

## TO AUTONOMISE

### **The Moderns' Project - a Fragmenting Legacy**

Immersed in the unfolding afterwards of a steadily receding and already beyond focus modern art project, we remain both partially in thrall and endlessly responsive to aspects of its legacy. During its flowering in, say, the first thirty years of the twentieth century it was experienced by its practitioners across the arts, perhaps, as an inchoate projecting that was barely under way. To have been involved in this common coursing was to have been in the throes of a throwing-and-being-thrown headlong beyond one's self by beings and things, a careering chaos of criss-crossing streaming lines of intensity that sliced across, through and away from the commonsense world of everyday experiencing. Only retrospectively have we tried to make sense of it as a possibly almost completed project through attributions of coherence that already signal its demise. Now, however, we (that is to say 'we' avid would-be artists and 'we' avid would-be recipients of the arts) are seemingly less and less clear, in spite of the supposed sophistication of our tools for analytical and historical reconstruction, as to both what comprises this legacy and whether it is still charged with intensities relevant to our contemporary plight.

We are well aware that the cultural context of the modern project's emergence and brief flowering is radically different to our own. The complexity and continuing diffusion of these differences (many of them in the areas of experience that bear directly on the daily life of the arts, crucially now the overarching and all-contexting socio-technical conditions of representation) render the maze of inter-woven broken and erased trails leading back to modernity's heyday ever harder to find and follow, let alone draw together into some unifying perspective. In some senses the confused disintegrating flow is itself partially constitutive of the legacy of the modern arts' self-projecting (this very fragmentation hinting, perhaps, that it remains ungatherable as a project).

Yet the makers' attempted projecting of themselves and their makings, beyond the bounds of the taken for granted assumptions about what the arts were and how one should relate to them, reveal their common commitment to a specific vision of artistic freedom. Across the arts makers made explicit for the first time that *making itself was to be subservient only to art and to nothing outside of art*. Making's journey between its beginning and its end was to be entirely dependent upon the interests and demands of art when put into question by the maker. Thus art's point, its *telos*, was to be nothing but itself. The things of art were sent out, offered, as a manifestation of art alone. Commitment to artistic freedom required the maker to devote and dedicate the making entirely to art. And the search for the latter, as an ideal now freed from its former ties and now completely without 'content', could only be made specific through identifying it with the subjectivity of the would-be maker. Art's purity and the maker's subjectivity were to coincide on the site of making.

In removing the last remaining traces of ground from beneath the 'Romantic Subject' and seeking to transform the latter into a pure artistic subjectivity (a subjectivity without ties to anything other than itself as the arts' last remaining hope and means) these emergent compulsively committed practices themselves inaugurated the fragmentation to which we are heirs. At the time, perhaps, the implicit assumption was that 'pure' artistic subjectivity would itself turn out to be the unifying force under and around which the multiplicity of makings could eventually be gathered as a single field, a field whose unity would be guaranteed by this shared vision of free artistic subjectivity. The arts could then stand alone but together,

responsible for nothing but their own purity, for ensuring only that what was generated from that site was nothing but art.

The cross-cultural proliferation of ‘movements’ (and individuals moving within, through and in between them) across the arts, through which we retrospectively attempt both to characterise the dynamic of the moderns’ self-projecting and to give it a coherence (if not a direction), testifies to artists’ concrete struggles to live up to the demands of purity. Finally, supposedly left (almost) to themselves, the arts challenged those who wanted to do nothing else but make art-things to turn themselves inside out for art’s sake. Their baffling challenges to the entrenched strangleholding conventions of aesthetic response (conglomerate mixings of judgment, value, connoisseurship, taste, whim and inchoate feelings) ensured for a time their problematic but still minor status for existing institutions that represented aesthetics to the culture. In effect they made unavoidably explicit the schism explored by Agamben in ‘The Man Without Content’<sup>1</sup> between two irreconcilable ways of approaching (thinking, feeling, and writing about) art-making and art-things in contemporary culture: art could be considered from the point of view of its creator or from that of its audience/reception.

### **The Schism Between Making-For-Art and its Cultural Reception**

From the artist’s standpoint, Agamben suggests, making and its things flow from a vital interest, the promise of a potential happiness that might flow from art recognising itself in and as the will to power, art as what Nietzsche considered as the original metaphysical power, “the eternal self-generation of the will to power.”<sup>2</sup> Followed through to its extreme (the risk of the modern maker), the creative principle of art requires performing and its outcome – the *gest* - to situate itself outside any aesthetic dimension. Making-toward-art, performing, is other to, is sourced quite differently, to all that we gather under ‘aesthetics’. It has no need of any of the conceptual concerns and their supporting structures that now set the terms of cultural response to both the arts and, under the designing required by the info-spectacle, to an ever more complexly aestheticised production-consumption machinery. Blanchot sees this fundamental difference between making’s interests and those of aesthetics in complementary terms when he writes of the author of fiction who, ‘...sees other people taking an interest in his work, but the interest they take in it is different from the interest that made it a pure expression of himself, and that different interest changes the work, transforms it into something different, something in which he doesn’t recognise the original perfection. For him the work has disappeared, it has become a work belonging to other people, a work which includes them and does not include him...’<sup>3</sup>

On the other side there is the post-Kantian perspective that has dominated recent western thinking about the relation between art and culture. This privileges the position of the audience/respondent and has facilitated the emergence of an aesthetics of judgment that is based on the disinterested respondent’s sensory response to ‘the beautiful’. Ignoring the maker’s ‘perspective’ (intensities and commitments) contemporary aesthetic discourses, both analytical and critical, are written almost exclusively from the position of this supposedly disinterested respondent. They live through the construction and application of criteria for aesthetic judgment that take no account of the artist’s ‘subjectivity’ (the felt reason-beyond-reason that sustained the making).

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<sup>1</sup> G. Agamben, , ‘The Man Without Content’, Stanford University, Stanford, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p.92.

<sup>3</sup> M. Blanchot, in “Literature and the Right to Death” in ‘The Work of Fire’, Stanford University, Stanford, 1995, p. 306.

