ positioned in specific relations to the encasing machinery of production-consumption. Whatever modern makers seemed to want or claim for their independence, for others the arts were forms of work that had very specific attachments and whose products entered into cultural circulation on terms only partially influenced by the artists and the art-things themselves.

Thus, in their unsettling of these relations, their decline of the conventions of art-as-work, the modern arts became ambivalent ‘objects’ without a clear, or any, ‘destination’, let alone ‘home’. In this very ambivalence they directly provoked the question of who and what they were ‘for’. The very diversity of movements claiming distinctive making projects and overlapping in time, place and sometimes ‘members’, confounded existing structures of patronage and homogenising discourses. Audiences were small and fragmented and the institutional response limited. In other words, those who did respond to the emergent arts’ things with love, enthusiasm and interest were thrown on their own resources.

Challenged to feel-think differently about what ‘art’ might be able to offer, lacking developed discourses and institutional frames for placing and interpreting the things, willing but tentative respondents had to turn inward and explore the ways the things touched, invaded, their sensibilities while withholding the conventional rewards and pleasures of aesthetic response. Precisely by resisting the tradition’s legacy of conventions for making and responding, the things took willing respondents elsewhere by seducing them into an active participation in their own undoing.

It thus seems that when the arts sought to be nothing but themselves they generated, for however brief a period, respondents who, in their turn, had to turn to, into, nothing but themselves. In this way they both extend and bring close to its conclusion romanticism’s inner-directed project. Irrespective of medium and response-venue (public or private) the things were offered as a potential site of seduction. As love-objects, sent forth but teetering in

their isolated optimism, they were becoming strange amalgams of the abject and the erotic, becoming attractive in the very diversity of their always singular mixings.<sup>3</sup>

But as such love-objects, what they needed was the passionate but necessarily private loving response of a singular other. For they offered the occasion to the respondent, the other-as-lover, to be moved out of the binds of the quotidian into the ungrounded and unfindable space-time of their own difference. To be moved, taken over, by the thing meant turning out of culture, and thus language as we 'know' it ordinarily, into an ineffable privacy. Consumption could only ever be singular because the things' very appeal, their seductive call, was to go inwards, perhaps by trying to re-constitute for oneself something of makers' journeys out of the containing languages of selfhood.

Thus, while remaining absolutely alien, untouchable, the art-thing, paradoxically, offered itself as the possibility, however fleeting, of a melting into an '-else' that one could never 'become', reach, without it. It is 'there' precisely to take the 'one' that one inhabits routinely, out of its one-ness into the absolute privacy of what has been 'there' before the 'one'. The thing is 'for' one alone, to be entered, enjoined, as provocative facilitator of the passage into the murmuring of the one's hidden multiple. But the murmuring in its specificity is only releasable, realisable, in this way by this very thing on this occasion. If the one is lucky in love now and again such a thing takes one over and collapses one into one's absolute alone-ness (no-one else can get 'there'...). Seduced, giving up its 'will', the one can go ahead by placing its trust in, giving itself away to, the other (the art-thing). It can bear the absolute alone-ness (always temporary) into which fusion with the art-thing has withdrawn it because this trust is partially definitive of the loving relationship. The one trusts the other to, somehow, enfold the dissolved one in its care, dissolved but not abandoned.

It is, perhaps, this 'envisioning' of art as the offer of such sites which the moderns performed for us. The offer emerged in multiple ways across the arts and established its distinctive spaces seemingly by default, for at that time this essentially privatising-withdrawing project was of no significance to its contemporary dominant socio-economic institutions. Even when some of the arts' movements represented themselves in part through their political affiliations, few traces of the latter could be found as identifying markers of their things. It was as if the makers across diverse movements, whilst seeing art-making as differently bound to its cultural context, simultaneously gave making a privileged self-exemption from structural constraints. It was granted this exemplary primacy because of the ways, essential to their vision of art's possibilities, it released them from exactly those very same conventions that held other (non-art) quotidian activities firmly in place. Whatever the ideologically tinged beliefs of makers, the point of their things was to show the contingency of the languages of making and thus, by extension, of everyday life itself. Art's things were there to perform otherness to the conventions routinely productive of social meanings and order. And the hope was that, where attention was seduced, the attentive 'one' would be drawn on its own through the swirl of the art-thing's alterity into the non-proper of its privacy – precisely what defined it but which it did not own, was not its 'property'. In their random decline and

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<sup>3</sup> For an exploration of the interplay between abjection and the erotic, specifically in relation to literature, see J.Kristeva, 'Powers of Horror', Columbia University Press, New York, 1982. See also her 'Revolution in Poetic Language', Columbia University Press, New York, 1984, for an extended consideration of modern literature as the site of an 'explosion' of the objects of linguistics and the human/cultural sciences. Writing in 1988, the painter Gerhard Richter remarked the 'abject plight of art' but, linking it as ever to the maker's permanent sense of 'failure', refused to attribute it to 'social conditions'. G.Richter, 'The Daily Practice of Painting : Writings 1962-1993', Thames and Hudson, London, 1998, p. 172.

displacement art's modernisms left a fragmented legacy of glimpses-through, reminders of what the arts might still hold before themselves as their hope for their own difference.

Caught up in the rapid intermingling of the communications' revolutions and the centralisation of a technoscientifically directed and capital-underpinned production-consumption system, the modern arts were steadily absorbed into and re-aligned in the emergent institutions responsible for the constitution and distribution of those things we now gather as 'culture'. So gathered, both makers and their things were and still are subject to continuous re-constitution according to the ways they could be reconciled with and made subservient to 'work'. For work had become the taken-for-granted conduit, the site for the back and forth movement of all kinds of relations. But all these changes, within which the modern legacy was sent on its way, were and are no more than moments, however critical, in the global re-drafting of representation. And representation – how we represent ourselves and things to ourselves, how our senses are made to make sense (to mean), how our routine becoming is made to coincide with its representation – is the overarching, underpinning, all-suffusing 'means' of our (and art's) living-on now. *We survive in, as, and through representation.*

Along with everything else, art's fate turns on how we might, now, find ways of coming to terms with, perhaps now and again even escaping from, our becoming-represented. And perhaps art is uniquely 'placed', in spite of the place in which it is represented, because of the moderns' legacy which it still seeks to adopt, at least in part, as its own, to carry us to representation's limit and even effect the slightest of ruptures in its outer coverings.

### **Extreme Representation: Our Lot**

Yes, we humans suspend ourselves and are in turn suspended within and by representation. It is our extreme condition as process – how we process our condition in and as our defining difference, our becoming-conditioned to and for ourselves. It is how we condition ourselves into the becomings that we become!

Our emergence into representation, as pleistocenian becomings who could represent things and themselves to and for themselves, was, and is still endlessly affirmed as, the extremity that is our difference. Of course representation has always, from our beginnings as would-be-representers, been extreme for it is what cuts us off from creaturely becoming, from animality-as-such. Yet this split constitutes our human becoming as foundationally double: every individual as a dividual. Within representation we set ourselves forth as both embodied-becomings (still animalic, creaturely) and, simultaneously, self-representers - presencings that can turn presences into representations. Sharing the fate of creaturely embodiment, we can nevertheless represent embodiment's living presence to ourselves in ways which enable the continuous modification of its conditions of becoming (heart transplants, prosthetics, genetic modifications...). Thus the quality of representation's extremity, the particular threshold of human becoming that it stakes out, is in continual metamorphosis. The terms of representation's appearance (how it appears to us and how we thus experience it) are absolutely context-bound: they vary according to the emergent conditions of becoming that enable us to differentiate (to represent) anything, including epochs, periods, cultures, economies, selves, things, and so forth. Representation thus gathers that complex of referring-relating processes (linguaging, signing, symbolising, coding, imaging, sounding, marking, and gesturing) through which we substitute more or less fixable representations for the infinitely elusive disappearing presencings that constitute our passing

through and away. Its little prefix ‘re-’ marks the work of bringing back that it performs for us.

But what representation performs, and thus what it returns to us, in its extraction of a ‘whatever’ from the flow of becoming, is a transformation. For its excising work entails the specific temporal-spatial procedures of relating (alignment (conjunction-disjunction) and framing) in which the excised-whatevers are set forth as utterly new becomings. The latter perform their constitutive work through modes of relating that, in spite of the various claims made for the character of their relation to the vanished presencing from which they made their excisions, *bear an unknowable relation to that presencing*. Representation operates as an absolutely differentiated mode of becoming. Across all its modes it carries out its constitutive work through the spatial-temporal, and thus framed, alignment of its discrete particulars (letters, words, marks, patches, sounds, gestures, and so on). And no matter how close their alignment or conjunction, in the setting forth of a relation between particulars there is always a gap between the two or more at the ‘point’ of conjunction. Relating one ‘particle’ to another demands incessant leaping across the gap.<sup>4</sup> Every particular is surrounded by its own peculiar threshold whose complexities set the terms for how relating, as our paying of acute attention to what might be ‘going on’ as we move across these gaps and thresholds, can proceed. For what we achieve through representation is the making of a definitive break between it (and thus ourselves) and the pure continuity of natural becoming - the gapless persistence-to-infinity of presencing’s flow.

And the specific qualities of representation’s current extremity, setting the terms for all efforts to make-toward-art now, emerge precisely from the way that the power of the capital-technoscience combine have revolutionised the terms on which we experience representation. If, in modernity’s heyday, Benjamin, writing out of critical aesthetics, opened up the issue of the relation between ‘mechanical reproduction’, ‘the work of art’, and the violent politics of emergent mass cultural forms,<sup>5</sup> modernity’s subsequent info-spectacular transformation into a culture absolutely dependent on and organised around the means of electronic representation now confronts making-for-art with very different challenges. Our drift away from receding modernisms and into and under the institutional dominance of a technically self-transforming mode of representation, faces such making with peculiar and unprecedented questions. It still hopes to sustain Art’s disappearing Body through the offer and placement of its things (gests); yet it is unavoidably permeated by surrounding contextual interests and demands that are the anathema of its sustaining performance. It is the tensions generated by this plight that I am seeking to tease out here and across the texts comprising ‘Art’s Plight’.

It is, of course, language which both intra- and cross-culturally is the common form of our way through representation. For making, language’s everyday life, languaging as our way of constituting the sense-in-common of our everyday life, seems to bear the brunt of these unprecedented changes. As languaged becomings, we represent everything to ourselves and to others through language’s multi-forms. Our relating – all our relations – coincide with and ‘occur’ through and on the terms of languaging’s representation. And, as good moderns, we have learnt to ‘see’ our humanity as coincident with our possession by and of language. But in the movement through and perhaps beyond modernity, what has defined that very movement-as-historical-mutation, is a displacement. Representation has absorbed language.

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<sup>4</sup> The importance of ‘leaping’ - saltation - to making-for-art as an activity is considered subsequently at much greater length in ‘To Leap’.

<sup>5</sup> See particularly W. Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in ‘Illuminations’, Schocken, New York, 1969, pp. 217 – 251.

No longer ‘just’ one process among many, or a family of everyday processes within some ‘wider’ more inclusive ‘whole’, it is what now makes our condition possible. Nor can we treat it as subservient to a ‘One’ (to Language perhaps?) outside itself, to any overarching ‘authority’ or system for which it is itself merely the representative. Language ‘itself’ is somehow, in our absolutely taken-for-granted everyday ‘use’ of it, ‘within’ - it has become the instrument of and for - representation. Yes, representation has become, in the most immediate mundane sense, what we live by. It sets our limits – both how we go on and what goes on.

We ‘get by’ through our reliance, irrespective of ‘medium’ (visual/aural/haptic/nasal), on a process of representation that makes some ‘thing’ stand in for something else, a something else that is never graspable as such. We know now that every ‘as such’ recedes from our grasp.<sup>6</sup> Rather, *we* are representation’s ‘as such’. It has us in its grasp. It becomes us, setting us up and allowing us ‘to happen’.

Yet so ordinary is it that, like everything else, like us, it is context-bound, always ‘taking place’ under specific conditions. And, because it is our over-riding concern (for without it there could be nothing we could call ‘knowledge’), its ‘forms’ and ‘means’ (both quite inadequate terms for the enormity of what contains us, keeps us where we ‘are’) are subject to continuous modification. Living now through the an-epochal (an aeon without foreseeable end) rule of technoscience, the mutant complexity of the ‘means’ of representation defines the texture and possibilities of our routine becoming – everyday life’s commonsense. Our taken-for-granted world is in thrall to, contained in and shaped by the technoscientific practices that maintain and modify how and what we represent, how we are represented, how the making of sense is making some ‘thing’ stand in for, stand in place of, something else which we can never get to or hold.

