

## Following a line ... she collapses onto the gleaning table

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**Abstract:** This paper, titled 'Following a line ... she collapses onto the gleaning table', looks at the relationships between writing and drawing. In particular it looks at a creative-making practice that is based on the gathering of 'remains', on the bits and pieces left-over, and brings to mind studio teaching, where the scraps of thinking and noting and sketching are often discarded (and thrown-away). In the paper, drawing and writing are considered to be 'graphic events'. Agnes Varda's film *The Gleaners and I* is referred to, as are writings by Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Gilles Deleuze, Clarice Lispector, Octavia Paz and Gregory Ulmer. Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* also plays a part. Fragment-images from an eight-metre long drawing by Michael Geissler (Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture & Design), that took its starting point from 'scraps' left in a studio, accompany this paper. These non-representational images form a parallel text; the image-text and the writing-text together are a made-work.

**Keywords:** writing, drawing, remains, teaching, event, art

'Love begins with a bench' (Cixous, 1998, p. 50).

'I like filming rotting stuff, leftovers and debris, mouldy things and rubbish' (Varda, 2000).

All around the design-studio – on the tables and the floor, shoved into the bins – paper, scribbled on, drawn over, screwed up, abandoned, forgotten, rejected, unloved; the remains of labour, of learning, of unlearning, of hate and despair and disinterest, of boredom and rejection; rubbish, waste, ruin, excess, remnants, surplus, spillage, detritus, refuse (lines, words, rubbings, creases, folds, crinkles, colours, footprints, stains) ...<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes we, the writer and the drawer, pick up the remains, make piles on tables, other times we finish the job ... throw it all away, good riddance, adieu, good luck, rot-in-hell.

Writing is (made by) slow gathering, handling this and that, keeping one's eyes on the margins, adding word to word, her word to his word, composing by remembering and following (old notes, photographs, dog-ears, asterisks), by taking time, by feeling anxious; one makes one's body, the writing (the made-thing), in time, with time. From the outside (an enchanted outside; or, from the inside of the air), something arrives, a ghost, a monster, a stranger, an animal, a glorious blue; a gift, a miracle, an enigma, a *something* one lets-in, welcomes, an accident, a chance, a mess, a step toward another's mess, or my own, junk;

suddenly, I am more than I was, I am the one who is arriving, dreaming my junk-filled self (reaching out; there is almost-nothing there; and yet so much).

One takes something, uses something to work with/from, that one needs/wishes to *go on* with (so as to get-on with the work – art, design, writing, singing, dancing, filming, teaching; the work, for instance, of building the world, again); it could be love, or a year, or a word, a scent, a sleep, a map (and something was taken/used for *that* short list to be thought and written).

'... and everything begins, like the postcard, with reproduction ...' (Derrida, 1987, p. 63).

Each small found-mark is a postcard (a note, a picture, an address, a stamp) to be cut and pasted (like a quotation), to be received (if it does arrive) and drawn upon. *This* writing, for instance, is a drawing of a table (I am sending you, giving you, a drawing of a table); it is a table for writing at; it has a chair pushed under it, a chair awaiting, but the chair will be another writing (not this one) – it is only under the table in thought, with the table now-said in the writing. The table is a surface for a book (an archive) of drawings; these drawings will furnish a world, for a moment; the table is the turning of pages too; the table is exactly as you imagine a table to be – although, it has several drawers, and is made of beautiful wood. It's a table to die for (and on perhaps), and to sit at each morning to write, to copy out sentences – one's that have never caught your eye before, and yet are *delirious* (and always were), sentences of terrible quietness, ones that lay-about, bare as bones (or so it seems).

The table will never ever be finished; most of it will stay, hidden, in a notebook, or become a distant memory; and, once-in-awhile it will pour out (as sound) at the mention of a rendezvous (for instance) sketched-out in speech to another, who has turned-up without warning, and who was forgotten by you, right up until *that* moment (they ask and you tell them how you are; you say, *I am table*). The memory is an accident, a crash – as if there could be *an accident* (of memory); no, no accident, instead one more line drawn across the face of the table (and in the face of the other) – there, that's part of the table now, of its intention (beyond you), part of the *design*, a line drawn onto the table *before* the writing begins; the table is being written (a writing table).