In contemporary culture it is these discourses (most explicitly at work in the institutional machinery for aesthetic reproduction and representation) that dominate, shape, and organise what the arts might be, where they should be placed within culture, and how 'we' (the assumed broader 'non-expert' potential audience for the arts) should respond to their things. They set up and maintain an unbridgeable gap between 'taste' - the judging faculty and the construction of and adherence to norms of aesthetic judgment/value on both a social and individual level, that produce value-hierarchies - and 'genius' - the 'productive faculty' at whose extremity singularities beyond the typifications of aesthetic discourses are generated by lone socially marginal individuals.<sup>4</sup>

In the period since modernity's apparent 'decline', the ordering of the arts has thus been underwritten by a complex of discourses, weaving through and filtering out from the institutions managing representation of the arts. The aesthetic discourses construct the arts' things from the standpoint of reception, thus making their underlying ground the grasp of the art-thing as an object for possible private sensuous contemplation by a disinterested isolated respondent-as-recipient (not as (potential) maker). Nevertheless the resulting plurality of discourses and writings manifest the endless struggle of their authors to reconcile the density and complexity of their own individual desires, tastes and interests (always concrete, contextually specific and socially positioned) with this underlying ground of disinterested contemplation. The flow of aesthetic discourses, much of it bound up with institutional interests and practices, thus works to make the arts' things appear reasonable, accessible to commonsense that is, by tying their value, positioning and significance to a specific model of the ideal respondent - the disinterested free-floating individual who, in relating to an art-thing, needs to detach him or herself from the interested practical flow of everyday life and withdraw to an elsewhere where the self's response to the thing can be assessed without interference from the confusing distractions of everyday interests. For aesthetics, authentic responding, that is, engaging an art-thing on the terms of aesthetic discourse, requires a respondent to accept that to approach the essence of the arts' offer requires a withdrawal to the extra-cultural site of autonomous beauty, a u-topia where only the rules of beauty and its sensuous contemplation are applied.

To maintain their criteria of value in the face of the extraordinary changes in art-making inaugurated under modernity, the aesthetic discourses (working out of the primacy given to the relation between beauty and the respondent's contemplation in the western analytic canon) had to find ways of accommodating these changes and somehow reconstructing them with the terms that had been generated in response to pre-modern art-things. Making across the arts seemed to be coming from and heading towards different elsewhere. Making-for-art within and under the unique conditions of modernity pursued lines of flight that appeared incommensurable with the terms which had been developed to establish continuity of aesthetic value through the changes defining the 'development' of the arts in the western tradition. Suddenly (it must have felt like 'all of a sudden') 'beauty' had to accommodate a plethora of disastrous (for it!) dissonances, disruptions, break-outs and shocks arising from artists' radically different approaches to every aspect of art-making (including the form-content dualism so important to established aesthetic discourses). Some of the outer shells of the established ways of making may have persisted for a time (such as rectangular paintings, several-movement orchestral pieces, texts looking superficially like earlier novel forms, certain staging conventions for performances), but they were transformed into elements of

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<sup>4</sup> See Agamben, *op. cit.*, p.44 et seq., for further discussion of the implications of Kantian aesthetics.

support for very different kinds of makings; they became constructive constituents of gests in which art-as-a-structuring was itself in question.

Composing, the proximal placing of elements to make up a singular whole, a unity, whether aural, visual, literal or tactile (or any combination of these), was being turned into something else, an activity incommensurable with the traditions and rules of creative shaping through which aesthetics had constituted the things drawn together as art under the standard(s) of beauty. Yet such emergent composing was still being done, in fact ever more forcefully and stridently, by its practitioners in art's name. Makers sought to gather their makings around convictions about art's possibilities that for them had remained latent, hidden, glimpsable only, in past art, but which now had to be disclosed, to allow art to become what until then it had only been able to hint at. It was time to come to terms only with art, to find and snatch up from the ruins of tradition's abandoned continuities only those previously buried almost imperceptible fragments, pledges, which stood for art alone. For the arts' makers, all existing aesthetic canons, any boundaries or limitations set by interests outside the making process according to criteria that were infiltrated by criteria of taste (and, perhaps, decorum), were all beside art's point. For that point, an art in and for itself, still and always a destination way up ahead, was to be the only point in the makers' sights. Art now had to be released into its ownmost, its 'as such'...

Modernity across the arts and culture began, then, to reveal itself as the site of two autonomies in crisis and thus in tension with each other. The crisis to be given preference in the discourses surrounding the arts was dependent upon whether the arts were approached from the perspective of response (audience) or from that of making (would-be artist). Firstly, and inevitably in the ascendant because of their close involvement with the institutions of the arts' representation, were the aesthetic discourses that had been carefully constructed around the relative stability of a slowly changing tradition of western art and that sought to offer trans-historical terms for judging and situating art-things. Their constructions were generated from the standpoint of a supposedly transcendent recipient-respondent. Modern making then throws this vision of the assumed unity between aesthetics and making into disarray by putting forth things that are seemingly irreconcilable with the terms of aesthetics, other to its reasonings. For the things were made as questions about what an art-thing might be and might be able to do, to effect. They emerged from and were summations of the clashing forces and intensities of both doubt and conviction – a committed belief in and desire to make something that might just be an art-thing, to be generated through a forcefully tentative questioning *whose very point was the withholding of any certainty as to what art 'was' and might still 'become'*.

Faced by this burgeoning multiplicity of art-things that were often at both the surface and in submerged terms beyond their comprehension, aesthetic discourses had to confront their own frames, terms, and values. At stake for them was nothing less than their perhaps long-hidden assumption (hidden behind the rhetoric of the transcendence of the beautiful) about what it might be to be 'moved' by an art-thing, about whether an art-thing could and should move the respondent out of him- or her-self to a different site of being-becoming: was art, as a moving performance, essentially the showing and offering of a possibility of transformation of the self's relation to world, thing, others, and finally itself? Was the very point of art's own 'movement', together with its potential to 'move' others, to be transformative?

In principle, for aesthetics, true movement could only mean that which was solely in response to, subservient to, the contemplative pleasures offered by the beautiful. This could only be

engendered (and how it might be through and through gendered remains a vital issue for those making-for-art) from within the kind of attention demanded and ordered by a paradoxical disinterested but engaged contemplation. Any movement of value or interest aesthetically could only emerge in the course of an attention focussed exclusively on the art-aspirant thing, and in the cause of reinforcing the existing norm of beauty. Because ideal movement could only take place through a transcendental shift out of this world to the realm of the beautiful (a no-place), its pleasure could not be carried back to the everyday world. This indeed was art's distinction, its difference. The art-thing's moving of the respondent, then, was a passing blip, a little rent, in becoming, rather than a transformation in the respondent's everyday becoming. Aesthetically the point of the experience of the beautiful thus appeared to be the provision of temporary relief and release from immersion in the demands of everyday life.