As the overarching frameless frame within which we live out our lives, all routes into and for the arts pass by way of representation. And before we can even dream of being makers-for-art we are all responders. The possibility of making rests on our already having become, through complex forms of apprenticeship, ‘good’ or at the least ‘adequate’ (informed) respondents, audience members. We become participants in the representation of the arts and develop relations with them through our experiences, solitary and communal, as audience members. For a long time now we have all been just respondents whose relations to them are shaped by the frames of representation through which they are made available.

These frames are now ordered and controlled by the institutional machinery of a techno-aesthetics certified by state and capital. What, as potential audience members, we receive are compounds of art-processes and -things and ‘complementary’ infusing discourse-and-image complexes whose persuasive ‘point’ is to generate specific kinds of attachment between us and the arts’ things. The discourse of aesthetics, as an agent of representation, performs this persuasive work – the endless construction and maintenance of consistent patterns of response (taste...) to the arts. Contributing significantly to the wider general aestheticisation of everyday life, it is the specific mediator between the institutions responsible for generating and maintaining (fixing and placing) all the activities we gather as and around the arts. Through their stream of talk and texts, aesthetic practices send the arts on their way and

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<sup>6</sup> For provocative explorations of ‘as’ and ‘such’ and their relation to ‘whatever’ in the context of a discussion of the (possible) community-to-come, see, G. Agamben, ‘The Coming Community’, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993.

provide us with vocabularies of response and the means of positioning ourselves in relation to the arts.

### **Making's Turn Away**

But to take on the challenge of making, those who would be makers of art-things have, irrespective of medium, to effect a turn away from and, eventually, a leap out of the time-place where they received others' art-things as audience members. Suspending their attachment to aesthetics, they have to find ways of splitting to an 'elsewhere' where the processes of making re-define their relations with art's possibility. Certainly, would-be-makers remain audience members, but as respondents-in-difference. Immersion in making engenders a relation to others' art-things constituted as a ceaseless, tense, and unpredictable shuttling between very different sites. This back-and-forth movement, between extremes of attachment to (even love for and identification with) and distancing from (even rejection of or repulsion by) specific art-things, gathers whatever coherence it may retrospectively seem to possess from the struggle to shape the dedicated occasions of making. Their very relation to others' art-things challenges makers to search for and show the absolute specificity, the difference, of the thing emerging from their own making. Although 'informed', taken up, consumed (aestheticians might gloss this as 'influence' whether driven by 'anxiety' or whatever else) by a multiplicity of previous art-things, these alternations simultaneously entail suspension of the latter. Their eventual 'relevance' to the making process lies in the way they have disclosed both the possibility and the necessity of their own rejection. Inviting their own displacement they point, for makers, to empty openings, cracks, in the frame of their representation, in which they may just be elbowed aside (gently or violently), set to one side. They cannot become models for a practice-to-come and are exemplary only in their display of the particular ways they have accomplished the relation between their vaguely sensed and hinted-at penumbra of art-in-general and their own specificity.

The silent, disjointed and errant 'conversations' that partially constitute making pass by way of multiple others, including both art as a vague but possible shelter and a plurality of specific art-things. But the point of this conversational movement for would-be-makers is to arrive at junctures of disconnection where the leap<sup>7</sup> into specificity alone can occur. If accomplished, the thing's very specificity will be sufficient to provoke the question among its respondents "is this 'thing' art?", "is it an art-thing?". To sustain a fascinated ambivalence about this, for however short a time, is the mark of the thing's particularity, its difference. Hovering placelessly between all past art-things, non-art, and art-to-come, each thing seeks to provoke, in advance of aesthetic intervention and interpretation (representative mediation), this very dissolution of place. It wants, if only briefly, to slip away from, the all-embracing grasp of the most powerful valuing-placing machinery which we, without quite knowing how we've managed it, have produced. And, having produced it, and now being ourselves produced and reproduced on and in its terms, perhaps we are, belatedly, beginning to realise some of the consequences of the ways we are ensnaring ourselves... to realise, for example, that what representation seems to 'deliver' is precisely the ungraspability of self and things. In the face of this deferring of the 'real' (the 'presence' that is now 're-presented'), it may just be that art finds itself taking up the challenge of this absence.

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<sup>7</sup> Considered at length subsequently in 'To Leap'.

### Representation Puts Off

For, as process, representation holds everything at a distance; it is a deferring delaying machine. And what it puts off, forever, is ‘presence’ – the living present. What the work of representation (itself as ungraspable as the very things it keeps out of reach through the substituting that it ‘is’) seems to effect is the forfeiting of any hope or chance of holding onto and fixing, however briefly or subliminally, the ‘being’, the ‘being there, here, now’ of any ‘thing’. We have come to recognise that language, as the most explicit representative of representation, performs and is the epitome of this deferring. It delivers only stand-ins, representations. Even when put to ‘work’ as a performative (as in ‘promising’) the words whose enunciation enact the promise simultaneously refer to ‘things’ and ‘processes’ beyond themselves – they represent ‘absences’.

Yet the attempt to seize and offer the ‘moment’, the ‘living present’ in its fullness, to make the action of registering, marking, at the ‘same time’ a capturing that saves and gives that ‘moment’ back to another (another yet to come), has been intrinsic to the modern project across the arts. The aim of each thing’s specificity was to capture the difference of the moment(s) of its making, the felt-thought as ‘content’, in the hope that this (these) could be re-lived by others in and as the act of response. To make within the modern commitment meant (and this is implicit in most making-for-art still) trying to find and show the absolute difference that each ‘present moment’ made to the making itself. Across the media of art what was ‘marked’, registered, in the elements constituting each thing was the ‘value’ (as the tension of ‘living’ itself) of those marking moments. Art-making’s aim, both under modernity and in its supposed afterwards, has been to find, separate, and fix in and through its materials what distinguished the time (the conditions) of its making. The particular situated time of the making had to be excised and revealed, held up, in its specificity and ‘significance’ (more than ‘meaning’) for the maker. In so far as making was taken to be ‘expressing’ something, crucial to this ‘expression’ (the outcome of the ‘expressing’ activities) was its being beholden (true) to its registering of the ‘moment’ and process of ‘expressing’ itself.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps we look back now with a mixture of admiration and sadness-tinged nostalgia at the seeming willed bravura and contumacious audacity so manifest in the moderns’ makings. For this vision of making’s hopes and possibilities no longer seems to ‘fit’ with the ways the arts are ‘experienced’ by both makers and audiences within the trammels of the global systematics of representation.

But, no matter that the moderns’ dream of capturing ‘the present’ may have been, as it now seems to us, ‘illusory’ because always in debt to representation, we are still marked in complex ways by the radical transformations that they inaugurated. Looking back from within the mutating machinery of contemporary representation, we ‘know’ now that our own unending re-constitution of both the past’s ‘significance’ (modernity’s included) and the unfixability of ‘the (our, any) present’, being simultaneously ‘wave’ and ‘particle’ (thing and movement, structure and process...), cuts us off unequivocally from the moderns’ ‘vision’. We appreciate that how we take their things, how we feel for and respond to them as our still relatively immediate ancestors, can have little overlap with their significance for their makers and audiences at the time-place of their emergence. Nevertheless the moderns’ ‘vision’, which generated such an extraordinary diversity of things-for-art, *as a practical claim about art’s possibility in relation to cultural ‘life’*, is now deeply but ambiguously imprinted, coded perhaps, into the ways we prepare for both making and responding across the arts. Culturally,

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<sup>8</sup> It may be that it is now precisely the rhetoric of ‘expression’ that is at issue for art-making. I take up this issue shortly.

aesthetically (*that is, institutionally...*), we celebrate the moderns whilst remaining deeply ambivalent about the possible relevance of their makings to the ways making itself is to be approached now under the radically transformed terms of everyday life, a 'life' set to work under the technics of representation.

No matter how hard we have tried to adapt the moderns' legacy in the arts to the current terms for living, we can neither isolate and hold on to the 'presence' of the things and processes constituting our worlds nor be fully 'present' to ourselves.<sup>9</sup> We understand this inchoately even though we may not be able to 'explain' it adequately to ourselves in the course of our everyday lives. We are condemned, we condemn ourselves, to representation. *Something is standing in for us – that much we recognise – that re-replaces us.* And the trouble is (this is our predicament) that our very recognition is entirely dependent upon that which stands in for us. So brilliant have we become at representing 'everything' (everything is turned into a representable 'something', ourselves, 'naturally' (this naturalisation is at the very heart of the 'ordinary') included) that we simply cannot recognise this self-condemnation as a failure, as true deprivation. Under the post-enlightenment legacy of a now hyper-developed technoscientific world-vision, within which everything is set up and sent on its way, our endless destiny is to 'live', through representation, at a distance (absolutely incalculable) from, always only proximate to, 'ourselves' and things'. Following Debord, Agamben emphasises this distancing effect of the now 'immense accumulation of spectacles, in which all that was directly lived is distanced in a representation'.<sup>10</sup> And of course we accomplish this distancing everyday (it is what makes up our 'everyday'...) with absolute aplomb and, mostly, without a second thought. Living becomes living-at-one-remove from any 'itself' that might have some kind of 'presence', 'presence' to and for itself.

### Charging Technoscience

We cannot avoid being agents, delegates, of representation, for the very possibility of relation, of how we relate to 'things', 'others', and self depends upon it. Within our current frame of technoscience, representation is practically worked out through calculative thought.<sup>11</sup> We appropriate 'our' world (precisely as just such 'a world' waiting to be appropriated) through the ever more complex machinery (including language, the many modes of which are explored alternatively across the arts, treated as a machine) developed in the application of calculative thought to 'problems' of living. Irrespective of how it is subdivided, split-up, or classified (according to spheres such as the economic, the political, the familial, the religious, the aesthetic, and so on), living, everyday life, under the 'integrated

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<sup>9</sup> Eschewing both 'representation' and 'presence' now, making-for-art perhaps seeks to situate itself in an in-between-zone aside from both an ontology of 'being' and Language-as-limit. It seems to be proceeding as an unfixable plural 'becoming as metamorphosis without end'. Thus when the poet Yves Bonnefoy counters the dominance of the Language-as-representing-limit metaphor by insisting on the primacy of the art-thing's 'presence', we might take this as an affirmation of the maker's hope that the thing can only become what it 'is' in and as the 'presencing' of something in advance of Language. See his superb 'Giacometti', Flammarion, Paris, 1991; 'The Act and the Place of Poetry', University of Chicago, Chicago, 1989; and 'The Lure and the Truth of Painting', University of Chicago, Chicago, 1995. I develop this in several of the later texts through offering 'making-for-art's' 'becoming' as a process of 'transliteration' whose gest emerges as 'not-quite-a-language'. The art-thing's endless 'becoming' is also touched on in the text 'To Sound Out Music...' through consideration of Messiaen's sense of the musical performance's relation to 'eternity'.

<sup>10</sup> See G. Agamben, 'The Coming Community', University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>11</sup> All subsequent reference to the 'calculative' draws on my response to Heidegger's interpretation of our 'ontological' plight. See in particular, M. Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', Harper, New York, 1977; 'Poetry, Language, Thought', Harper, New York, 1971; 'On the Way to Language', Harper, New York, 1971, especially the chapter 'The Nature of Language'.

spectacle'<sup>12</sup>, is set up, represented as a 'problem' which is always potentially amenable to solution by the practical application of calculation. In this practical application the aim is always to bring every 'thing' under the rule of work.

The always temporary solutions (for-the-nonce) arise and fall away through work. The 'world', 'life', is first of all something to be worked at. But for this work to get under way and become a seemingly self-generating dynamic, life's things, life-as-thing, represented as an objectively identifiable (some day...) 'process', must be brought into representation. The more expansive work becomes the greater the span of representation's rule over the quotidian. In their mutual enhancement, representation and work, through their fusion and structuring of our most routine practices, shape everyday life and the possibilities of our routine becoming. Life becomes some 'thing' to be worked at. And the possibilities are always situated, always 'somewhere', but the specific 'some' of every 'where' that we call a 'place' only comes about through representing work. We only 'have' specific 'places' through the representing work that makes a place 'take place'. We can constitute 'subjects' (us), events, relations, processes, as 'taking place' only through the exorbitant work of representation so that, in just getting by, we, perforce, have to take it utterly for granted: we are so 'close' to representation, so whelmed by it in the course of our being set up and sent on our way through it, that, as it provides the means of our 'seeing' and 'recognising' anything, *seeing through it we do not SEE IT*.

No place without representation – No representation without work – No unsituated work ....

Sent on its way, this is the spiralling of our plighted becoming, how we are sending ourselves on our way endlessly but now in thrall to the all-too-situated machinery of representation which we have worked so hard to construct, maintain, and complexify. Not that we can be(-come) anywhere, anything, else for the time being, for this is how we are working ourselves out (working ourselves to death) on behalf of nothing other than this very working out. For it (representation as we now 'live' it, 'sur-vive' it) enables us only to go on representing and be represented. Whether it contains the seed-terms of its own metastasis, and thus its eventual transformation, can remain an open question, though one that is still only frameable within the very terms of representation itself.