The trouble starts with the gathering of *remains* (a type of re-searching); then it starts again with the first word (maybe not even a word, more a sigh, a gasp); then again with the word *table*, now there's no end to the trouble(s).<sup>2</sup> And the body of the writing is less and less *somewhere-in-particular*; less and less in place; it has drifted away, but it remains too, to be

read (as the remains), as small incessant effects – at the table the non-writing, thought, is written.<sup>3</sup> This is important, as writing now is spread-out, scattered, inconclusive forever.

The table looks nothing like a table; I can write this, I have written this. Writing does this drawing. The table is a table for the hope of both writing and drawing; its drawers are for drawings and writings, and for the beginnings of drawings/writings (titles, measurements, quotations, errors) – small suspenseful strokes of the (yet) invisible (hope). ‘The effort to write is always beyond my strength. What you see here, these lines, these strokes, are rungs on the ladder of writing, the steps which I have cut with my fingernails in my own wall, in order to hoist myself up above and beyond myself’ (Cixous, p. 25).

The table is a dream. The table could be a bench. It makes a difference to call the table a bench. You can sit on a bench (‘... the stream, the flowers, and out of breath she collapses onto the bench ...’ (Cixous, p. 50)). There are different things on a bench. Sometimes a table becomes a bench (when it’s thrown out, for instance); and sometimes, in time, a bench emerges as a table, it surfaces to be another type of surface, for food, for plants, for birds.

To go away, to leave, even for a short walk ...

*‘I am going out to walk for a bit,  
I’ll be back right away,  
probably I won’t go far’ (Derrida, p. 127).*

... will change the direction of the work underway – writing, drawing, thinking. It might be a slight change, a swerve, or a dividing line, dead straight from left to right, light as a feather. You might leave never to return, or return to a blank page (blank when you left, blank when you return), as if you’d never even pondered beginning (but you had, you had vowed to start *soon* – sooner or later: I will write that house, you vow). And to begin you might reach for a sentence, a sentence for life, a throng of words assembled by another for one’s attention (written just for you to read), and possible use (like kindling for a fire), or to borrow (like sugar); for example: ‘Any plane surface within a certain range of dimensions, and suspended or supported at a particular height off the floor, may be considered a table’ (Kingwell, p. 174)<sup>4</sup>. One-self becomes an-other, is made *to be* an-other, by *their* work, the work of the other, as their work is excised and carried over, copied down upon the page on the table (or upon the table of the page). It is a kind of drawing (an actual drawing), a broken-off bit of a larger drawing, as if tripped over (and one is overjoyed, because it is so fitting, and it starts things up, writing starts, writing thinks that it is drawing, that it is making a space in the world); and it has begun, finally, by *reading* (thank goodness).