To sacrifice the ground on which these discourses had been established would mean not only the loss of their *raison d'être* (a *raison* indebted to specific debates and positions generated in the course of western philosophy's analysis of the human subject and self-consciousness), but also a concomitant loss of the position of relative power they had achieved within the wider culture through their intimacy with the means of representing, disseminating and positioning the arts. The attempt to sustain this essentially legislative position on what art 'is' and how it is to be valued has largely framed the internal dynamics of aesthetic discourses since the modern movements' emergence across the arts. Yet, once incorporated into the machinery of art-representation, aesthetic discoursing (institutionalised texting) has become ever more closely entwined with the means of power (control over the positioning and valuing of art-things and artists). Such discourses have been unwilling to sacrifice their fundamental commitment to analysing and assessing the arts solely from the perspective of an ideal and detached respondent. Whilst their writings may seek to take account of, in *ad hoc* and contextually specific ways, art-making (aspects of making's plight, its 'situation' and 'circumstances', the qualities of imaginative-creative processes), they remain bound to rhetorics of judgment and value that 'ground' the beauty-pleasure relation in an ungrounded, ungroundable, context-free respondent.

The expansion of these response-discourses, sustaining a wide variety of aesthetically oriented interests, has generated a complex dialectics within which external resources (analytical discourses, frameworks and methods for which the arts may be of only passing or negligible concern) continue to play influential and continuously self-modifying roles. They (philosophical-anthropological-sociological-cultural-historical-psychological-economic-semiotic-linguistic-structural-post-structural-and-so-on-world-views) are co-opted as aides in the analysis of both the 'insides' of the arts' things and their context. Indeed the present text necessarily falls under the same 'rule', for avoidance of explicit and implicit conceptual interests is beyond writing's grasp; the crucial question for this text, however, concerns the quality of relation to the things and processes of art that the writing desires and exemplifies. In the case of the dominant aesthetic discourses, the implicit assumption and hope underlying their selective use of analytical frameworks and tools, is that abstracting, transferring and re-applying discipline-specific approaches to knowledge-production will strengthen their construction of criteria for judging and valuing. In whatever ways this borrowing and collaging modifies the rhetoric of an aesthetic discourse it is always used to confirm response as the sole ground for judgment. The arts' 'point', 'significance', 'meaning', 'value', 'position', 'role' (and so on) are to be assessed through a singular focus on the relation between the respondent and the art-thing, *irrespective of the performing-offering dynamic that constitutes maker's plight(ing)*.

Respondents are indeed allowed to be moved a little, but never enough to unsettle them from their tacit obedience to and reliance upon assumptions which leave them in control, masters, of the art-thing. Whatever ‘loss’ of themselves they submitted to in order to ‘be with’, to get ‘inside’, the art-thing on its supposed transcendental site, has to be immediately clawed back and reinstated to restore the respondent to a position of superiority over it, that of judge-arbiter allocating the thing to its position in the value hierarchy. And the risk run by this world-vision of the arts’ things is a self-blinding to crucial possibilities of the arts’ becoming, to the offer defining their plighting, *their being all about us*.

Clinging to the untouchable primacy of a transcendent harmony locatable by a subject of this world, the aesthetic discourse always situates itself in a relation of authority to the art-thing. It aims to speak with authority and on good authority (the voice of reason over the final unreasonableness – the madness - of the art-thing) about the art-thing’s ‘meaning’, the assumption being that the art-thing’s point is precisely to be meaningful, that the art-thing, in other words, is intrinsically moving in the same direction, on the same plane, as itself and the enfolding culture – towards meaning, towards a resolution of judgment. Having positioned themselves within reason in order to make sense of their objects, to bring their objects into their field of knowledge, aesthetic discourses have to condemn themselves to trying to be utterly reasonable. As soon as they give the least quarter to an art-thing, allowing it to give them the slip, to be (however slightly) beyond all (their) reason, they compromise their own project. For their point is precisely to show the way the art-thing’s value is dependent upon its meaning as so constituted by the discourses themselves. This commitment to meaning’s primacy, lays down most clearly the narrowness of the limits within which the aesthetic discourses construct art’s moving possibilities. They cannot allow or envisage any movement that would undo their own discursive authority. For aesthetics the arts’ things are not to be represented in ways that would dissolve the ground of their discourses’ authoritative judgment. No art-thing can ever be seen as something defeating, out-witting, or even compromising, meaning (reason). For a knowledge-oriented practice everything within its view is gatherable and has to be brought within its reason(ing). Thus only those things are judged to be art (and thus valuable) that can be embraced within and filled with the discursive meanings of aesthetics meaning.

But of course the discourses, unwilling to admit any limitations to the breadth of their aesthetic authority, tend to treat all objects offered to them as challenges to their meaning-constituting powers which they are invariably able to meet undisturbed. Far from being thrown out of joint, out of the space-time of analytic or critical interest-as-disinterest, by an art-thing’s intensity, their measured responses restore the calm surfaces required by dispassionate judgment and its appropriate matching speech (a speaking that performs dispassion). Self-maintenance (survival) is the first and long-term goal of every established knowledge-producing discourse. And this can only be achieved through a reiteration in practice of the routine assumptions that ground the practice and their continued application to specific examples. The last thing they can afford to admit is either that the things of art are quite beyond them, beside their point, or that they have been so moved by one or more of them that the ground on which they rest themselves has given way. Discourse has to remain, and be seen (institutionally, publicly) to remain, strong, upright (not object before the thing), full of authority.

In contrast, if art’s possibility, the possibility that it might move one, is the reason for writing about art and not something else, then this ‘writing about’ must also be *for art, on art’s*

*behalf*. The good of the writing would then be in its display of the movement effected by the writer's relation to the thing. To write for art would be writing to one side of negation (judgment and criticism) and with a concern only for those things that had drawn one out of one's everyday becoming and onto the trajectory of their own way out. Critique would be an irrelevancy, for the writing's attention would be taken up entirely with the ways the art-thing chosen (and which had chosen oneself in the way it enfolded and suffused one) drew one out, off and away.

In the mean time, over there, poor weak art, the cause of all the trouble, has to try to find ways of both reconciling itself to and simultaneously withstanding its endless appropriation and dispersion by the machinery of judgment and placing. There they lie - the conglomerate of the art-things of modernity and its afterwards - proximate but just out of reach. Their makers tried to sever them from tradition, keeping only here and there scintillations of tradition as reminders of the leap they made with more or less success. Or, now and again, they may brush up against tradition's outside, acknowledging by contiguity their elemental debts and affections. Perhaps they are lying in wait for something, for someone, still embedding signs of their makers' hopes. Certainly they can't be waiting for 'the people' (remembering Paul Klee's lament that 'the people are not with us'), not yet anyway. No, in the leap towards the sought-for autonomy, seen by their makers as both modernity's birthright and their own justification and end, they cut themselves off instantly from any foreseeable reconciliation with 'the people'. For how could 'the people' see the virtue, plighted hope, in something that was only in-and-for-itself and devoted to careering out of the everyday world - the very world in which they are condemned to struggle incessantly to make some kind of 'living' and nascent sense? For 'the people', both then and still now, being a fractured fragmented multiple people-in-general, are yet to become 'a people', a 'community'. Reconciliation could only 'take place' here and there with individuals according to chance conjunctions of desire and the struggle for alterities.