If, in the (our) mean-time, in this interval-without-foreseeable-end, art's plight is our concern, then we may need to attend to the implications for art-ing and its things of being constructed, constricted, and dragged along within representation's traction machine. In this attending we already seem to be finding it increasingly difficult to incorporate what we have taken from the legacies of the arts' moderns into making's continuing and continuously reflexive projects. Nevertheless, for an arts-wide making tinged with and inflected by the ways the modern movements are represented, certain questions seem unavoidable.

If under the weight of the moderns' influence, the requirement is to make something singularly disjunctive in relation to 'tradition' (all the arts of 'yesterday'), how can the unbidden and irrecusable drive of a maker-in-hope engage with, contest, that which frames all 'traditions', that which allows us to 'recognise' tradition in the first place? Is the contestatory model for making - disjunctive singularity - relevant and sustainable under representation? For the representing machinery is what has already set up and holds in front of us as an attainable goal both the possibility of 'art' and the terms on which any hoped-for

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the 'integrated spectacle' see, G. Debord, Op. cit.

art-thing might be recognised ‘as such’. A would-be-maker can only approach art, come to see it as a potential site for her or his making, through making within representation’s terms. Representation is not like a ‘tradition’, it is the possibility of there being some ‘thing’ describable and recognisable as a ‘tradition’ at all.

And yet representing is always particular. It sends things on as things over-there only through absolutely specific conditions of formation. Currently, in modernity’s afterwards, working itself out through the technoscientific integration of representation, this specificity is the organisation of the relations of everyday life by a capitalist consumptive-production machine. The routine operations through which this social form reproduces itself are managed through the application of calculation (means-ends schema) to the representation of every ‘area’ of social life. Politics and economics merge, become indistinguishable, in the co-operative relations of large-scale organisations (bureaucracies). But the crucial enabler, director and mediator of their self-regeneration and mutation, is the ‘third-force’ embedded in them, dependent upon them for resources *but quite beyond their control – technoscience*.

It is through technoscience that representation is now given the specific forms and processes of its means: a global machinery for the conversion of everything into machine-readable and instantly transmittable exchangeable ‘information’. ‘Information’ is now much more than it has ever been: information is whatever (everything) can be represented in a transmittable digitised code. And everything we include within representation (all ‘human’ senses – aural, visual, tactile, nasal...) is so codable and, through simulation, can be made virtually available. Because the arts too span the range of ‘human sensibilities’, the ability of the machinery of representation to map itself onto and ‘represent’ art-making and its things is patent and unavoidable for would-be-makers. Wherever we are ‘within’ representing, this machinery is ‘there’ too, working itself out. It both overarches us as a ‘protective’ umbrella and courses through us as the shape-director of the flow of what we generate as ‘meaning’.

Politico-economics, the construction of ‘power’ through the interweaving, the confusion, of the means of holding some sort of balance between value and violence with work as the mediator, is entirely dependent on but cannot control what ‘comes out’ of the commitment to and investment in technoscience. Because the latter is the epitome, the extreme ‘info-point’, of means-directed work and is impervious to, takes no account of, ‘ends’ (values), it is precisely the dissolution of all value. Wherever (everywhere...) values are thrown into disarray by the depredations of technoscience (the de- and re-constitution of everything according to the requirements of ‘technical’ (means) inquiry and construction), the bases and constituents (ordinary ‘valuing’) of economic and political arrangements (everyday life) are dissolved, become untouchable, ungraspable, utterly elusive. And, being beyond value, technoscience is constitutionally speechless about the substitution of alternatives. As the conglomerate with which we are all in collusion, through its machinising of the means of representation, technoscience begins before and ends its work way beyond the very things which we take the means of our political representation (in, for example, the ‘representative democracies’) to be ‘all about’.

Our existing forms and systems of political representation find themselves (and thus lose themselves, lose their ‘reason’, their ‘point’) brought under the control of the global representing machine. What we think of as ‘political power’ is displaced, itself becomes subservient to the machine’s requirements as the latter turns political representation inside out. Our relation to the taken-for-granted routines of political representation are henceforth

framed within, constituted by, the representation of politics. If representative politics is in crisis (it is, isn't it...?), it is because it is no longer the site where what power 'is' is decided upon, worked out and effected. The power that used to define and partially, though never obviously completely, belong to the institutions of political representation (and via them to (some of) 'the people'), has been displaced by new forms of power about which it can do nothing and to which it is subservient. It is forced to become a bit-player, an inadequate actor, in the performance of politics-as-theatre. For technoscience, as the name for what informs and enables our routine ways of becoming (how we move, are planed, through 'life' as a representable thing-process), now constitutes our only source, our measure, of what we take our 'potential' (the capacity of our latent possibilities) to be. Courtesy of technoscience we are represented as very different 'things' (we are no longer 'beings' or 'becomings' for technoscience...), things whose potential is a mutable manipulable X that must be subjected to permanent and continuous re-constitution according to technoscience's calculatively guided experimental work. The struggle over value(s), ends, as the object of the politics of representation, is simply by-passed, set aside, under technoscience's rule as an irrelevance to the endless calculative assessment of means. For what technoscientific representation shows us to 'be', potentially, is always a potency-in-waiting, a bundle of latent energy, all of whose possibilities are or will be subject initially to calculation and subsequently to change by experimental manipulation. Henceforth, at any point in time for technoscience we are no more than the calculative potentials that its current investigations can represent.

### **Saltation in the 'After-World' of Becoming-Electronically**

And is not this 'our world' now, a world undoing itself-as-world? Capitalised technoscience, seeking to enact its own continual ex-orbitance, goes endlessly beyond itself; it unravels its orbiting through the supposed 'worldliness' of its current (and current-dependent...) de-worlding, its 'out-of-this-world' means. This is the 'after-world' whose machined attempt to contain and dispose of everything (to make every 'thing' representable and thus functional) forever displaces and defers any sense of there being, let alone of us inhabiting, 'a world'. This 'here', this 'now', is where we are appropriated as 'subjects' through the by now absolutely unworldly machinery of general representation. And this machinery's current extreme mode thus engineers our routine becoming (necessarily including art's becoming), through the fusing of the means to socio-economic-political (and thus military (an endless *anabasis*...)) power ('might'...) with the control of specific forms of energy-generation. The maintenance of modernity's productive-consumptive drive is absolutely dependent on the extraction and conversion of materials into the controlled distribution of an unceasing flow of electricity.

*Modernity's calculative mode of becoming is now through-and-through electronic; its survival depends on the production of 'power' (including the controlled heat-light-power that enables - courses through and drives - 'social power') through the conversion and exhaustion of 'natural' resources into the strictly monitored and limited current-flow. We know from the occasional interruptions of this flow just what the 'extreme' consequences would be of any more radical cessation.*

This is the inescapable circumstance that encases making's self-disculturing leap-towards-Art's-Body. It enables making to generate and offer its things as the outcomes of its leap-aligning activities. Coming out of and being delivered through this circumstance, they are de-defined, given their severely limited 'limitlessness', by it. They can neither get out of their entanglement nor avoid the recognition, however disconcerting, that, *in their very appearing, they are condemned to their impregnation by and containment within the means and terms through which power is effected.* Swept up in and borne along within its material-social flows, they, just like all of us,

come to pass and pass away on its terms. For it is the circumstance that sets up the conditions of our everyday passage, and that leaves its multiple hidden marks written throughout our embodied becomings as the elemental but everyday traces of ‘all our dates’.<sup>13</sup> Performers may still be able to chorus Walt Whitman’s,

‘I sing the body electric,’<sup>14</sup>

though they now recognise and experience the potential of their charged bodies in very different ways to that celebrated by Whitman as the then emerging body of a still nascent modernity. And what this difference sets up is the challenge to performing to explore, as a necessary engagement of the all too real conditions of its own embodiment, *the ways that electricity’s flow imposes itself on and pervades performing’s decreative turn back through its resourcings*. For what its gests seek to expose, and thus to partially detach themselves from, is precisely what both charges it and simultaneously holds it back and directs it along ‘lines’ not of its own choosing. Offering itself as the epitome of weakness means, at the very least, acknowledging, in the crystallised compressed syntactics of its gest’s alignments, its own dependence on ‘things’ whose ‘effects’ it can do little to avoid if it is to have any chance of even minimal exposure. Part of its self-exposure may thus entail finding-inventing the singular transliterative terms to figure how technical-calculative modes of representation enter unbeknownst into and re-structure perceiving and language themselves.

And now that bio-power (for example, the knowledges and modes of manipulation of life-processes generated in genetic research) is absolutely intertwined with electronics through both research machinery (not least via the speeds and computational ‘powers’ of information processing) and shared stances towards knowledge-conceptualisation and -production, it is clear that the limited model of power around which modernity cohered has been shattered. It has been displaced by the emergence of technoscience as an open and partially independent field of operations with its own dynamic of change (including occasional paradigm revolutions) and shifting relations (mergings, multiplyings) between specialist knowledges. Nominally subservient through its funding sources to ‘external’ functional requirements (the surrounding dynamic of production-consumption), it maintains a finally unchallengeable independence through the unbridgeable gap between its esoteric knowledges and research machinery (the specialist discourses and materialising practices constituting its ‘objects of knowledge’), and the everyday world of conventional struggles over the ‘power’ to control function and application.

And, like everyday life itself (including the ‘political’ institutions that would like to control the technoscientific practices that they themselves partially fund), making-for-art finds itself the enforced recipient of the productive dynamic imposed (on bodies, on relations) by the collusion between the institutions of technoscience and capital. Within this order of calculation-beyond-control there is little opportunity for either avoidance or detachment. What is made to count, precisely through the intimate ties between technoscience and the all-too immediate and practical means of representation, is the dynamic itself as the culture’s prime and untouchable value - the always unpredictable motion of productive-consumptive innovation through the application of technically generated knowledges. This movement, using aestheticisation as its means of making its knowledges functionally attractive, embraces and takes over every domain

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<sup>13</sup> Some of the implications of Paul Celan’s ‘all our dates’ are considered across other texts in the sequence.

<sup>14</sup> Walt Whitman, ‘Leaves of Grass (1) & Democratic Vistas’, Dent and Sons, London, 1925, p. 80. Silliman subverts and re-directs Whitman’s line elsewhere: ‘I sing the body eccentric’, Silliman, *op. cit.*, p. 155. To which technoscience might append ‘I sing the body eclectic’, thus seeking to subsume the Whitman/Silliman combine under its conclusive control. While making’s ‘embodying’ might be taken as seeking a fusion of the electric-eccentric-eclectic in its singular gests as idiosyncratically subversive anticipatory visions of Art’s Body ‘over there’.

of everyday life (political, economic, cultural) as its way of shaping, of designing and representing, the movement of representation itself.

But, irrespective of domain, *the movement-complex's very possibility is absolutely dependent on the maintenance of electronic flow*. Such flowing is the enabling shaper of contemporary empowerment. It sets up and sends forth through the machinery of general representation the very conditions of our relating (to whatever). Power, access to it and its control, is absolutely bound to the terms on which this flow is generated and maintained. And art, along with all other regions of becoming and in spite of its driven elsewhere-charge, is utterly dependent upon this co-relation, *this operational contract*, between power's modes and means of flowing-through, of disposing of everything. There is nowhere else for it to go, for all destinations and the ways towards them are held fast, sent on their ways, in this movement. *All that performing can do in response to its plight is to explore how it might turn, might itself flow, back through the flow which sends it on its way and divert it (and thus itself) ever so slightly*. By making the flow vibrate slightly differently, by effecting subliminal interruptions, quasi-trans-ischaeamic attacks, on power's movements, it may still be able to gesture beyond its (and our) defining circumstance. This is the challenge it faces in coming to terms with the bareness of its available 'means' – how to align its 'own' materialised waved elements in a singular syntactics that might, just momentarily in its passing through, disperse, dissolve, something of the 'given' constituting the flow's orders.

*What we are confronting here is nothing other than the fate of our and making-for-art's 'energy'. Maintenance of the energy that we re-coup and expend without end right up to the end, the energy whose energising flowing is the signal marker of our embodied Life-as-Potential, is, in the now global occident, utterly dependent upon the taken-for-granted instant availability of a fixed current. This is the flowing groundless ground on which everything social-cultural-political-economic-scientific seeks to stand and balance itself precariously. It is the placeless perimeter under, over, and around us hemming us in. Capitalised technoscience silently rests its unspeakable case on this flow's permanent return.*

Derivation and provision of this flow, the organisation and control of electronic power, defines technoscience's mastery over its only 'end' - productive-consumption's attempted guarantee of more of the same: the repetition, enacted by the very flow of electricity itself, is there to ensure the continual return-without-end of the cycle of productive-consumption.