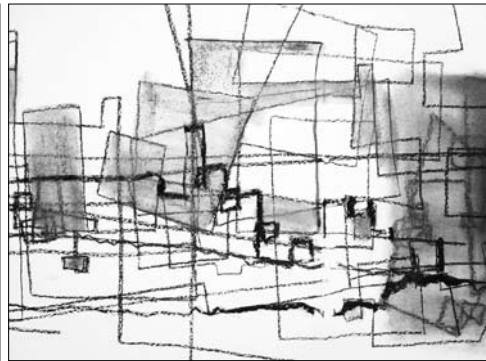
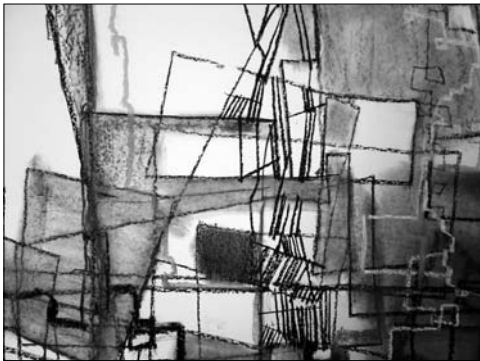
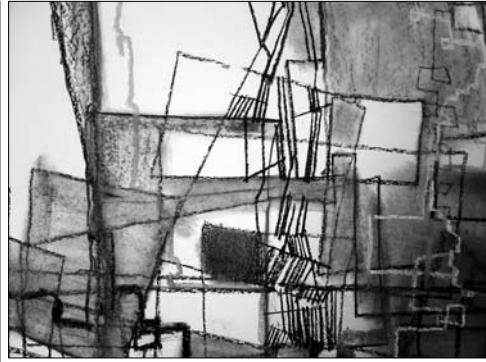
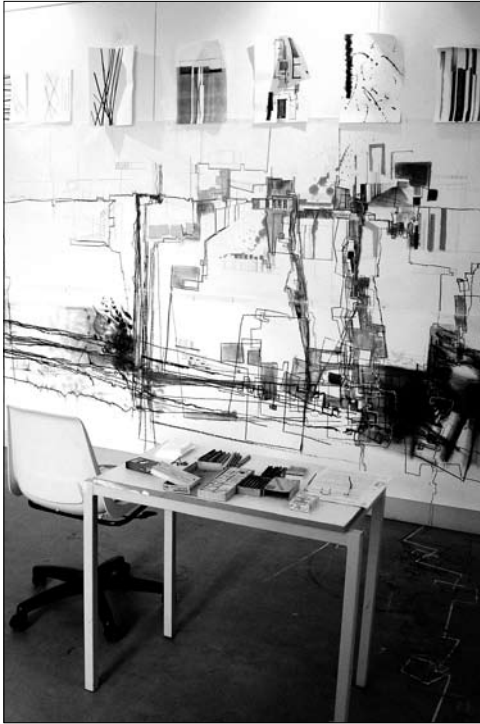
We make by gleaning; in Agnès Varda's film, *The Gleaners and I*, about gleaning, she is the gleaner, both of her own life and the life of those she films (the gleaners), and also of the making of the film itself. She makes use of the accidents of her filming; when the camera is left running and the lens cap is filmed bobbing in and out of frame Varda leaves the footage in and calls it *the dance of the lens cap* (she has gleaned her mistake). *There*, she seems to say, *there's some waste, and now here, here's some physical rhythm for you, here is what I have made of it (with music).*