### **The Emergence of an Appropriating Machinery of Representation**

No, everything that the desired autonomy demanded of modern makers served to ensure that their art-things-to-come and 'the people' (lacking a peoplehood or ground from which they might be able to see their other) were held worlds apart. Nevertheless, in the embracing culture where many of tradition's concerns still held sway, some places had been maintained for the arts' things. And, given that tradition was essentially about the management of continuity (the same), the cultural machinery responsible for this management, which was itself in transition from earlier forms of response and patronage, began to recognise that its own long-term interest required it to develop ways of engaging and positioning the arts of its own time. The need was to find ways of representing and thus controlling contemporary makings as, in spite of their leap for autonomy, essentially reconcilable and alignable with and within the tradition for which it was taking responsibility. Nothing could be left out. A nascent, still loose, system for the control of everything cultural (including the arts) was emerging in response to and as an accelerator of the decline of earlier forms of patronage. Revolutionary changes in media technology inaugurated forms of communication and popular entertainment under close political-managerial control. The positioning of the arts in relation to these changes in the techno-politics of representation began to define the 'life' that was publicly possible for the arts, including those kinds of making whose commitment to autonomy would always lead them to struggle to break through and beyond whatever borders were being maintained by the institutions responsible for cultural representation.

Managing such representation was and is crucial to techno-capitalism's dynamic of market expansion, and the arts were unavoidably dragged along in the wake of these revolutionary changes. Being intrinsically weak they were eminently absorbable, and this absorption throws the struggle for autonomy into stark relief, but on terms very different to anything experienced in the arts' previous subordinations to controlling institutions. What had felt to makers across the arts as a precipitation into conditions that might enable their making and its gests to realise the promise latent within all past art – the possibility of a pure autonomy through which art-making could finally turn into itself – simultaneously generated a gathering-up of making and its things. The arts were steadily re-incorporated into and redistributed across the sites of cultural power - but this time differently...

This time the point of the enfolding penetration was, within certain bounds, to celebrate, reconstitute and release the previously repressed 'romantic subject' as a now free-floating singular subjectivity. It's destiny was to become the ideal empty consumer subject of a rampant late-techno-capitalism. Transformed into a desire-driven receptacle (that was, is and will be, first and last, for capitalism, a mini-producing-machine), this subjectivity, with its desires endlessly re-coded and re-written as needs across all its surfaces, becomes the consumer responsive to production's own requirements. Completing the spiralling circle it becomes the literal all-too-real embodiment through which the system's flows must pass if the system is to charge on. And these flows, through the alliance of technoscience and design, are shaped and given specific contents through the integration of aesthetics into the productive machinery. The dynamic, internal to the self-revolutionising means of production, generates simultaneously through its goods and services just the consumer needed to maintain the a-systemic system's trajectory. This is the subject always seduceable into giving itself up and over to taste. For in techno-capitalism's high alert, a tension teetering permanently on the edge of chaos, its subject has to be infinitely malleable, movable (along with matter and capital itself) at as close to a moment's notice as can be managed. Perhaps the 'romantic subject' was ideal material for its steady conversion into the subject endlessly circulating around the needs of groundless tastes.

At the necessarily unachievable end of the line would be the perfect 'mini-consumer-machine': continuously re-formable and re-toolable inwardly and outwardly (consider how far prosthetic/spare-part surgery, gene therapy and cloning have already gone in providing the means for material and codable self-and-other reconstitution...) according to the exorbitant (always both out of but also very much in this world) demands of productivity. The technics (now a 'technotelematics'<sup>5</sup>) of representation, within which the arts are now so strategically and firmly situated, proximate to the interface of taste and design, construct the information-spectacle for us and us for it. As noted earlier its present form is the integrated info-spectacle.

In some ways, then, the desire of the modern arts to be released into their own autonomy, to be purely themselves, complements late-capitalism's project of eroding and dismantling all social attachments (nation, society, community, family, and so on) in its reconstruction of subjects as first of all isolated consumers each, eventually, with its own taste profile. Insofar as the arts (makers and their gests) are co-optable into and subordinatable to the socially and technically coordinated means for taste and corporeal reconstruction their autonomy remains illusory. For they are condemned to remain, through an endless re-territorialisation hauling them back towards a (notional) centre, contributors to the dominant attraction - aestheticised

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<sup>5</sup> See Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, 'Echographies of Television', Polity, Cambridge, 2002, p. 79.

consuming. The arts, like almost everything else under globalising representation, are easily absorbable into the texture of the info-spectacle through by the transforming machinery of technotelematics. Their constitutive weakness makes their availability patent.

Yet, in spite of the very visible institutional placement and control of the arts in which the latter are hybridised and the boundaries between them and their others are in a permanent flux, many people, perhaps more than ever before, still seek to engage the arts by way of making. They take to art's plighting, taking themselves towards art, as desiring-makers.

Coming to the arts within and through this flux, would-be artists can only now approach the possibility of art-making from the shifting sites of institutionally driven and directed taste. For the arts can now come from nowhere else. Receiving and perceiving the arts through institutionally controlled means, makers' felt responses nevertheless moved them eventually away from being only receptor-respondents to the possibility of making-for-art. Of course this may only be completing the institutional circle, for the art-representing machinery always needs to ensure the recruitment of new makers to replenish the supply of its things. Yet the self-transforming movement away from the development of 'taste' towards making, may also contain the seeds of a different kind of movement.

### **Splitting Off from Taste into Making**

To reflect on the transformation from percipient (tasteful – 'I know what I like') respondent to possible maker is to reflect precisely upon an aporia between two kinds of becoming. To become a possible maker, to make the driven leap in faith and hope (without any expectation of a charity-to-come) across this gap, one has to have realised that, in some zone of one's surfacing, one is becoming fractured. Part of one, maybe a considerable part is being drawn out and across (away...) by, an other, unspeakable others, beyond reason.