Under the electronic aeon something is being returned to us without end, something that has the semblance of the aeon's defining 'mark', its distinguishing 'product': what returns is the sameness of continuity. Through its relation to 'energy', technoscience seems to grant us the constancy of endless continuity. It is its form of the Eternal Return. It is no longer just a matter of 'keeping the home fires burning' but of meshing the globe, containing it, in and on the terms of info-representation's flowing ceaselessness. Everything (how we 'live', sur-vive) now depends on the constancy of this flow as the return of the same. The exactness and precision of energy's controlled surging enables our passage along the paths of whatever-code. It 'gifts' us, at exorbitant cost, our surfacing whose prime feature, that which it bears, is reiteration.<sup>15</sup> Techno-representation promises and delivers the semblance of infinite reiteration. It seems that

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<sup>15</sup> Obviously the question of repetition/reproduction, as making's 'condition' now, is addressed frequently across many of the texts of 'Art's Plight', but in a brief case-study I consider some of its specific consequences for music-making's relation to 'recording' in 'To Sound Out Music's...'. I seek to open the question there of what it is that is being 'returned' to us in any reproduction.

we can now repeat ourselves (with cloning as our generic case) as much as we like, at least for the time being...

Such is our 'sophistication' now that we have added a superior 'level' of transforming repetition to the process through building into it the generalised coding-forms of digitisation. As I propose across these texts this changes everything! Electricity's flow of power simultaneously doubles as information. Power's energy flow is representation at work. Converted instantly into 'information' it mediates the means of control for all sites and functions of the productive-consumptive apparatus - the institutionalised work-leisure dynamic.

Does this controlled provision mark precisely the site where the energies that drive making-for-art meet their greatest challenge? Does not the quest to make toward Art's Body - its being 'other' to, the beyond of, productive-consumption's everydayness - demand that making performs a conjunctive-disjunction as it takes on the forms, relations, languages, and matters that seem to sustain our everydayness? Surely making's 'meridian' (think Celan...), its journey through, around and out of culture, with its necessary leaping away<sup>16</sup>, is prey to and under the sway of 'other' senses of 'energy' than the controlled flow of electronic repetition? Do not making-for-art's idiosyncratic alignments betoken a different relation to the life-defining energies that sustain makers' embodied becoming?

If art requires the suspension of work-as-we-know-it and its displacement by something other-than-work (via makers' reception of 'givens', decreative undoings, chance interventions, reverie, lassitude, synaesthetic in-betweens, paronomasia, and so forth...), then its relation to energising, and thus to its embodied sourcing, will not be reconcilable with the pathways of technoscience's calculative means. Somehow, in the very course of engaging with the electronic flows organising everyday life, making-for-art has to be simultaneously fragmenting, splitting, and re-directing such flows into multiple elsewheres... Like all of us, immersed within and suffused by the waved operations of what Berardi calls semio-capitalism's 'techno-linguistic automatism'<sup>17</sup>, making-for-art heeds the elsewhere-call of Art's Body and offers its performing and gestic as displays of a different relation to 'energy'. Its exploration of embodiment's sensuous potential on the trail of 'otherness' always entails a suspension and an undoing of, a leaping away from, the language-machinery (now digital-virtual rather than paper-voice) that rules the info-spectacle's everyday life. In the cause of 'art', desiring's multi-directional energy-drives are assembled around the scattering of this machinery's orders both from within and without. Responding to the Body's summons, making's self-energising makes its way outward through whatever multiple sensings the call draws it. This is where making-for-art somehow has to find ways of making its projects coincide with what Sollers, writing of 'Desire', calls the 'absence of limits, the interminable and irresponsible energy without opposites which must be diverted and directed by every society'.<sup>18</sup> For the whole point of society's production of a controlled flow of electronic energy is precisely to set it up its power as the perfect opposite of and answer to Desire. Whereas making's distant but unachievable 'point' is to celebrate Sollers' 'Desire' through singular gestic that, leaping away from calculation, seek to align themselves with Art's Body. And here Blanchot offers us 'un-power' quite aside from 'Power in the broadest sense - capacity, ability... *Macht* is the means, the machine, the functioning of the possible.' In contrast un-power 'belongs to the outside'. Writing, making-for-art, declines this *macht* through its 'lassitude' before words. This lassitude is 'the desire for words separated from each other - with their power, which is meaning, broken, and their composition too, which is syntax or the

<sup>16</sup> For further discussion of making-toward-art as necessitating a 'leap' see the text 'To Leap'.

<sup>17</sup> Franco Berardi, 'The Uprising : On Poetry and Finance', semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2012, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Philippe Sollers, 'Writing and the Experience of Limits', Columbia University, New York, 1983, p.47.

system's continuity (provided the system be in some way complete in advance and the present a *fait accompli*).<sup>19</sup> Is not this *fait accompli* precisely the present where we already 'are'?

Of the various dimensions and orders through which energy-power is made to flow under techno-capitalism none is more fundamental to the routine 'unified' functioning of planetary becoming than the global electronic coordination of clock-time. Our 'present', and thus all representation, is de-fined in the calculative work that treats 'our', indeed all, 'passing' as a quantity, infinitely sub-dividable-measurable, of a common time. Yet isn't this imposed 'shared' time the very 'thing' that each of the arts dissolves, but differently, in the materialisation of its own medium/media-specific alignments? *For what is at stake for performing in its gest-generation is to find a way of offering the possibility of an interval within which the immeasurability of passing can be exposed and experienced.* The strange singularity of this interval is dependent upon the ways that the syncopated rhythming of a gest's alignments withdraw the engaged respondent-as-subject from the timed orders maintaining its unification as this very subject. Making's 'point' (instant...) is to drive us out of everyday-clock-time into an incalculable elsewhere, with 'music' being the exemplary interval of such difference.

Attention's absorption carries the subject (performer and respondent-as-performer) out of 'itself' and out of the tenses that are the order of the day. The attention-payer, in under-going de-subjection by the gest's syntactics, is required to leap by the gest's alignments into the drift of an elsewhere unknown to and unfixable by the coordinates of time-space. It is a collaborative drifting in which the drifter is held up, borne along, through multiply intertwined but immiscible flows. And because this intertwining continually entails an engaged reliance upon and the exploration of memory (its 'contents' and processes, both voluntary and involuntary), the remains of what has passed become the fluid resources that define and shape both performing's alignments and the responses they elicit. But it is a relation to re-memoration in which clock-time, the time of historicising and its modes of knowledge with their reliance on measurement and the equal intervals of periodicity, has been suspended.

If Rimbaud proposed art-making under modernity as the paradoxical performance of a reasoned deranging of the senses, it was a deranging, *a dementing*, whose staggered leaps nevertheless had to rely absolutely on memory's strange facilities. Performing's possibility within each medium or combined media rests on the ways it confronts and seeks to make its singular way through the languages of the gests for which it is both legatee and caring (touched) renewer. These are the languages through whose re-memoration it turns unceasingly in the course of its aligning. It is its loving rememoration that drives its attempts to resuscitate Art's Body. The defining condition of the 'reason' engaged in the deranging has to be the near-free-floating fluidity of its language-remembrance out of which the conjunctive-disjunctions of its alignments emerge. Without this endlessly renewed coursing through the possibilities offered by its remembered language(s) no performing recognisable as a making-toward-art would be possible.

We have seen the consequences for art-making of radical memory loss and the most literal dementing in de Kooning's very late paintings which were made when he was already suffering from dementia/Alzheimer's disease. In these remarkable and strange 'works' (they were no longer gests-for-art but were generated under other compulsions, including, possibly, the therapeutic-research interests of observers) the fragmentary shapes he painted appear as

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<sup>19</sup> Maurice Blanchot, 'The Writing of the Disaster', trans. A. Smock, University of Nebraska, London, 1986, pp.8-9.

both isolated and rigidly formalised echoes of gestural marks he might, years earlier, have integrated into the surface of a singular painting. Faced with a blank canvas, the obliteration from his memory of both painting as a languaging resource and his 'vision' of art as that which he had to make-towards left him with nothing but a kind of elementary haptic 'know-how' (still lodged perhaps somewhere in the neuro-musculature) that generated his schematic fragments. It is thus surely indubitable that rememoration is intrinsic to performing under art's demand. The constancy of rememoration, remembering as ever-present in art-making, is what the latter celebrates in its 'knowing' undoing, its decreative dementing, of its 'own' facilities. In this way the heightened cultivation and accentuation of rememoration is what making lives by. But it is a living, a passing through, that occurs through leaps beyond measure or comprehension and whose very point is the avoidance of time, of the historical work in and through which we lodge and lock our knowledges of the past.

Perhaps, then, it is the ways in which the drive to make-for-art comes to terms with this defining resource – the intertwining of memory and language in an attempt to expose nothing but art - that is the key circumstance enclosing the question of art's relation to waste and wasting (explored further in the text 'To Risk'). For if, as I shall suggest, making-for-art is essentially tied to a wasting-without-end that keeps it in a permanent tension with its surrounding culture, then the most profound site of this wasting may be that of the measured clock-time which, under productive consumption, becomes the place where value (and thus identity) is allocated and fixed. A condition of making-for-art is the necessary wait for 'something' to 'emerge'. Art-making has to waste time because it doesn't know when (or where, or even if,) the 'things' a gest 'needs' will break through the ordered surface of everyday reasoning. It is dependent upon chance and the 'accidental'. As it lives through this 'wasting' out of an irrecusable desire for art, then 'wasting' is precisely what it is exploring and celebrating. But it can only do this by suspending, by casting itself outside of, the global clock-time which rules everyday life and its programming, the time which represents us and which we take as the enabling measure for assessing the value of our passing away. Making can thus only be represented as 'a waste of time' from within a tacit acceptance of clock-time as an ontological 'given', as essential to the 'grounding' of our (and art's) becoming. And this, of course, is exactly what making disputes and seeks to distance itself from in the course of its making towards art's elsewhere-elsewhen.

Under late-technoscientised modernity, ever more dependent upon the exigency of converting the present into its representation, this is the very time whose measurement now seems infinitely divisible into ever-smaller calibrations through the efficacy of electronic power, a power that is defined by the speeds at which its own transfer can be effected and represented. With their apogee in the speed of waved light, electronics' 'inhuman' speeds may seem to mime the no-time-at-all of the leaps through which many of art's 'materials' make their appearance (and disappearance) in making's course (involuntary memoration being a key exemplar). Yet, under the rule of calculative measurement, they remain absolutely bound by and to, are operated within, clock-time. Clock-time and the socially organised speeds ordained under its authority, its frame, are a defining circumstance of, making-for-art.

### **Technoscience's Challenge to Art's Alterity Drive**

Yet, despite the moderns' various dalliances with aspects of the optimistic enlightenment world-view that is the precursor of our technoscience, art-as-project, far from identifying itself with the latter, congregates elsewhere – on the site of alterity. Underwriting the moderns' 'vision' across the arts was the drive to become-other, to perform otherness, to stand-for (and here is the inevitable entanglement with representation) that which is other-to-what-is. While the responding discourses (critical aesthetics), living under the rule of

permanent interpretation, thus placed and judged art's things by connecting them to what was 'outside' them (biography, society, ideas, thought... - 'meaning'), the makers were committed to making things that could not be reconciled with the encasing realities. Making's entire 'point' was to show, to enact, perform, the difference between things-for-art and everything else. Whatever its 'languages' might be deemed to be doing they were not participants in the work of representation through which the quotidian orders were displayed and maintained. In trying to show the qualities of their relation to the 'moment' of making they were precisely eschewing, casting themselves adrift from, representation.

Making-for-art sought to engage 'culture' (everyday life) only by insisting upon its difference to that culture. It performed for other possibilities of perceiving-feeling-relating to those constituting 'modern' social life. The hope embedded in the makings was that respondents, audiences, might, precisely, be drawn out of those ordering conventions and towards not-yet, no-where, sites that were art's alone. And, by suspending, circumventing, and playing with existing mediating languages of everyday usage, this 'vision' established itself temporarily as a radical displacement of representation. But this was still the pre-global-digitised representation as the relatively stable bearer, across the sites of language, of tradition, tradition as an almost coherent and consistently transmittable 'body' of meaning practices. It was, of course, the drive of modernity itself to which the modern arts made signal contributions exactly in their pledge to show that which is other-than-what-is. And their persistence in this project was soon to upend any idea (still desperately maintained by aesthetics) that there could be a coherent, 'singular', 'tradition' for transmission. The moderns inaugurated the fragmentation that ensured that, in spite of the systematic gathering of increasingly institutionalised aesthetics, there was no 'body' simply 'there' for forwarding. They ensured that Art's Body, already beyond representation, could only from then on, be a 'body-in-question', a necessarily dissolving 'body' lacking any containing skin, at odds with itself and the encasing culture.