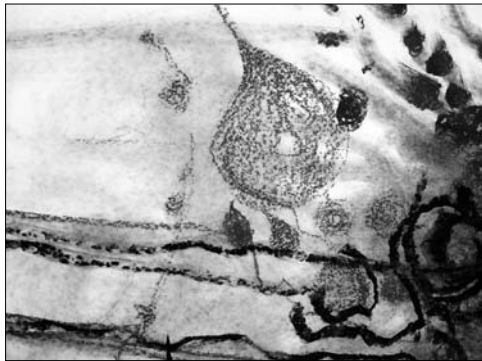
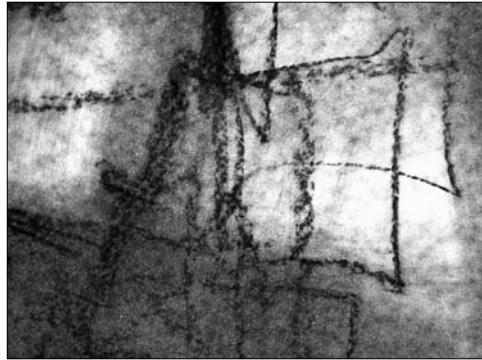
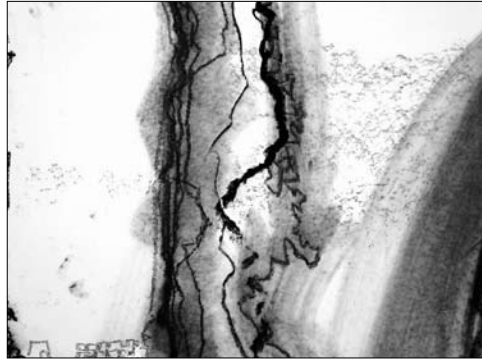
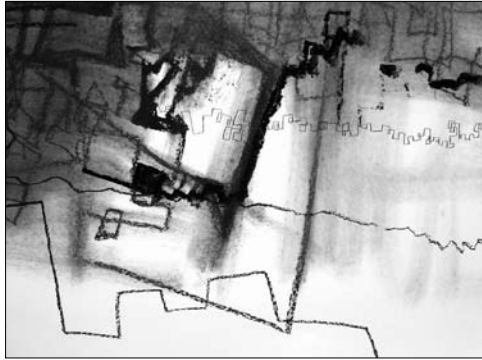
Gleaning is not a method, not a teaching; it's a possibility, an understanding (a way to live). As a research method it is aligned with that invented by Gregory Ulmer in his book *Heuretics, The Logic of Invention*. He says, more or less: glean. If you want to make something, he says, try this *weaving*-method; a process of mixing several strands, and the strands can be named: Contrast, Analogy, Theory, Target, and Tale. To work with these strands one must glean one's own interests, one must consider one's 'specific position in the time and space of a culture' (Ulmer, 1994, p. 32). One must be, in fact, subjective. He calls this method *chorography* after Plato's concept *chora* – which is a generative vessel, or space, that will endlessly receive; a container that allows everything to come and to go. Chorography is an experimental method of making new poetics; research by doing rather than consuming. It is choral-working. And one can improvise within the five strands (or categories; and there could be more, and they could have different names). Essentially it is the building of structures of possibility; of using what comes into view, and being associational, and intuitive. The process is as much about failure as success. It's a practice of adventure and synthesis, of evoking relationships (from what is gleaned) between things and facts and concerns and desires, it's a scattered and infinite making (like using the bobbing lens cap).<sup>5</sup> Gleaning saves the excess, and makes helpful the broken, abandoned, rotting, imperfect, worn, and the failed – it picks one/self up-off the floor, or out of the swamp, and values the chance to make-do with the mess (to see the mess anew)<sup>6</sup>; it draws upon reserves, and draws out exhaustion into inexhaustiveness, as there are inexhaustive amounts of surplus matters and materials from which to make a refrain, a poem, a reply, an image; to form a new thought. 'To *make* an image from time to time ... Can art, painting, music have any other goal, even if the contents of the image are quite meagre, quite mediocre? In one of Lichtenstein's porcelain sculptures, sixty centimeters high, there stands a brown-trunked tree, topped with a ball of green, and flanked by a little cloud on the left and a patch of sky on the right, at different heights: what force! One asks nothing more ... The image is a little ritornello, whether visual or aural ... Image-ritornellos run throughout [Samuel] Beckett's books. In *First Love*, 'he' watches a patch of starry sky as it comes and goes, and 'she' sings in a low voice. The image is not defined by the sublimity

of its content but by its form, that is, by its 'internal tension,' or by the force it mobilizes to create a void or to bore holes, to loosen the grip of words, to dry up the oozing of voices, so as to free itself from memory and reason: a small, alogical, amnesiac, and almost aphasic image, sometimes standing in the void, sometimes shivering in the open. The image is not an object but a 'process'. We do not know the power of such images, so simple do they appear from the point of view of the object' (Deleuze, 1997, p. 158/159).

Gleaning is the taking of the gifts that are not given (as if they are given), but are there for *the taking*; gifts without the name *gift*, gifts for those who feel free to take *the gift*, who are willing to steal-away the fruit, the sketch, the sentence (in the name of touch, a touch that touches upon the flowing-over (overflow) of the world we make; a touch that recognizes fleetingly, but again and again, that we are not alone in our craving, that we do not have to make it all up by ourselves); that we can *help ourselves*, that we share the world (with *everything*, animate and inanimate), that we do not have to start at the start, or start with a belief that there is a *blank empty start* – with the digging of the soil, with the melting of the metal, with the pulping of the trees (that are all already in the midst of *their* own makings). This, I imagine, is what Ulmer means by proposing a set of categories (that become fields) that enable us (arm us) to make in the midst of *our own making* (of self), of paying close attention to our own minute specifics, our own nuanced spatialized place.