To be tracing the movement of this other (that is both within and throwing itself already ahead of this, *of any*, one), is to be on the way out of and beyond the tasteful. After all, the tasteful is the ruled, is what is prescribed by and inscribed in the orderings and representings of the institutional 'care'-takers. It is more of the same, reiteration of the already formed. Whereas to experience the split is already to be thrown towards the unformed, the zone of a not-yet that is not yet and never will be in one's possession. It remains (always) to be explored. This zone's attraction, this non-place where fragments-in-waiting of one's other hang about, is precisely that the latter are unknown to and unrecognisable by the one. As the unformed, yet to be excavated, drawn forth and exposed, they remain far from the arcades of taste. They are the possibly distasteful, disturbing, shaking, particles of what is always in advance of and a challenge to taste. However inchoate the one's thoughtful feelings are about the split's qualities and possible effects, the movement across is itself the trace of a hopeful partial recognition. It is what-remains-of-the-self coming to a realisation that what may emerge from the search will, in the beginning, be unruly, will not be accommodatable within existing orders of its own, let alone others', judgments. Aside from the comforts of any dwelling, it is not something taste could ever feel 'at home' with.

The very otherness of this other, being unanticipatable, is an always latent threat. Thus getting the making under way is always risky because the threat that hovers around making is, at the least, double. The self itself, the one that takes on, embraces, the risk of becoming several, risks its own dissolution, risks not being able to pull itself together beyond the making. But, in taking on art (the enormity of tradition's being beyond-excess), in trying to dedicate making purely to art, it risks the always open possibility that whatever it makes will

not be recognised as such. It risks falling short according to both its own felt-thought and aesthetic judgments. Risking itself on art's behalf it knows all along that, however it places its own making, the judgments that will be made back on the other side of the split will be critical for its own future possibilities. And having itself, in its earlier days, come to the making of art from this other side through the necessary detour of taste (there being no other route), it knows full well that the criteria to be brought into play are utterly different to those intense playfully serious passions that drove it across the gap into art's lethal arms. At some point in the movement across, the separation between the desire of making and the critical pleasures of reception (aesthetic discourses) is experienced as (almost) absolute.

Art's lethality is realised in and as the rendering inoperable for making's time-being the rules for constructing a commonsense world, and perhaps even the rule for making already 'given' by the tradition. For the moderns and their after-peers (us...) making sense is not the point, *for art is nothing if not utterly unreasonable, the other to commonsense*. In the face of the continuous re-inscription of the arts' things into everyday discourses, making constitutes itself and its things around this resistance to 'meaning'. On each making occasion it tries to secure its incommensurability with non-art interests through its singularity. It knows it must strive to make something that can stand alone, be nothing but itself. Knowing in advance that it will always be liable to 'translation' (as if it were really just a 'foreign' language) back into the typifying and gathering discourses, and knowing also that these 'translations' are the means for positioning, hybridising, and circulating its objects, making, in its infinite weakness on the outside of all power relations, can do little in the face of appropriation.

It may be that in the effort to become nothing but its self (as only art-ing), making tends towards tactics of withdrawal, withholding, inscrutability, and specific vagueness. Wanting to hold its own over there, to keep 'there' still 'over-there', while being dragged continually back 'here', defines making's paradoxical project(ing). Now that the heady days of modernity's self-convincing belief in and rush towards a zone that would be the 'out' of 'out of control' are behind it, making knows it has to find ways of surviving within this paradox. The realities of containment and placement according to non-making interests are all too enveloping for makers to continue as if recuperation and control of their things were not already constituents of the making situation. Part of the challenge and struggle of making, where self-questioning and self-out-folding cut across all aspects of its processes, is to find ways of living with this seizure-to-come. For the knowing-maker, questing into and responding to the context of her/his making, the specific anticipated response is already a considered condition of making. Unavoidably, tactical responses to the anticipated take-over become constituents of the thing in its making. The qualities of the drive to make are necessarily modified by the ways this anticipation diverts and re-forms, however slightly, the flows of making. For makers can now see that the goal of autonomy is always deferred by the interventions of the arts' representing and placing machinery.

What had seemed to the early moderns as a faint but still realisable goal, a pure, autonomous making site, from which absolute uncontaminated art-things might be sent forth, has to be seen in modernity's afterwards (now, here...) as paradoxically problematic. Performing is forced to take on, perhaps even begin with, *its own appropriation as its fundamental condition*, its only firm ('given') ground (all others being suspendable in the course of making's self-questioning). Adapting late-Duchamp (of whom more shortly) the following 'givens' of making's condition (plight...) might be offered:

- Given: 1) the representing transforming illumination,
- 2) the capital flow

Performing's goal is subtly transformed from within. Clearly the change does not arise from some project consciously coordinated by artists. Rather it occurs stutteringly through the complex changes in the driving force of the very real circumstances (the arts' representation) within which all the arts have to make their ways. For they are challenged to come to terms with the combined revolutionary forces of techno-representation and market exchange. Tradition and its specific slowly shifting systems of patronage are completely displaced by a global culture-generating-and-distributing machinery within which the arts are absorbed. Pulled this way and that through the machinery, the arts' makers and gests experience a range of effects according to their specific whereabouts within it. *The one condition uniting the terms on which they are processed through these various stopping points is the sharing of a perspective on art that is derived from response and not from performing.* Thus while, here and there within the processing, an occasional 'friend' emerges who 'identifies' with the paradoxes of performing's plight and represents them to institutions, the force of controlling response follows the specifics of institutional interests.

Thus 'the arts' are treated differently in educational institutions (where they are situated in discourses focussed on knowledge and its objects and truth conditions, albeit within a context of state control and the development of criteria of (supposedly) social relevance), to market institutions (e.g. shop, gallery, salesroom, performance venue), where the arts' things are 'for sale', for 'consumption'. Both performing and its gests are kept moving continuously across sites of controlling interests within which different demands and concerns are brought to bear upon them according to site-specific response criteria. Once positioned within the machinery, performers' pathways through are defined by continuous negotiations with and across partially competing interests. The gests offered, released by performers to their fate, are effectively beyond control and subject only to the respondents' immediate concerns. The fate of the goal of autonomy is sealed within these movements.

### **Making-for-art Confronts its Hybridisation**

To have any kind of presence and participation within those cultural sites where the arts are given some value(s), performing has to generate gests that are already hybrids; they are awkward combines, tense fusions, arising from genetically incompatible sources. As a condition of entry to the machine they give something to Caesar while simultaneously trying to secrete something else - to effect a *caesura* - on art's behalf, something, perhaps, in disguised form which Caesar would not know what to do with, something which, if found, could, at some unanticipatable point, be a trouble for Caesar, too much trouble for him to tolerate.