Technoscience's emergence, out of modernity's tumultuous conflicts (life-and-death as well as theoretico-aesthetico-practical), as the dominant 'means' through which calculation would both revolutionise representation and construct its operative machinery, marked the transition to a different 'world'. Or, rather, it marked the dissolution of what, via tradition, some 'we' (an assumed collective with a common vision and concern) still seemed to be able to regard as 'its world', and the move into a 'worldlessness' (wilder-ness...), an unboundaryable de-centred expanding-contracting-disappearing region. It is a barely-region without, despite our still remaining earthbound, 'ground' or frame other than that set up within the calculative machinery of representation. If this is 'where' we are now (a 'we' gatherable only in the grammatical fiction of an object - 'us' - as technoscience's target, and a 'where' unplaceable according to any of the coordinates delivered by tradition), then the arts, inevitably caught fast in the representing machine, stand in a troubled relation to their defining commitment to alterity, to be on the way towards other-than-what-is. For 'what-is' is now subsumed absolutely within the means of representation. How can any 'one' be 'other', make things that perform otherness (to representation), when the very possibility of 'one's' appearing at all, of finding or making a 'place' for oneself is already a condition of representation? The very possibility of 'place' is under the grant of representation.

And the arts' things are, along with everything else, brought into the 'place' arranged for them, however unobtrusively and unnoticed, within the organisationally maintained textures of machine-ground 'meaning'. Places are granted according to the machine's needs which thus already enfold, hem in, the arts' plight, including their projected stabs at alterity. At least

the scale of the challenge to any art-making that seeks to hold to elements of the moderns' commitment to self-displacement, becomes increasingly explicit. The question which might be said to drive this commitment turns around the aim to make things which try to perform a self-excision, a cutting-out of their own difference in order to lie, abjectly, beyond representation's edge as off-cuts, fragments, from no recognisable whole.

Because representation drafts all things into its service and applies them by directing them through its classifying series, it works as a grotesque homogenising and generalising process. Within the machinery, the singular, specific (and thus the hoped-for 'different' or 'other') is subservient to the categories and cells through which it is distributed. Once positioned within categories it becomes a 'type', being given attention and value according to the status of the things with which it shares category membership. In its typicality it is ready to be operationalised as an 'example'. Even the machine-organised search for some kind of distinguishing elements (locatable perhaps within critical discourses about 'style' or 'vision') takes such difference/distinction as an exemplary category within which the things can be gathered. The 'point' of such categorising and coding work is thus to mutate the thing in its particularity into an example. Sited within a category, and thus given an identity only through its shared membership, each thing becomes, for representation, before it is anything else, an example. The value of its exemplary status will depend on whatever the machine needs at any point in time to preserve the momentum and relations of its own 'development' (always as a structure in tension with itself due to the struggle for the control of scarce resources, knowledges, and the means of control (violence) themselves).

### **The Discursive Response to Making**

The purpose of the discourses (gathered here under 'aesthetics' but including the routine discourses of the bureaucracies in charge of the arts' things' everyday lives) which attend to the arts' things and are responsible for any sending on and circulation to which they may be subjected, is to ensure their own survival through convincing displays of typification and exemplarity. Such scripting work (writing the scripts that set up the 'life' and course of any thing's performance through the machine) has to underwrite itself according to calculative criteria derived from and manifesting a technoscientific relation to writing-as-representation. It has to ensure its accountability. It is thus beholden to a model of rhetoric (it has to persuade its sponsors) that forefronts on the one hand the necessity of 'contextual research' and on the other a 'contestatory' model of discursive intervention. The contextual research (which may use any of a plurality of contexts as a means of deriving 'evidence' and for strategic placing of its own discourse) allies it to the technoscientific world-view (of worldlessness!), while the contestatory mode affirms its commitment to critique as the way of ensuring (through contest, victory or defeat) the emergence of agreed values. The two are held tenuously together through a tacit agreement, required by the machine in its bureaucratic plane, to work within the parsimonious constraints of logical exposition. What is expressly outlawed is to allow any 'movement' generated within the techno-scriptor in the course of a developing relation to an art-thing, to produce a leap to the site of the art-thing itself, to cast off the 'responsibilities' and authority of the discourse.

Representational discourse cannot afford to allow anything to so move it that it ends in losing itself, giving itself away to the thing. It has to shun, rule out absolutely, its own becoming-unreasonable in its response or any fall into the disjointed staggering speech (to stammer, to

stutter...<sup>20</sup>) induced in and by alterity. To ensure the smooth continuity of its speaking-scripting it maintains an insurmountable distance between where it stands and the thing's possible 'life'. Before everything else, it has to maintain the consistency of its discourse; this is what drives it on. And, of course, accomplishing this is already to be working oneself out through effecting a discourse (here, critical aesthetics) as an active confirmation and display of existing forms of power. Whereas the things of art, in their elsewhere over there and giving paramountcy to their search for otherness, already dispose themselves towards weakness. Their trajectory is towards a becoming-bject when assessed in the terms of technoscience and everyday life. The maker's struggle to hold to a love for both art and for some art-things (as themselves offering a site from which to strike out towards otherness) seeks to realise, make manifest in its things, its conviction that 'tradition' is still open and mutable, that, further, it has become a 'tradition' of questioning its own possibility. In spite and in the face of the representing machine it is a struggle to effect, however slightly and temporarily, a tear in representation's enwrapment. Its charge is to find ways of staying on the thither side of typicality and exemplarity, thus rendering representation's agencies, however fleetingly, lost for words.

### **Making's Paradoxical Struggle**

But the problem of sustaining a credible hold on the moderns' legacy of celebratory self-questioning within the changed conditions of representation, is that the challenge to this questioning has been doubled and complexified. Firstly, there is still the perennial and paradoxical struggle with tradition: to find a way of simultaneously both joining it and breaking out of it. The directing love for art, arising from one's experiences with specific art-things, proposes tradition as destination. Yet, under the moderns' drive, the maker is directed to make things that are in some way unsanctioned by, aside from, tradition. Making can thus occur only in hope and to one side of any knowledge or interpretive understanding of or value-judgment about whether what one is making will ever be taken to be an art-thing. In making fuelled by the intensity of the moderns' self-doubt, the imaginative drive can only be sustained by a utopian optimism; keeping going underwrites itself, even while haunted by the threat of failure, of falling short, of errance, through staying hopeful, maintaining an *esprit* about the coursing of its own *corps*. Making is that paradoxical fusion of remaining sprightly, wit-full, while pursuing the abjecting course of self-doubt.

But secondly, now, in modernity's afterwards, this necessary and irresolvable doubting uncertainty<sup>21</sup> is compounded by that which has always already framed and delivered tradition, and thus making's possibilities, for every artist. Not only is the relation to tradition the 'target' of the maker's reflexive turn but, now, the very machinery through which both she and the tradition of art-making (as a still open and 'realistic' aspiration) appear and have a 'relation' has to be 'taken on', engaged in and as the making process. *The doubt has to include the very terms (the representation) of doubting itself.* For the machine, as both an 'efficient' reconstructor of the moderns' 'meaning' and as a continual calculating monitor of its own performance (display of accountability), has already built doubt into its own operations. But this is doubt borne of the necessity of feedback, the system turning through itself (sometimes resulting in runaway 'positive' (running on towards self-destruction...) and sometimes in negative restraining feedback), as required under the routine 'efficiency' rule of continuous self-assessment. All the machine's elements are already generated as

<sup>20</sup> Art-making as a stammering-stuttering is developed further in the text 'To Sound Out Music...?'

<sup>21</sup> Merleau-Ponty's wonderful text on Cézanne shows just how fundamental 'doubting' was to the moderns' emergent 'vision'. See, M. Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt' in 'Sense and Non-Sense', Northwestern University Press, Chicago, 1968.

‘information’ enabling the feedback on performance through which the machine seeks to maintain and develop itself. The scepticism of this routinised self-doubt is very different to the ‘ontological’ doubt - suspension of belief in self, dissolving and splitting of this self – intrinsic to art-making.

Somehow making has to find, make, its way through and beyond the doubt (scepticism of critique and information), which routinely organises the everyday life of its machinised representation, and strive towards a non-place unreadable by the machine, aside from its codes. In absolute contrast to the vision of performance endlessly affirmed by the machine in its relentless pursuit of means-assessment, art-making has to body-forth elsewhere. For the abjection it aims for is precisely one which is the suspension, the putting into abeyance, of those systematic forms (the languages of representation) which keep one vertical as a ‘whole subject’ able to move ‘forward’ continuously through the performative conventions of meaning and relating. Shot through with, and thus supported by, the joy and euphoria of optimism, the maker is somehow borne through (always in a way unique to the context of the making) the emptiness intrinsic to the doubt about becoming. To withdraw from the ways in which one’s own becoming is framed within representation, without any guarantee that one will return with some ‘thing’ that is both unspeakable and telling (perhaps it can ‘tell’ only by its gest as a pointing-pointed performance), is a daunting project. But to fail to risk the attempt is to remain entrained by meanings already being put to work in the service of representation. Within the latter the arts are obviously already assigned to and valued as cultural ‘goods’. This is precisely why making, to fulfil its responsibility to itself as the caretaker of art’s difference, has to search the multiple fragmented possibilities that constitute its own entanglement with art for ways of resisting and avoiding its reduction to cultural value.

Given the exorbitant powers and technical brilliance of the appropriating mechanisms, any such avoidance is likely to be short-lived and minuscule. It may be that only tiny elements within singular things (objects, performances, short stories, poems, compositions, installations and so on) remain resistant to typification and its valuing. Such tiny pockets of reserve, splits in representation’s fabric through which, falling and drifting, the ‘one’, freed from culture’s fixings, may become many, *may be the most making can now hope for within machinised aestheticisation*. It seems that, without the risk and struggle to maintain this hope, activated on behalf of the arts’ utopic not-yet-places, the last and key elements of the moderns’ bequest – its willed vision for otherness – will disappear. The hope for making must be that a sufficient number of the things made for art (both pre-modern, modern, and contemporary) still, in spite of the machine’s seizing and typifying work, preserve elements of mute refusal. Contained within and distributed across the archive as signs of value, and pregnant with ‘meanings’ reconciling them to everyday conventions (social orders...), most things rapidly become ciphers not of otherness but of organisational needs. No longer subsisting in themselves, in their particularity, their fragmented differences, they are affiliated with and absorbed into the trappings of power wherein they become themselves icons of this same power (cultural capital as means to cultural control). These are the terms of exchange on which they are distributed before and around us.

Only elements which, because of their very abjection (their being-before-culture), were either invisible to or irrelevant for the controlling placing technical project, might secrete pockets of passive resistance and reserve. And even these would have to be sufficiently strange to provoke some response other than the technical. Passed over by the interests of calculative accountancy, they could only be noticed, responded to, by one wanting, hoping, to be carried

beyond representation. Alongside the conventional responses of aesthetic pleasure one would have to bring a desire for the disturbing, discomfiting, strange, ob-cultural... Coming to the things now through the cultured ears, eyes and senses of aesthetic appreciation, *and thus assimilated to the information-spectacle*, can only set us up for comfort and reassurance. And because the shocking, the obscene, the horrific, the sublime, are already defined for us and routinely represented within the machine, any such gesture within an art-thing is immediately assimilable on the same terms.

It begins to seem that attempting to keep alive the hope for alterity, through investing the thing with traces of the maker's search for culture's beyond, is always already compromised. But, despite the obvious fact that we all, makers and audiences, can only come to, 'get at', the arts' things through the means of representation, this machine can only continue to reproduce itself through recruitment of new makers. And the latter only take up the challenge because they have been moved and provoked by traces secreted within the machine's existing collections. New makers risk themselves to the strangeness of the making project because some art-things have thrown them beyond themselves and into a desiring-relation with the beyond that art seems to offer still. Possible art-things can only come from the most acutely attentive, though finally unmanageable, relations with the loved elements. Such elements survive to perform their recruiting role only by being within the machine whilst managing to hold themselves ever so slightly aloof and separate from, just 'to one side' of, representation, unnoticed only, perhaps, because of no interest as value-potential to its appropriating discourses. Generative here and there of an inexplicable seduction, they provide for the occasional recruitment of emergent makers, each of whom hopes that their own things may effect similar secretions.