Gleaning, running one's eyes around the space (the classroom, the theatre, the gallery, the surgery), along the street, across the horizon, over the page, can – if we surrender the notion (momentary, perhaps) of an original (independent of anything else) thought, a genius idea, coming to us like magic (from the gods), turning us inside-out, singling us out as *the one* – give us beginnings in all directions, ready-things from the hands (and life and labour) of others that are not so much *intact* answers to our heart's-desire, but the energy of inspiration (of breathing in or into), food for thought, shivers of intuition; and then, with force of differing kinds, we belong to others' (imagined) origins (or to a never-ending chain of origins – origins-without-origins), to the community of myriad others – who we make contact with, touch upon, and join (breathe-with).

In the (design-)studio, paper is the table, the screen, the surface, on(to) which thought arrives; it is expendable, page after page marked and left, marked and left. Once the surface was skin, the skin was stretched, dried, rubbed, then scored; the surface was an animal.<sup>7</sup> Once, the surface was sand and rock. On the (animal-rock of the) paper surface, desire and feeling congregate, sent from inner and outer speech, to try out their wings. Can a first line become a museum, a school, a house, an embassy, a skyscraper; a note is made (jotted down, dashed off, scrawled, doodled, recorded) about site, light, sound, tone, wall, door, floor, and so on ...<sup>8</sup>; a diagram sums up a lecture, a single word suggests intention: feather, seaweed, lagoon. '... if it [paper] gets hold of us bodily, and through every sense, and through every fantasy, this is because its economy has always been more than that of a medium (of a straightforward means of communication, the supposed neutrality of a support) – but also, paradoxically ... that of a multimedia. It has always been so, already, virtually. Multimedia not ... in the regular and current use of this word, which, strictly speaking, generally presupposes precisely the *supposition* of an electrical support. Paper is no more multimedia 'in itself', of course, but ... it 'already functions', *for us*, virtually, as such. ... Paper is the support not only for marks but for a complex 'operation' – spatial and temporal; visual, tangible and often sonorous; active but also passive (something other than an 'operation,' then, the becoming opus or the archive of operative work)' (Derrida, 2005, p. 42).

On the paper, the page, a world is made/operated on, a world of infinitely moving (extracted, adjusted, oiled, filed, recombined) parts, its complexity is packed into shades of a doubtful tentative procession of learned and improvised movement(s) – the writing of a single letter, e.g. L or M; or, the unexpected *happening* of a pencil held on the page and slowly patiently pulled across: contemplation, pleasure, trust, expectation, acceptance, surprise; moving, choosing to move, without the demand for *outcome*; the seeing and watching of one's body

as a subject in the world, and of the particularity of being *that* subject, and that *subject* bringing into appearance *something* by a deliberate sitting at another surface (other than one-self), a surface that might resemble a *table*, or an animal - an animal-table.

What we put down on the paper comes to the sight, potentially, of others: the paper comes into view as bearing (an indication of) us as who/how we are at *that* moment (it puts up with us, receives us). 'Paper is utilized in an experience involving the body, beginning with hands, eyes, voice, ears; so it mobilizes both time and space' (Derrida, 2005, p. 44).

Every time we write or draw are we looking for love – a gleam, a flash – to look back at us; so that what we have made appear will *appear* to us as faith, as cheer, as care; that we might *glean* in that gleam/flash a glimmer of ourselves for ourselves – and not for our teachers, judges, or critics; that we might glean a hint that we have changed a little, grown-up a *tad*, become human and animal, all-over skin; that in the broken lines, the clumsy render, the illegible words, we might divine our future, or intuit a realm of good-tidings (a calendar of *good tides*), where we *are* welcome.

On the (design-)studio tables and floors are pages of all sizes – torn, crumpled, stained; pages of disappointment, neglect, anger, worry, freedom (to leave), ready to be swept up, recycled, or mulched, whatever, and so we pick them up, from time to time, and look at them and wonder if the markings are as beautiful as the cracked/scratched glass in Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*<sup>9</sup>, the furry legs of a moth, the tip of a butterfly's wing, the buds of cherry blossom; are they traces, evidence, testimony, of thoughts that caught themselves in thought (thinking) and froze, amazed, and then (quick as a wink) lost their nerve, or slipped, and, with the next thought, ripped the page from the book, and *started* (heart-broken) all over again: 'Graze the paper with the soul's foot, and immediately the foot slips. It's always this same story of the foot and the ground, one and the other in motion, the one missing the other. How then to draw a firm footing, when our soul is merely a staggering? Our drawings, our books and us, we all go along at the same pace, with an uncertain foot. This is why it is the legs above all which, in our drawings, are the most agitated' (Cixous, 1998, p. 29).