Through their hybridity, then, makings are likely to 'throw' cultural responses. For the latter, whatever the specifics of their particular positions, still routinely gather and seek to understand the art's' things in terms of the ideals informing the interpretive habits of aesthetic response. The unaccountable passions that drive making are of no relevance to their working out the positions and judgments of response.

Condemned to hybridity and accepting some of its terms, most makers, seeking some 'presence' (even that of institutional re-presenting) for their gests by, chance themselves around the edges of the institutional frame and seek to survive through precarious fractured dialogues of engagement, contestation and distanciation. Making, still so close to the foci and ambitions of the arts of modernity, is inevitably haunted by some of their defining concerns. In particular the moderns' attempt to extend beyond all limits the romantic subject's urge *to*

*express* its hidden depths and to accomplish this through things that were nothing but art – seems intrinsic to the self-constitution of contemporary makers. Although autonomy, clearly compromised through hybridity, can no longer be an unequivocal goal for performing's wily ways, it still appears critical to makers' faith in and the intensity of their involvement with and seduction by art. It is as if it helps to keep alive a hope for what making-for-art is committed to and might still become, *even though the current terms of its 'life' (an institutional half-life) make it unrealisable.*

Thus the question the arts' gests now confront us with is: can they, though recognising the tragedy of their own short-fall (and thus offering themselves as icons of disillusion and fragmentation), simultaneously hold on to and find ways of showing (while remaining aside from all representing work) a hope for a different 'life' for others yet to come (in some unanticipatable future)?

Unable to be whole and pure on their own terms, and thus bound to reveal the essential tragedy of their own plight, they still hope (and this may be their and the moderns' last hope) to embed the faintest glimmer of another light, a still dark shrouded light-yet-to-come beyond the total but totally artificial illumination of representation (the above 'Given 1)...). *The challenge is to find ways of keeping alive this hope that the arts might still found their own difference.*

Perhaps it is in this context that the issue of 'origin' and each maker's struggle to pursue and show their 'originality' (that which originates their plunge into making-for-art), gathers particular significance. For if, under a system of extreme representation, one cannot ever be quite true to oneself and to one's other selves, nevertheless art's continuing possibility might lie precisely in the gap that these other selves can open up *within the gest* between themselves and the demands of both appropriating interests and other art things.

For the drive towards autonomy, modernity's legacy, is partially dependent upon would-be-artists finding ways of showing in the gests the absolute specificity of their own 'difference'. The point of the performing is, each time, to draw out through its 'movement' some 'thing' that could join up with art precisely by being nothing but itself. And from the side of reception it is our recognition of the thing's 'expression' of this specificity (its 'own' peculiar way(s)) that realises art, gathers the thing as now 'an art-thing' within culture. From the maker's site too the diffuse encompassing love of and desire for art is only realisable through the making of particular things. But, whether recognised by others (and thus recruited socially) as 'art' or not, the thing may still stand as art. For the entire effort of the performing has been to generate some thing that displays the intense specificity of the performer's relation to and engagement of art. The thing has been for-art all along. And the gap between performer and respondent may emerge in its unbridgability at the very point where judgment and placing enter. A gest that is definitely an art-thing for a maker can be judged non-art, nothing...waste matter, in its aesthetic reception and vice versa.

From whichever site the gest is engaged, then, it is its difference, its offering of itself through materialised 'means' alone (vocabularies, phrasings, rhythms, sonorities, colours, shapes, lines, spacings, timings, harmonies, disharmonies, conjunctions, disjunctions, flows, fragmentings, gestures, ties, repetitions...) that, aside from all form-content distinctions, compound a unique-whatever. Originality is this self-differentiating compound. And 'authenticity' (as being-true-only-to-self/selves) is only attributable to the thing when it shows that, whatever debts, allegiances, loves, affections, it owes and bestows elsewhere (to

other artists and art-things), it has cut 'itself' adrift on a singular trajectory. Any acknowledgments it makes to others (its 'inspirational' precedents for example) are transformed from debts, influences, into distinctive moments of the emergent trajectory; they may, metonymically, hold something of their 'origin' elsewhere, but they are given a new, different, life in the ways they have been re-cast. In this becoming-particular they may well disturb conceptions of performing and the arts' possibilities among both makers and respondents.

### **Origination as the Questioning of Making's Current Predicament**

Origination, then, as the activities that constitute and occur in the gap between self and institutions (both the arts' specific sub-traditions and representing organisations), is certainly historical but it does not refer (or does not only refer) to some distant past 'point' of origin, however formative this may have been 'originally' for the emergence of the would-be-artist. Certainly it is about how the 'self' *re-news*, begins itself ever again, by coming across and allowing other selves to surface. It entails an acceptance and active celebration of the dissolution of the singular authoritative self and its displacement by a loose and open gathering of many such fragments. And for performing under and after modernity this is a process always already under way. Indeed, given that with and since the moderns we have always approached 'the self' as multiple, 'the self's' embodied-becoming is the always open topic and terrain of the arts' questioning movement. As far as 'self' is concerned, nothing is given, other than this open question. Originating is that mixed movement of both renewal and change in which the self's waving particles, their flowing off and away, *are intrinsically and permanently unsettled*. Making-for-art suspends, at unanticipatable 'moments' of its performance, the intentional controlling singular self-authoritative self required by commonsense to hold its unruly subordinates at bay and ensure effective functioning in everyday life.<sup>6</sup>

Both the self in its embodied-becoming and the context through which it moves are in flux. It is condemned to re-originate itself without end. In this way an origin is always 'now' and 'anew' – it is what keeps forcing the maker 'on'. And while the emergent, but never settled, origin may carry utterly historical (past) elements scored across its surfaces (experienced through surface oscillations, splits, interruptions, perceptual and affectual associations, voluntary and involuntary memories, and so on), these little 'originals' contribute only as elements in the plane of current becoming. The ever-shifting context renders them as both the same and different in the elemental constituting context-specific activities of performing – the plane of becoming as it is 'now' in its unstoppable unfolding. And as the goal of a searching, whose driving force is to 'expose'<sup>7</sup> origination, this originating (perhaps 'these originatings' would be better) remains the perennial goad to performing. Because the forceful and forcing origin(s) are continually recontextualised (sometimes subtly, sometimes radically) in the shifting texture of becoming's plane, performing is always faced with

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<sup>6</sup> In his detailed and challenging commentary on the poetics of J. H. Prynne, Michael Stone-Richards approaches the question of the writer's relation to agency and autonomy through a 'passivity' that precedes intentional activity. He finds Prynne's drive to write at the interface of poetry and contemporary natural science (neurology in particular) enabling the written intrication of a post-human sense of becoming. The writing seeks to open itself to what goes on in the zone in between consciousness and neurological processes where embodiment (feeling) and thought collide. See M. Stone-Richards, 'The time of the subject in the neurological field (1): A Commentary on J. H. Prynne's "Again in the Black Cloud"', in *Glossator* vol. 2, 'On the Poems of J. H. Prynne (2010)', ed. by Ryan Dobran, pp. 149 – 244 and esp. the passage following p.154. This work is Open Access, a print version of the online open access journal *Glossator* (<http://glossator.org>).