Most of what is recruited to representation is inevitably already in machine-ready forms that reproduce existing conventions of representation and live within the guiding terms of aesthetic response. The now minor-mass scale of the arts' representation as 'hybrids', partially merged with the heritage, entertainment, and education industries, requires just such a steady flow of recruited things and performers to echo and re-enact the established terms of critical aesthetics. Heavily invested now, 'training' and 'qualification' in the 'creative arts' occur alongside all the other technically certificated practices to meet organisational recruiting needs. The demand for the replacement of consumables through the endless reconstruction of 'taste' is no different in the aesthetic industries to any other productive area, and the point is the same: tasteful novelty – the 'new' certainly, but now pre-positioned within the terms of creatively managed mass-'taste'. Strategies of representation, necessarily grounding themselves in the task of ensuring consistency of productive-consumption, have to generate the routinised appearance of 'novelty' to which they can attribute certain 'powers' (according to the conventions of critical aesthetics and the discourses of publicity). The things have to be represented, that is, 'seen' and 'recognised', as echoing, working within, the conventions through which power is vested in things and relations. For the organisations, an art-thing's 'virtue' thus lies in its manifestation of aspects of power: any movement which it effects must be an affirmation and strengthening of extant modes and nodes of power. Abjection, if explicit, is at best irrelevant and at worst anathema. For the decline that constitutes a movement 'away', 'out of', cannot be reconciled with the generation of taste.

Secreting 'moments', spots, openings, where something ob-cultural has a chance of breaking through, cannot be planned or managed. The ob-cultural can only occur as the igniter of a relation with a respondent according to the absolutely contingent interplay between the muse-summoned maker's things (via the 'other voices' removing the maker from routine

embeddedness) and the outcome of this with a peculiarly attentive responder, one ready to abject her/himself through the thing. In the hyper-productivity of the representing machinery such eventualities are effectively minimised by the affirmative rhetoric of ‘potency’. Entirely unanticipatable and private, the little openings that offer, all of a sudden, the drift into the boundless, the collapse of identities, the fleeting glimpse of a yet-to-come that is beside the point of any of our ‘nows’, can only lie in wait. Likewise, respondents, in the necessary vagueness of their initially unfocussed attentiveness, can have no expectations of specific meetings with such openings, for the latter only occur when such attention manages, perhaps by default, to be simultaneously acutely alert and wandering. It has to be able (an ‘ability’ somehow aside from the latent potency that is on the way to the controls of power) to go, *in errance*, to somewhere where the ability to appropriate (to see, say, do, what is ‘proper’) is seen-felt to be beside the point, quite out of place. In this occasional and peculiar conjunction a very odd scene of seduction emerges, seemingly out of nothing, before falling back, unreconstructable, into its obscurity.

### **The Socialising of Art’s Seduction**

If tradition and its things are what animate the maker and provoke the intensities that fire the desire to make, nevertheless they are only brought into a conjunction, set up as a dynamic relation, through the representing machine. And, paradoxically, the machine still carries within its functioning a trace, a legendary mark, a remembrance, of the moderns’ drive to become and show not just what is novel(ty) *but what is other*. This memory is retained (perhaps as a story of a recovered ‘fact’ of our aesthetic histories or as a cautionary tale about the inevitability of failure) within the workings of a machinery which cannot recognise, constitutionally outlaws, alterity. For it, there is nothing beyond representation – representation delivers everything that ‘is’; all our possibilities lie within what can be brought into and under representation. To take on this machine through trying to re-animate, keep alive within it, the disintegrating memory of the moderns’ hope for otherness, is a daunting challenge. It would require makers to confront their own constitution under representation. Not only are art and its making in question, but this questioning has to double back upon the ways in which both of them have been set up and sent forth from somewhere else altogether, a ‘somewhere else’ deep within the surfaces of representation. The absolutely unfindable vagueness of this ‘somewhere else’ is always hidden by the mythifying within which this vague is eliminated, to be replaced by some specific tale of ‘origins’ and identities which seems to provide the answer to the kind of social space within which we are all destined, for the foreseeable future at least, to live.

Making would thus have to take on the implications of this elsewhere’s absolute lack of interest in art as an occasion for anything other than its transformation, as I have already proposed, into typicality. For in all ‘social space’ to date art has been put to work to serve social purposes, invariably linked to the interests of the powerful, that have nothing to do with the drive to art. Art is converted to social use through typicality. And for us, right here, trying now to survive within representation, its use is an exemplar of the machine’s inexorable abilities. We are daily witnesses of the latter’s corralling of everything to its own overpowering need for self-regeneration. We ‘know’ (our own knowing itself falling under the self-same rule of representation) that those activities (so very few) dedicated to setting something going off and away, to trying to secrete elements on behalf of the unspeakable, of representation’s beyond, are in their abjection easily absorbed by and put to work in the interests of power. It was ever thus. When, therefore, we approach art as both makers and responders, then representation, being both within and without, thrusts us into the play of the aforementioned odd seduction scene.

Right ‘there’, wherever art seems to offer itself to us, as either makers or responders, as an invitational possibility, to call to us to join with it, we know all too well that its ‘it’ and its thing(s) are always already formed by, entwined with, and sent on their way to us by the calculative mode of representation that we now ‘live’ by. And this mode is operated and controlled by interests ordering their and our possibilities according to what they represent as ‘here’ and ‘there’. In order to just get by (everyday life), we and art become, unavoidably, ‘willing’ participants in this ceaseless representing flow.

This constitution and mediation of ‘our’ heres and theres, our attributions and placings of knowledge, rules out absolutely what is neither here nor there, whatever struggles for alterity. Irrespective of the apparent erotics of the thing lying in wait for us, we know that its attraction now is a managed affair. For the thing is set up to try to ensure that we respond to it on the terms through which its place within representation has been granted and fixed. The collaborative work of technoscience and aesthetics on the site of consumption sets up ‘life’ – the possible-and-desirable-life - as the achievement of comfort through the provision of endlessly elaboratable aesthetically imbued comforts. Politics is represented as the management of the provision and maintenance of this comfort zone.

Now technically extraordinary, in the complexity of its accomplishments, and already under the sway of capitalism’s project of aestheticising the lifeworld, representation has been made steadily and systematically machine-dependent. The terms of our routine suspension in representation, the taken-for-granted interchange of knowledges and meanings through which we constitute and reproduce our ordinariness, are now defined by this machinery. The ‘medium’ of our suspension (what courses through us and around us) is this continuous many-languaged multi-flow of ‘significance’. Always caught up in, tied to, contextually specific needs, we grasp, from that which fleets past us at speeds quite beyond our comprehension, whatever we can make sense of just in order to keep ourselves going.

Welcomed by and easily absorbed into the flow, because they are already committed to the traditionally medium-specific embraces of representation, the arts’ things become key participants in this drifting as it swells to a flood. But for the representing machinery the entire point of appropriating the arts is to affiliate them with and subordinate them to the project of aestheticised consumption. They have to be constructed, sent on their way, as virtuous representatives of the machinery itself. To effect this every effort is made to ensure that art’s things are completely taken over by and subsumed within discourses that will control their journeys through the flow. They are sent out as already meaning-full bodies; the intention of representation is to fix each thing’s place through discursive information-and-image-heavy work. They arrive at and flow around and through us protected by the layers of meaning which are the means of their trajectory. What they are ‘to do’ is spoken for in advance.

The point of this instituting work is precisely to direct each thing on the institutions’ terms. Everything about its appearance before us, its being sited, must be textualised and coded. Representation’s over-riding interest is the controlled ordering of desire and response in ways which affirm the interests it embeds. This is why the kind of seduction which the art-thing can offer is very different to that glimpsed as a possibility in the moderns’ project. For now the scene from the machinery’s standpoint is one of a double seduction in which a respondent will be drawn through the thing to affirm the mode of representation itself. Though the art-thing wants to position itself (through the maker’s felt-thought tracings in relation to both art-

as-tradition and its own present and potential respondents' context) as a seductive summons that might just move others by its siting, it only becomes available as an offer through its having been suborned by the systematics of representation. At least some of its possibly seductive qualities are those which have been wrapped around it to draw respondents in on the institution's terms.

At the most general level, what is at stake for all art-things is the quality of relation they can have with respondents when the latter can only 'see', approach, them on and through representation's terms. For these latter are also designed to seduce, but differently. Their over-riding concern is to fix the art-thing within language, to ensure that it appears for us, comes to us, already shaped by their meaning-endowing work. This advance-textualisation provides for the way any art-thing can circulate, for the kind of cultural life it can have. In becoming-cultured, through the persuasive shapings of various rhetorics, the thing has already been turned into an object of knowledge. For the defining point of the rhetorics' describing-valuing work is to persuade their readers, potential respondents, that they know the object they are framing. Written from within the frames of technically adept discourses, their texts work on us to ensure that, first of all, we take their word(s) for it. Essential to their writings' authoritatively persuasive work is its ability to persuade its readers that it is the realiser and protector of art's and the art-thing's 'truths', their real 'significance'. It seeks to be seen as the privileged provider on the basis of the authority it claims from its adherence to criteria of technical performance. Represented art, cultured art (having passed through culture's forcing houses), can and should seduce but the direction of the seduction is always towards the institution's unfixable centre, from where the meanings emerge and are sent on their way.

### **Art Challenged to Survive**

Each would-be-art-thing faces a perverse challenge for it has to try to reconcile, to hold in the balance, irreconcilable demands. Firstly, if it is to become, to make an appearance as, an art-thing, it has to persuade the institutions' gate-keepers that it can and should be assimilated to the already scripted 'stories' accounting for the arts as historically founded traditions. Secondly, it has to accept that its potential to 'move' others has, first of all, to move them to affirm the rightness, the 'good', of this institutional script and judgment which had led them to the thing in the first place. Thirdly, in spite of the social and technoscientific transformations of the representation and managerial control of the arts, the conception (myth...) of art-making through which potential artists are recruited is still grounded in the 'subject-world' of romanticism-modernism. Within the legacy of this vision the maker is one who seeks 'self-expression' through an 'interior' journey fired by contact with specific art-things and aiming to realise the difference of their own experiences through a personal trajectory of making. Searching for origins, the trajectory, passing through art, inevitably seeks to go beyond, to get 'outside' culture. Trying to sustain, to real-ise this vision of making under representation generates irreconcilable tensions.

Fired by the hope for otherness, and itself moved to distraction by its relation to matters, others and its 'own' things, it tries to hold to the chance of generating things that dissolve 'meaning' and 'placement'. Yet the entire thrust of the passage through representation in the struggle to affirm and join with 'art' is one that is continuously re-shaped according to the machinery's interests. And what makers across all the arts are forced to confront and try to pick their way through is a critical transformation of that relation to art by which the moderns, extending romanticism, sought to offer their things. The last hope of this vision for making is that somehow, in spite of appropriation by the means of representation, singular

things may just be able to secrete unassailable possibilities for moving another in ways that are aside from and suspend cultural control. It is obvious that there are no ‘ways’ in which such secretions or deposits can either be planned for or predicted as outcomes; all visions of ‘practice’, either as strategy-directed tactics or as context-specific tactics alone, break down when one (as maker or responder) tries to diagnose (in order to avoid) what is amenable to institutional appropriation. For the lesson of our living-on within calculative representation is that its span coincides with ‘what is’. ‘Avoidance’ of representation would require a disappearance into an unknowable elsewhere, the ‘before’ of our extant languages. Can we still ‘entertain’ (with the specific sense of our being held-between, suspended, that ‘to entertain’ implies) the possibility of such a reachable elsewhere, and if so, is this possibility the arts’ only chance of keeping the legacy of the moderns’ hope-for-otherness alive?

The question brings us, perhaps, to the tremulous crux of the arts’ current plight. If representation under technoscience defines, orders, our becoming (the possibilities of our relations to anything whatever) as intrinsically calculative, and if the vehicle for this calculation is the plurality of the languages through which we mediate all our relations, then we will be confronted with how these operate as limits only if the languages’ representing-work can somehow, in however small, short-lived, oblique ways, be dissolved, held up, interrupted, diverted. And for us to take on, experience, the implications of such a breakdown we need to be waylaid, seduced, and enticed to an elsewhere and held there fascinated on terms that are neither our own nor those of the extant languages. This is what the arts may still, just, be able to do. Hopefully...

But is it possible to keep alive the hope for something other than the calculative when the exorbitant (already now literally ‘other-worldly’ – out-of-*this*-world) power of the latter is realised routinely? Is art a possible region where traces of the incalculable might still be imagined, sought, and offered, even though their recuperation by representation is almost guaranteed?

### **Making for Solitude Within the Cacophony**

If the challenge to making across the arts now is to establish and hold to what it is responsible to and for, then we may need to pick up the earlier discussion of the moderns’ drive to privacy and the solitude of ‘aloneness’. In the wake of their bravura but hubris-tinged context-specific practices the question focuses on the terms of their legacy. Should anything of what they have bequeathed be held to as guides for contemporary making? For to try to sustain their vision now of art-as-alterity reconstitutes making as seemingly inescapably and radically schizoid: caught up in and strung out across diverse but taken-for-granted languages while ‘wanting out’. Inevitably held fast within representation – displayed, distributed and sold-on there – they are condemned to be simultaneously both for and against it. But if we treat the moderns’ drive to, into, the privacy of aloneness as their defining exemplary performance, complementing their desire for alterity, then this may be precisely what contemporary practice needs to both commemorate and revivify.