Writing is a way/mode (in a way) of drawing, of forming by hand, shapes called letters – characters, signs, symbols, consonants, vowels (from the archive of the roman alphabet) – and *here*, in the first instance by a cursive script, in syllables, spelt out, in a draft shape: in sentences, phrases, paragraphs, with capital letters and full-stops and commas and semi-colons, and colons, past and present tenses, adverbs, verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, conjunctives; now and then I use a question mark, an ellipsis, brackets, dashes, slashes,

apostrophes, accents, quotation marks; I make at best a *mood*; the mood is composed of all the markings in the constellation of a writing that in each of its separate contributing marks is itself an atmosphere (a mood then of atmospheres; the meaning and history of the individual word (sketch), the combinations of several words (e.g. *gather to us*), the choice of a word (e.g. *atmosphere*), the order of the paragraphs (e.g. a pathway), the other writers (e.g. Hélène Cixous), the tone of the other writer's (e.g. *the deep bass of sorrow*), the touch and touchings of different forms (e.g. art, film, furniture). There are half-baked ideas, scrappy corners, song-voices of strangers, suspect-grammar, threadbare patches, awkward angles, sharp edges, borrowed expressions, wrong-commas.

To write-draw is to write *in the mood* (for love, even), or in the mode/temper/measure of making or inventing (of imagining the drawing (*here*) could become, or already is, a table, a set of shelves, a cabinet, a chair, a house, an urban plan (including gardens, cemeteries, dwellings, underground passages, overhead passes, bees). It's a process which forms and un-forms; it's an opaque vessel of cuts, splits, slits, gashes, and hollows, partial, inconsistent, discontinuous (a texture stretched and stitched). This writing is not *about* design/style, it's more likely *for* art – a work of language, an approach (like a board-walk or a red staircase) toward (a drawing near, a seeking warmth) making (and knowing making is framing). This writing is, for instance, something else: music, film, performance, (social) sculpture<sup>10</sup> (and a drawing, as already written) – a composition (a compound substance, a combination of substances), an invitational composition, an unfinishable composition, as if heading, imprecisely, toward the open sea (with passion for the headlong *heading* and the company and the anecdotes and camp-food and starry nights and misty mornings, the choppy waves, howling wind, and creatures from the deep); and it, the coming-about writing/drawing, doesn't know what will be added to or taken from it, scraped out, squeezed in (or thrown at it). Clarice Lispector, early in her book *The Hour of the Star*, writes: '... what I write is like a dank haze. The words are sounds transfused with shadows that intersect unevenly. Stalactites, woven lace, transposed organ music. I can scarcely invoke the words to describe this pattern, vibrant and rich, morbid and obscure, its counterpoint the deep bass of sorrow' (Lispector, 1992, p. 16). Writing is a social space, a space to be in, to draw with; to follow lines from, so as to make another garden<sup>10</sup>.

And so the left-over, the scrap, is quoted, copied down, as a moment of weakness<sup>11</sup>, a leak, as if admired, dearly held; it has persisted, and it is not a mystery, it is the beginning of a drawing and of a writing; *these*, thoughts, may be mysterious – the poem, the perspective, the map (*these* are different than their stolen beginnings, and yet they are no less

'beginnings'); they are present as *the*-things (*the* poem, *the* map), and present as situations (occasions) from which we can drift-away, or come a-drift – they cannot constrain us in their sureness, their program. They, wonderful marvellous *the-things* can open the world (as mysterious) – that is, if a little anarchy *remains* (to initiate the unpredictable).<sup>12</sup>

Drawing and writing are graphic events (graphic, from the Greek *graphein*: to write); they record lines and line-shapes – there *is* the word or a *paragraph* or the outline of a body or the sketch of a window, but it *is*, too, a galaxy of other shapes that we have learned to 'read', and even if we can't read them, they are still available for reading.<sup>13</sup>