<sup>7</sup> The importance of 's'expose' to making-for-art now is treated subsequently through a consideration of a sentence by Paul Celan that contrasts it with 's'impose'.

locating the mutating terms of its own differences which, in the presencing of their passing disappearance, *never go away*.

This is where the greatest challenge to performing now lies. For the pressures to follow, either wholly or partly, the representing machinery's demands and interests are enormous. If the sought origin is intrinsic to and partially constitutive of performers' diurnal rhythms (how they insert themselves into and allow themselves to be enfolded by the enveloping world of everyday life), then any forced adaptation to outside demands and rhythms will make it very hard to hold to the little disappearing originals. And the seductions and enticements of the machinery serve to reinforce the difficulties of keeping to the trail, the spoor, of the one's (the conscious organising I's) own originating in the multiple. For substitution of institutional interest for any part of one's own brings not only its own rewards (of status and economy perhaps) but also distinctive pressures that are likely to clash directly with the needs of the performers' idiosyncratic forcing rhythms. Machines are 'about' productivity, and their own long-term survival is intimately bound up with how their productive means (capitalised technoscientific forces) can be constantly geared and tuned to ensure this continuity.

In this contest the desires and rhythms of individual performers have to be continuously adapted to both the machine's speed and its material requirements (the flow of 'raw' materials it needs to replenish, maintain or expand its output). To lapse into 'style', into repetitions, into habits of performing, is all too easy in the face of such pressures. Indeed, institutional recognition may be seen as a belated reward for earlier (and perhaps long drawn-out) deprivation. Reliance on what may be increasingly regarded as performing's 'skills' or facilities, invented, modified and subject to intense probings in the course of an earlier quest for origin, can become props and taken-for-granted resources for performing. Precisely because they arose in earlier engagements of origin in a preceding 'state' of becoming, their unquestioned acceptance as tools in a necessarily different because subsequent confluence of the maker's becoming, will obscure origin – how *current* becoming originates without end. Any limiting of the space and range of questioning covers over the very zone in which what originates (what originates the self's putting itself into question on art's behalf) has its obscure ineffable life. Relying on past habits and modes of performing because of their likely machine-adaptable convenience is a way of abolishing the gap opened up between performing's intensities and institution's productive needs. Once institutional relevances are mapped onto and into the performing-self it is very difficult to avoid their controlling effects. Permeating performing's surfaces, institutional needs draw forth and re-write, according to their own interests, the drives of current becoming. The resulting hybridity – now making's starting point – confronts the fragile legacy of the moderns' hope for an autonomous true-to-its-selves search for what originates in ever new ways: the one-as-many's desire to become at one with art. Making's only hope for little break-outs-beyond it is to strive to open, however temporarily, tiny gaps between institution and art-as-search-for-its-selves. Surely a recognition of hybridity's reality (the forced mixing of the immiscibles of the desire for original autonomy with a grounding acceptance of representation's terms) has to provoke a realisation that 'tactic' has to become a crucial constituent of making-for-art?

### **Becoming-Tactical**

Situation-responsive tactics involve the continuous assessment, now necessarily integral to performing, of the difference between the site aimed for through its own intensities, and the site towards which it is pulled by institutional pressures. Tactics turn around the troubles of clinging on, sur-viving, within the gap between these mutually exclusive planes. And they

may be complicated by the range of rhetorics used to recruit performers and gesticulators. For some institutional interests undoubtedly represent themselves as ‘friends’, ‘supporters’ and advocates of and for the arts, as working towards the same end as performers and on their behalf. But what performers have to remind themselves constantly in the development of these tactics is that such apparent support is, with rare exceptions, invariably positioned clearly on the sites of aesthetic reception. And these positions, invariably within the safety and security of institutional backing, are precisely those whose relation to (and therefore understanding and ‘appreciation’ of) the arts is grounded in the aesthetics of taste and critical judgment, and the institutional responsibilities of response-management. They can have only passing, ‘academic’, interest in the specific dynamics of performing from which arts’ gesticulations emerge. Indeed for them to try to accommodate performing’s intensities to their taste-aesthetics would generate a dissolution of the reasons for their relation to art. Performing and judging are mutually exclusive. In developing tactics for surviving in the gap performers need to maintain a distance from and scepticism towards claims and offers of friendship. Performing and responding constitute different planes of becoming and they live through different temporal relations to the arts’ things.

Of course, tactics have never been absent from performers’ ways of trying to position themselves and their gesticulations. But in modernity’s afterwards, because systematic representation sets the terms for the (half-)life of the arts, informing and permeating every aspect of the relation between performing and its reception, it is always already partially constitutive of the performance zone. If the arts, since the moderns, have shown themselves, through particular kinds of in-turning, as performances that, on art’s behalf, go by way of a questioning of self and art, then that very self-under-scrutiny is now necessarily institutionally infused and indebted in ways running directly counter to its intense drive towards autonomy. The turn-within thus needs to locate these institutional injections to try to find ways of ensuring that they do not dominate and re-align, according to their alien interests, the drive towards art’s impossible ‘as such’ – ‘pure art’. To have recognised that the moderns’ post-romantic desire for absolute autonomy is already compromised is to begin to be open to the necessity of tactics.

Clearly tactics cannot insulate making from institutional controls. But, at the least, a reflexive attention towards the necessity and consequences of living a double life - a life simultaneously within and outside representing institutions’ interests - may be the necessary condition of the arts’ teetering survival. Institutions are skill-banks for appropriating means and will always be able to recuperate, absorb and re-present the arts according to their interests. As epitomes of weakness, the arts’ gesticulations can offer little direct resistance. *What is left to performing is the development of a double tactics to match the double life which defines its plight.* A tactics of the in-between would have to live in and try to find ways of exploiting the tension between irreconcilable demands. The challenge is to find ways (always context-specific) of holding fast to the primacy of showing, however fleetingly, the otherness of art’s becoming: becoming other, elsewhere, to ‘what is’, the very ‘destination’ of the rider in Kafka’s parable – ‘Away-From-Here’<sup>8</sup>. Yet this has to be sustained while enacting, miming perhaps, some of the motions of institutional affiliation.