Under representation we are delivered over entirely to its own means – the multiplicity of languages it has gathered to itself in which the possibility of everything ‘lies’ in its forced entry into and its fixing within ‘meaning’, language-figured meaning. Obscured by this now machined multitude, ‘Language itself’ (could there be such a ‘thing’ as ‘language-as-such’...?) recedes and remains ineffable, while being the unrepresentable provider of

representation's possibility. Paradoxically both securely gathered up and held within this multiple and also abandoned to it, it seems that our very quotidian-becoming coincides with our being languaged (ceaselessly). We are thus abandoned to nothing but Language because, it seems more than ever obvious that there is nothing we can do about this. Indeed why should we want to when, under representation, through the practical manipulations enabled by its ever-more technically 'efficient' languages (with information-languages – and thus language-as-information – being the current manifestation of our domination by techno-languages), every environment, 'social' or 'natural', is reconstituted analytically and empirically as some 'thing' to be controlled technically as structured information. Of course, however much the technosciences can 'tell' us about the operation of languages, Language 'itself' remains infinitely distant and unheard of. Not only that, it is of no interest to the technosciences whose concern is always with working out means for use and not with our planes of becoming, our beginning and our ending. Whereas the arts, perhaps, seek to 'begin', to project themselves, precisely where the technosciences break off and turn back.

Through their intervention in and partial suspension of the languages of tradition, the moderns precipitated themselves into the challenge of becoming-alone and of finding, constituting, art's project there. Concomitantly, their seductive challenge to respondents was to follow them in this journey out of their 'selves' and culture's taken-for-granted and towards what might be 'theirs' alone. Being drawn out of the meanings that one held in and that held one to everyday life entailed a fall out of its languages to elsewhere, not-places, aside from the quotidian socially shared spaces (we need only think of the strangeness of the spaces of cubism and abstraction, the sound-spaces of serialism, the mixed-media performance spaces of Dada, the post-Mallarméan spaces of writing). But, under the epochal shifts marking the fall away of the moderns' vision and the emergent hegemony of technoscientifically constituted representation, the arts' relations to their context are radically reconstituted. Absorbed into the ever more complexly integrated networks of information and spectacular mediation, they are subjected along with everything else to an unprecedented take-over and penetration by managed languages. They become fully socialised but through machineries that appropriate them in historically unique ways. For their management requires that they be treated – represented – like everything else within calculative representation: as informational quanta whose every trait, detail, mode of appearing, must be brought into discourse, analysed, valued and thus historically situated. They are subjected to permanent operationalisation by technical specialists responsible for their movements and the terms on which they appear. Everywhere, as public objects, language, in the shape of specific discourses and image-languages, precedes them and sets up their trajectories, plans the kind of 'life' they can lead. This is their and making's fate under a now fully-fledged representing machine for which we have become functionaries, keeping it going through 'simple' participation, carrying out the routine tasks of sending and receiving that constitute its everyday maintenance.

Everything, then, in the setting up and sending forth of the contemporary arts is aimed at making every process and thing, first of all, fully social, that is, shared and known in common. Art-making, its things and their respondents, are only approachable through the relations in which they are sent forth. Even before they leave the maker they have been inaugurated as the things, the products, the representative agents, of complexes of social relations. For makers are already participants in and co-respondents for art-placing organisations. Their knowledge of the terms and conditions of the ways in which their things may appear as 'art-things' necessarily permeates their making. Once sent on their ways and described, placed, and valued by dedicated discourses that have cut them out, given them

identities, and classified them according to the interests having nothing to do with the conditions of their making, they make their entrances as already socialised ‘becomings’. Because they appear under the auspices of institutions and in the latter’s name(s) they have to be fixed in advance in sets of relations that confirm what the institutions want from them. This is why they have to begin as textualised theorised things, things penetrated and thus shaped by carefully controlled discourses for whom the last thing in the world they want or expect from art’s things is to be moved anywhere, let alone beyond themselves, beyond their own controls, into the kind of elsewhere art-things might just offer.

This socialising of would-be-art-things through discursive frames is in direct tension with the moderns’ attempt to show the arts and their things in and as their separateness. For a defining feature of their project was the struggle to establish the arts as free to be for-themselves, free to display themselves in and as their self-created difference, subject to no external authority. The extant languages of making (tradition) were undone, displaced and substituted through each maker’s search for the difference of their own ‘vision’. Making for and within a vision of art-for-itself required the suspension of the shared syntaxes of making-traditions in order to find and show what animated makers’ own erotic attachments to art. No longer under the auspices of traditional guidelines or patrons’ requirements, making privileged the private search, the searching into idiosyncrasy ‘itself’, into ‘what differentiates’; irrespective of ‘surface’ affiliations to movements and groups, making was carried through in lonely intensity.

As a corollary to this, the still small emerging audiences for the modern arts, as desiring respondents, had to construct their own personal trajectories around and through the art-things’ ‘bodies’ by probing the ways any thing moved them out of their known and familiar feelings. To get anywhere with the things, respondents had to turn the questions provoked by the things back through, and typically against, their own taken-for-granted sensibilities, their pre-understandings and knowledges of the arts’ possibilities. Thrown into their own felt and languaged resources, respondents were engaged in a private ‘journey’ complementing that of the makers. Given the things’ challenge to and undoing of the arts’ extant forms, languages and syntaxes, the journey out of familiar languages necessarily drew respondents into the privacy of their ‘own’ extra-language experience. Snatched out of shared syntaxes, respondents had no option but to try to shape for themselves, to collage the particularity of their own response. There can be little doubt that it was precisely the excitement of these erotic challenges that generated small but committed audiences for the nascent modern arts. The journey into each’s separation, in order to pass through some form of self-loss and re-forming via each thing’s unique offer, seemed to confirm that the thing was for each alone. Immersion within the thing on its terms (unavoidably) meant being cut off from the social body, from specific affiliations and attachments to conventions of taste and response, and being lost to others while the immersion persisted.

The art-thing’s point was the provocation of this move into one’s own separation. The thing was ‘there’ to offer an occasion for each one to become other, many, to open, in the secure privacy of the silent temporary bond with the thing, onto the obscurity, otherwise largely inaccessible, untouchable, of one’s ‘own’ originating. The trajectory, however it might be discursively socialised by others, was one’s alone, a plunge-beyond into the ‘one’s’ idiosyncratic manyness - unreproducible... unrepresentable. But this dissolution of the one meant (and perhaps still ‘means’) that the aloneness, the unsharable journey, no longer belonged. It could be the property, always for the temporary nonce of the immersion, of any one. Entering and being led, drawn on, by the art-thing, the ‘one’, the familiar assumed

unitary willing subject of everyday life, becomes willing to disappear, to give way in an unbecoming to an anonymous plural without centre or boundary. This plural is beside the point of all analyses, all attempts to theorise the ‘human subject’, the self-representing embodied-linguaged being. Plurality, as a possible disjointed ‘collection’, veers off elsewhere, always elsewhere, if art has anything to do with it. For art, from modernity onwards, has tried to find ways of sustaining the commitment to hold to this becoming-plural, the drive towards an elsewhere. And because the drive out of culture’s givens - the shared meanings of both everyday life and the enveloping grasping discourses of analysis – had no destination other than this going-beyond, this opening out of a plural looseness, the boundaried fixed regions of all analyses were and are an irrelevance to art’s outward-bound project. The range of metaphors developed by different analytical frames to figure and place the subjects’ ‘mechanisms’ and qualities operate in regions of human practice that have nothing to do with would-be artists’ submission to the demands of making.

Rather, for art indebted at least in part to the moderns, the necessary plunge into the ‘private’ means going it alone along lines not yet marked, veering off and following calls by inchoate voices that withdraw one from the refrains of convention. It means following and then tilting the planes of becoming so that the one slides across the many ‘surfaces’ that make up planing. To relate to the sensibilities, to the ‘how’ and ‘where’ of the planes of sensing, where our pulsing rhythming ‘edges’ collide with, touch and are tangential to everything outside, is art’s way of real-ising how what surrounds and envelops us, permeates our surfacing, makes us what we ‘are’. Art-making tries to come to terms with our living-as-surfacing, how it (we) is touched and moved by what it passes through and across. For it, our surfacing is always a relating via these touchings and permeations. Now more than ever we are being flowed-through, sent on our way as absorbers of and as mixed-media transmitters (via our bones, tissues and fluids) of certain things that wave into and pass through us. We have become the inadvertent incidental vehicles for waves that use us as moments of their endless circulation.

So our ‘senses’, of which we are somewhat ‘aware’, and to which we respond haltingly, confusedly and sometimes violently, are only a part of the ‘story’, for much else is passing through, using us, of which we are not perceptually aware. But we can have uncertain ‘feelings’ for and about the unfelt processes – of revulsion, curiosity, ambivalence, disturbance, delight even... Perhaps what we call ‘mood’, the shifting tremors and terrors of how we appear to ourselves and others, that seems to define, set up, how we may relate, is in some way an attempt to stabilise and fix our response to both our confused feelings (how we are touched and moved by what surrounds us) and the processes that we are subject to (ageing, the balance between states of health and illness) but partially unaware of – how we are being processed unbeknownst, the consequences of which we may register only obscurely and aside from ‘knowledge’. Perhaps it is this chiasm of touch,<sup>22</sup> how we are planed through, that the arts take as their open zone of exploration. For all our movements, and thus our being moved by whatever passes through and by us, are positioned touchings.

Making follows up the feelings engendered across its planing surfaces by searching for ways of marking and fixing its responses to how its surfaces have been touched. It may also involve testing the surfaces at their points of contact, interrupting them to see how they give way. The chance encounters coming from such touchings, remnants of the self, drift off all beaten tracks to where conventional continuities, that which has held the surfaces together,

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<sup>22</sup> This is picked up, in passim, in the discussion relating art and waste. See ‘To Risk’.

fall away. Of course planing continues, but for a brief interlude, lacking its sure-faces, shakily disarrayed. Not that the moving-moved-toucher falls through into some 'depth' below the surface, but rather that the erasures, the splits, the breaks and obliterated securities provoke leaps, jarrings, syncopated hesitations, which continue the movement but disjointedly, as a sequence of wavering disjunctures. What might occur, the maker hopes, in this de-facing-disjointing is the emergence, the fleeting appearance ... over there, but very proximate ... of the other(s) whose constant touchings envelope and shape the plane of becoming.

It is these possible contacts that the maker, whether provocatively or by chance, hopes to make the most of. But the lying in wait and the paying of the attention necessary to grasp what may come to pass are defined by their isolation. Privacy is crucial not only because attention has to be ready to catch the other in the inadvertence of its appearing, but also because this other is the outside of the social, the shared, that which is already securely within the commonsense of everyday languaged meanings. The receiver has to be in the margins of language, alone, to pick it up. Yet, from within aloneness, it is still art which is being memorialised. Whatever suspensions and disjunctions mark it, the celebratory remembrance of art is what maintains the sequence's connections. But the very peculiarity of this sequencing provokes questions about art-making's relation to what we take the subject and subjectivity to 'be'.

Is the art-thing's offer of a relation between things and responding-others for, on behalf of, does it make and demand, an aloneness that is, that belongs to, is the 'property' of, our 'classical' unified and singular human subject? Or might it confound our commonsense (and much analytical) understanding of this subject? Might art draw us towards a region incompatible with our conventional (always 'in use') sense of subjectivity? Is the 'she', the 'he', to whom we attribute the making of an art-thing (the signing named 'author'), who makes under the auspices of art (remembering that the 'auspice' might make lateral reference to divining, to the '*haruspex*' who reads entrails for signals of events to come), no longer our familiar subject?

Perhaps the possibility of such making is premised upon a splitting in which the willing, ordering, reasoning subject of everyday life and technoscience, of analysis-in-general, gives way to 'something' very different, something unaccountable and always unprecedented. And what may be opened up or out in this split may not be in the least amenable to being represented by any kind of discourse that treated it as a 'thing', an 'object of knowledge'.

### **Art... Beyond All Analysis**

Perhaps art-making emerges from a region that is irreconcilable with the 'objects' that analyses of the 'human subject' generate. Analyses have to have a unified, or at least a unifying, structure as their goal, a unity constituted through internal stratifications, interlocking sites, connected by passages, lines, along which sequences of exchanges 'take place' over time. Clearly locatable within calculative representation, now shaped by technoscience, each analytical project constitutes its own objects of knowledge. It establishes the parameters of its frames according to its disciplinary-specific interests. Rules for concept- and evidence-construction set the terms within which the everyday life of analysis and its generation of its 'own' discourse operate. Those disciplines which take as their 'objects' the human individual-as-subject, subjectivity, consciousness, either alone or in relation to others (to other sciences, to language and so on), set up their 'object' (the subject) as a unity. The disciplines' point is to treat this 'one', this 'whole', invariably rendered as a 'structure-' or 'system-in-process', as a machine whose parts and functioning processes can be mapped and

described through the inter-relating of empirical observations and conceptually developing discourses. As constructed objects of knowledge, the (machine-ish) wholes represented in analytical discourses are completely separate from everyday life, from all other practices. They serve only the needs of the self-enveloping discipline on the road to mastery of its 'own' distinctive objects of knowledge.

When they are brought into conjunction with other practices (the everyday world with its practical 'problems' of living) in the context of some project of application or extrapolation, their possible relevance is always context-specific. Any subsequent relation between the analytical framework and an everyday practice will always be the result of a contest between interests. The interested groups bring different values (technoscientific, ethical, political, economic, and so on) to bear in negotiations and the 'transfer' of any 'knowledge' from the analytical discipline to practice will always be selective and, crucially, transformational. What is transferred will have to be adapted (translated), and thus changed, to accommodate both the context-specific tasks of practice and the everyday discourses within which these are carried out (made sense of). The pristine untouchable unities sustaining and sustained by the analytical frameworks are radically other to the assumed, half-felt, unexplicated, barely recognised 'unities' that, haunting commonsense, enable the untroubled (always relative...) accomplishment of the practices of everyday life.<sup>23</sup> When the technoscientific is interwoven with the everyday (as it is now across all regions of everyday life) the process generates not meanings united under the control of the technical but hybrids in which the ordinary and the technical are force-fused in quite unanticipatable ways. Commonsense is a site of endless hybridisation within which the technoscientific is but one element (though a powerful privileged one) that loses something (much, perhaps) of itself in order to enter the play of the ordinary, interest-bound, activities.

### **Solitude Makes All The Difference**

'At the right moment we must get up and leave such gatherings, circumstances, conditions, for what naturally becomes a lengthy, lasting, always unending solitude, so Roithamer'.<sup>24</sup>

But, in direct contrast to art, all this cross-site construction, this hybridising, is social through and through. It only happens in the intensive social work of discursive relations through which everyday projects emerge, take shape, and disappear. Representation is both its means and the medium within which it is held fast. Privacy's aloneness is simply irrelevant to this representing work that endlessly constitutes 'the social'. Just as, conversely, the departure into privacy gets the suspension of representation under way, aloneness being vital to art's anathematising of it. Any art-things issuing from this detour into solitude offer themselves as potential occasions for desiring respondents to re-animate elements of this outward-bound journey. In both the making and response to it, regions of experiencing are released that cannot be aligned with, incorporated into, the ways that either commonsense or analytical discourses have developed for conjoining 'feeling' and 'thinking'.

Once the lines, phonetic or graphic, of ordinary language are placed, partly or wholly, in abeyance, meaning drifts away into a zone where there are only fluid movements, currents, whirls, waves, swells, drags, risings-fallings, no longer subject to language's syntactic excisings of sense from sensing, then any possibility of boundary disappears. At the extreme

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<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it is this 'vague' region, the other of analytical knowledges, whose tensions are so 'tellingly' explored by Fernando Pessoa in 'The Book of Disquiet', Penguin, London, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Roithamer's words transcribed by the narrator in Thomas Bernhard, 'Correction', University of Chicago, Chicago, 1990, p. 265.

there is only the amorphous abject. This regioning that, by being off-limits, cannot be fixed as a singular region with edges, 'exists' only in its becoming vagueness, its being-obscure. Yet when a would-be-art-maker drifts through it, precisely because the 'force' engendering the drift is that of art's way-making (it is gone through so that some thing may be re-called to and for art), this very amorphousness is tracked according to art's interests (material- and medium-specific). Out of this partnership-beyond-mastery, the art 'force', the chargeless charge of a becoming-weakness, can draw something of what it needs for its re-formings. Submitting to the privacy's necessary solitude, the being that was a 'subject' self-scatters across the obscure zone. But, in the midst of this very dispersion, its waving elements find that they are never quite alone, for they are held up, retrieved, and reconfigured differently in the loose gathering facilitated by the accompanying weakly art-force. Any energising directive drawn from the voicing reveals itself only in the way it provokes a re-gathering as a kind of remembrance, for it is under way only on art's behalf.

The re-congealing maker re-emerges from the obscure into a tight half-space between culture and the obscure with the spoils, elements still inchoate but bearing some of the marks of art's interests. Coming from elsewhere such gatherings enable the making to proceed, at the very least, under the partial aegis of art. What goes on, the re-formings, in the fold of this half-space of return will still not be 'social', not yet affiliated to known languages, to the machinery of representation, but entails a necessary re-engagement of the textured (the not-yet of language) surfaces, only, however, on art's terms. These ensure that the taken-for-granted syntaxes of commonsense are drawn out of themselves and embroiled with, twisted into, the spoils from the detour into obscurity. The aim and hope is to keep art's tracings from the obscure coursing elusively through the emergent things for as long as possible in the face of the appropriating representation. Once lost to the latter the chances of the thing preserving memory traces of the culture's beyond, of being able to offer to respondents-to-come the singular rewards of its plunge into privacy, recede rapidly.

And, of course, we know that, under the rule of our epochal technoscientifically driven representation, such appropriation is extremely rapid. For the representing machinery 'lives', reproduces itself, through the conversion of its materials into 'objects of knowledge' within technically efficient discourses. The latter move back and forth between their own specialist sites and commonsense through conventional processes of substitution and exchange. Commonsense understanding (and thus response to the arts) is in a 'state' of permanent reconstruction as the findings and valuings of institutionally placed discourses are injected as 'information' into the arts' distribution and positioning. The 'vision' of analysis directs, runs through, and orders this transferring process so that its way of articulating 'good sense' becomes that which sustains the discourses of theoretical disciplines. It is the way of propositional logic brought into specific conjunctions with both 'empirical' (the 'factual' realm of everyday knowledge) materials and rhetorically structured modes of representing; the rhetoric is to persuade reader/listeners of the position of authority from which the representation is offered. Any boundaries set up around the combined conceptual and empirical materials are dependent upon the field of interest of each discipline.

So makers and their things are faced by a battery of highly specialised and technically skilled talking-writing machines that convert them into propositionally ordered and rhetorically directed (valued) objects of knowledge. Cut out and off from their context of emergence, they are reconstituted and positioned according to a combination of disciplinary and institutional interests within which, naturally enough, the 'personal' interests (values, tastes...) of the reconstitutors have their effects too. Language, put to work in its propositioning mode, is

‘used’ to construct idiosyncratic regions of discourse and thus meaning, within which the things then circulate. Such circulation defines their everyday life, the primary feature of which is their subordination to the effects of discursive power. This socialisation works to supplant the demands made on the lone respondent in the solitude of privacy through the substitution of fully social (agreed within negotiated tolerance limits, shared, distributed and intensely lobbied for, for this is the politics of aesthetics) discourses. So penetrated are we all – makers, things, respondents – that the wrench into and sustenance of privacy is almost impossible, for any ‘moves’ we make, any ways we seek to open up, are already framed, shaped, penetrated, and pre-tracked by the discourses’ propositional rhetorics. Indeed it is they which will have had the whip hand in delivering (representing) art to us, and us to wherever we already ‘stand’ (have been placed) in our relations to the arts. Unavoidably the arts’ things vibrate to and for us through their enveloping texts (heard and/or read).

But whether, under current conditions, the things can vibrate us beyond the framing investing texts, can shake us through the language sieve, into that ulterior solitude which is the crucible of art’s emergent suscitation, is another matter. And the possibility of this other movement will depend on the always context-specific conjunction of both maker and respondent with the thing. Somehow, if it is to over-leap with and into art’s elsewhere, the socially constructed ‘subject’ (all of us in our quotidian mode) has to combine the maintenance of an acute attention with a lapse into a vacillating will-lessness that might just allow the other (voicing, figuring...) to break through. Nothing in the history of representation, in the ‘life’ of analysis and theorising, can prepare one for this conjunction, *for it is the elsewhere of everything towards which they are working*. It follows, is summoned by, something which is excessive to the ‘reason’ that is both their point and their means. Becoming-unreasonable is the animating eros that draws making out of the maker’s self and into an other atmosphere, in the process making itself, as suggested, a hostage to solitude. By definition, then, the consequences, the things made and offered, are showings, monstrosities, of this excess. They cannot help being, in an infinite variety of ways, ‘extreme’ for they ‘come from’ a where-less ‘where’ that is far out, beyond the quotidian’s borders.

### **Different Extremities**

But we need to approach this becoming-extreme warily, for how it makes itself felt to us, how it marks and shapes the things, may have little to do with what commonsense understands as ‘extreme’. In the culture of technoscience that bears ‘onwards’ without end, our extremities are always already in representation. *It is representation itself, how we represent and are represented, which is our extremity, the outer limit by which our every act and moment are encased and represented*. Because everything exists to be shown and seen, because we are now routine witnesses to everything done and commonsensically imaginable as a possibility of human becoming (including those activities we try to mark off as not-ours by labelling them ‘inhuman’ or ‘bestial’), we participate unquestioningly in this conventional flow. Our daily life is a being-drawn-through this enveloping ‘medium’ (the meaning-overload, meaning-to-excess-and-without-end of the information-spectacle) which knows no bounds except being bound to represent.

Caught up, along with everyone else, in this flow, would-be-art-makers can claim no special exemption from its effects. But under art’s aegis they will be drawn to try to make something that avoids, side-steps, out-maneuvres, resists, however fleetingly, representation’s bravura extremity. Retreating within, going inwards, in order to get out, such making will be confronted by quite different extremities. For what it hopes to come across, to be called

towards, are precisely what is other to the ‘everything’ revealed, laid bare, by representation. And because these others are still, for however short a time, not representable, all the making-performance can do is to try to hint at them, gesture towards them, perform their absent near-farness. Such extremities will be, initially at least, unrecognisable to the means (the discourses and capturing instruments) of representation. They may be so near to ‘home’ that the focussing perspectives of commonsense representing, which maintain a certain distance between the textual fixings of the perceiving self and its objects, may be quite unable to spot them and line them up.

Left to its un-self alone, art-making makes for the left-overs that representation doesn’t get (yet, quite), the zone of what remains (both here and be-hind, be-yond) when everything has already been said, seen, grasped (virtually), the slope on which we are all already teetering where little nothings continually set us sliding out of our comprehension. Their unsayable extremity lies (and this is the challenge they present to a maker trying to deliver them and to the respondent in receiving them) in their very closeness. As they constitute the pre-life of language, they are precisely what language can never reveal about itself on and in its own terms, let alone the terms of calculative representation. In between the maker and all the structuring processes of representation their careering flow forms an insubstantial vibrating viscous membrane that both separates the experiencing body from and joins it to the possibility of language. To be with them and to invent ways of marking their effects, the maker has to sidle out of sense into the extreme narrowness of this in-between and merge with, be taken over by, them. Whatever making’s specific medium or mix of media, the making itself is the shaping of something from these little nothings, a transforming of these pre-precipitates of language into things which butt up against commonsense. The making turns them out into the world in ways which, hopefully, show in their forming their debt to art while simultaneously hollowing out and shaping a tuck, a fold, which, owing nothing to anyone else, marks them out. They take themselves right up to language, to quotidian sense-making, while remaining utterly different to it. For the maker, to hold to this difference in its extremity is making’s lonely point; if it can be brought off and sustained, it will be what gives the thing its only chance of long-term survival as an art-thing.

Once it is brought under representation whatever happens to its specific way of dicing with its own extremity, whether it is fêted or passed over, the very terms of its being accredited and embraced as an art-thing are the responsibility of others. Working on behalf of institutional interests they re-fashion the thing and send it on its way as a hybrid object of both knowledge and pleurably informed consumption. It is very difficult for makers to insulate themselves from the effects of these processes. Making can proceed only by incorporating into its upshots its responses to the pressures and seductions which unavoidably mark it. There can be no site separate from representation, for the very trajectory of coming to making passes through and is partially constituted by how the arts’ ‘practical’ (and thus instrumental) possibilities have been set up. Making’s plight is thus to have to construct its journey while trapped between and within unmentionables: trying to show and give a singular and context-specific inflection to its hope for art’s difference (the absolute distinction of its ‘own’ extremities) while knowing that its destiny is the ‘same’ of representation. Art’s tremulous Body is in the hands of the performances that, together (yet entirely apart...), seek to manoeuvre their way through the precarious paradoxes of its tight situation.