Performing thus needs to be about a kind of concealment. Art-particles have to be secreted somehow within the surfacing of a gesticulation that appears to be reconciled with and resigned to

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<sup>8</sup> The parable is titled ‘My Destination’. See Franz Kafka, ‘Parables and Paradoxes’, Schocken, New York, 1971, p. 189.

institutional requirements. It has to try to perform this while knowing from the outset that the inordinate appropriating technologies would soon enough dissolve its concealing insulations and secretions. Caught in between, making-for-art can only sur-vive by being forever on the move, a back-and-forth shuttling of violent agitation and calm passivity, simultaneously one and others distributing themselves cross pure alienation and willed affiliation.

But the tactical vision which might sustain this in-between zone will draw the performing<sup>9</sup> towards tactics of avoidance, of abjection, of inertness, of collapse, of fragmentation, of disappearance, of double dealing (giving-withholding), of seemingly passive confrontational resistance, of the vague, of the impenetrably specific, of media-mixing beyond the sometimes bland reassurances of a 'home' medium. For the point of tactics permeated by the work of representation can only be to sustain performing as a holding operation, as holding on, the para-practical praxis of a half-(or less or slightly more)life which knows that art has to cling on in its own gloaming for the time being, for as long as representation's time being takes. The moderns' trajectory-beyond has to be forcibly modified, turned back onto and into itself, in the quarter-light of changed circumstances. It has somehow to turn itself into, and itself up as, an outside-while-within-heading-outwards.

The one virtue of institutional experience for art-performing is that it makes utterly manifest the practical impossibility of purity. Necessarily immersed, like everyone else, in the everyday world, the arts' gests are and will always be, no matter how much performers seek to hold to the goal of absolute separation, permeated by things of that world. Realising this, learning its lesson, the arts are left holding on to a hope without illusions that can only be directed towards the future. What then might inform the performing is not the moderns' over-optimistic belief in their own achieved freedom and autonomy (the arrival on earth of the pure...), but the hope that the arts' things, in the face of appropriation, might still be able to keep alive the vision of the possibility of otherness – an other-still-to-come: art as the envisioning of a necessary not-yet. To sur-vive while holding to, exemplifying, this hope, performing needs to keep all its wits about it...

Perhaps, then, performing has now been drawn so close to, is so much a part of, the routines of representation themselves that this very proximity can perversely become an unexpected resource. Intimacy with the manipulating appropriators (invariably operating from within a perception of their own art-oriented benevolence, a benevolence as ever situated, tempered and led by an aesthetics of critical judgment as mastery) provides opportunities for a close monitoring of what institutions take for granted about their own controlling relations to the arts. Tactical awareness of and attention to how the powers of routine representation are effected may furnish performers with materials of direct relevance in the development of a tactics of avoidance. Not that tactics under such circumstances could ever be part of some blueprint for resistance. Rather they may be drawn into the play of the performing process and combined with other elements in always unanticipatable ways. By virtue of their institutional experience performers can become agents for an art-yet-to-come. Condemned to hybridity the challenge is to find ways of secreting fragments of the pledge of difference.

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Bolt also insists on making as a 'performance' that is absolutely other to 'representation'. But whereas my emphasis here is upon the challenge to performing of the permeating technoscientific machinery that structures the making context, she writes towards the development of a 'materialist ontology of the work of art'. See Barbara Bolt, 'Art Beyond Representation : The Performative Power of the Image', I. B. Tauris, London, 2004.

Maybe the hybrids emerging under these conditions, destined for an institutional life but, by whatever devious self-insulations, *seeking to preserve elements of an utterly different kind of becoming – a becoming-other-within-the-same* – can begin to gather within and re-form, according to their own lights, a particular zone for performance. They seem, as a condition of performing's pressing needs, to share some of the features of a category of aesthetic response and evaluation that performing might adapt to its situational needs – allegory.

### **Performing Tactically as Partial Allegoresis**

Allegories are double becomings. Whatever their medium or prime material, they offer themselves as a paradoxical tension between two states: they seek to attract through a texture (how their material surfaces make their appearance) whose 'significance' or 'point' (for the performer) is to operate as a vehicle which takes the respondent to a different, implicit, alternative but invisible texture or zone of contemplative seduction. This alternative *but not secondary* zone is, if not the real 'content' of the thing, the destination towards which the performer hopes respondents will be drawn and will pass through while in some way still at the surfaces, for art's gests consist only of and in these passing surfaces. This doubling's 'movement', a constant out and return between textures, shows that what the gest offers and seeks to live by as its surfacing, is expressive of an uncertainty, an unsettlable hovering this-way-that-way, constituting performer's 'own' becoming. Art-as-allegoresis offers itself as ensnared in and consumed by its own paradoxical irresolvable movement.

Yet, from the tensions of the performer's 'position', the allegorical thing's supposed secondary zone of reserve, is not something which could have been offered, shaped, 'said', textured, in any other way (i.e. more directly, without the 'camouflage' that allowed it to lie partially 'concealed' (though right 'there' at and as the gest's surfacing). It could not have been made 'first', or more explicit. The secreted reserve's possibility is constituted entirely the texture offering itself as primary to any respondent, the surfacing that is 'all there is'. This very reserve, this self-withdrawing retreating into its own distance (simultaneously both proximate and far away) is exactly its offer, its plane of becoming. For it to be opened and drawn out towards its own possibility, it has eventually to expose itself as nothing more than its singularly double life. Its surface contains, offers and withholds a depth-to-come that is already right there. Irresolvable oscillation is its tremulous life (recalling 'Mrs. Potatoes'...).

In a sense, as respondent, one can never quite 'know where one is' with it. For, if its surface engages as the performer, borne along by the tensions of making, hoped it might, one will always be left caught up in its tangles, hovering groundless in its paradoxical in-between. It cannot deliver catharsis. Indeed, the performer's hope and pledge is precisely that this irresolvable obscurity is the gest's reason for becoming and potential for attraction – the hope-in-doubt that its shuttling irresolution is what will grip.

With allegoresis floating in the background, then, not as model but as precedent, perhaps the hybrids provoked by institutional life (exemplars of a fatefully specific floating suspension) can have no other way of holding on to art's difference, of trying to keep the tiny flame of its already guttering candle alive. What is left to them may be no more than the possibility of secreting the hope for this difference in textures which owe multiple allegiances and are subject to so many conflicting pressures. Maybe their only hope is that their reserve regions might still provide some passing (always temporary, for the exorbitant skills of institutional techniques will find them out) shelter where remnants of art in its current plight might just hang on.