And, always, as we read we practise how to read (the monstrous painting, the convoluted novel) – we are slowed, aggrieved, impatient, brutal, or we learn to learn, and we become a strange image of ourselves; we sink into '... writing rather than seek transcendence over it or by means of it. The inconclusive play of letters is the magnetic sediment, the fertile earth or ash of writing and learning. It is out of this earth that the colossal natural entities ... are dreamed into being.'<sup>14</sup> We can ask of something: *what is it*; it is thought, it is *transmission*.<sup>15</sup>

And, out of this earth, and out of transmissions, are dreamed the machines: '... machines are great producers of waste, and the refuse they leave increases in geometric proportion to their productive capacity.' (Paz, 1990, p. 7) We are machines (from the Latin *māchina*: an invention; and from *māchināri*: to devise, to plot) and we can be anti-machines (in the Duchampian sense): 'These apparatuses are the equivalent of (the) puns: the unusual ways in which they work nullify them as machines. Their relation to utility is the same as that of delay in movement; they are without sense or meaning. They are machines that distil criticism of themselves' (Paz, 1990, p. 8).

Rubbish<sup>16</sup> offers us a chance to be an *anti-machine*, a *being* working carefully to produce a further *delay* – a drawing that is writing, a writing that is drawing (and drawing and writing as sculpture). Not as play-thing (writing/drawing play-thing) though (although playful), nor as gesture (although makeshift); but as a contribution to the ether of *abandonment*: the ecology of incomplete documents, and documents that, as act/action/event, set atmospheres in motion; a motion that is only an offering/commitment to the infinite condition of an atmospheric imagination, or an imagined atmosphere (even if *real*); to the *furnishing* of the known place we carnally inhabit and the unknown space ahead of us, that we (freely) chance upon (and about which we know next to nothing (except its impending coming)).

Out of the atmosphere though comes a *use* – a conversation, a nervous pause, a proposal, an urge to go home, a design for a *table*, a floor plan, a colour scheme, a sense of joy, a resolve,

two hours of peace, a painting, a photograph ... and one thing connects (leads) to another; the anti-machine spreads out exponentially, and its logic runs by electric filaments, gaps of thin air, pulses, ringings in the ear, shudders, rain, static, interpretations – an assembling of endlessly presenting (in themselves) assemblages, and proliferating tactics of differing densities, from the barely visible (line) to the unavoidably solid truck, road, disposition, *subject* (e.g. art, architecture, chemistry, me, etc). The anti-machine works as if it *is* an anti-machine, and all the while it belongs to the communities of machines. Somewhere nearby, in the vicinity of a chasm (machine/anti-machine), the writing/drawing reflects *not* an image-of-myself, not the appearance/surface of-myself, but an inquiry *of* myself that can be looked at and admired – it faces me, and it faces the world; it is social: ‘Drawing and writing are mirrors in which we do not see ourselves. What we see when we are the graphic mirror, when we read or write, cannot be a mirror-image. The result of loving to draw or loving to write is not an abnegation of the living self, but a discovery of life’s otherness. This discovery is not apocalyptic or sublime but divisive, echoic, repetitive and bathetic. To experience this discovery we must agree not to be its author, not to be exempt from failure, scattering and disappearance’ (Wood, 2006, p. 60).

To-be then, perhaps, in-between (or nowhere to be seen in regard to ...) ourselves looking at the mirror-work and the mirror-work – not-ourselves – looking back. A tender state of double-jointedness (and not of separation, not of peeling oneself from oneself and then speaking of a subject and an object), a fading, fleeting, and reaching (invisible) activity spilling in every-which-way and defying propositions; one can dream oneself in writing/drawing as myriad; the activity of making-present ‘... brings us out of ourselves into the world ...’ (Wood, 2006, p. 61).

And still, remains: ‘... there is no getting hold of ... drawing or writing’ (Wood, 2006, p. 62).

Duchamp’s *Large Glass* is the drawing/writing (picture/anti-machine/machine) that cannot be held; it is a painting/text/sculpture/architecture, a glass-work, sealed (hermetic), and accompanied by boxes of notes and diagrams: the *Green Box* and the *White Box*. It is touched upon (here) in passing as an artwork that cannot not be (or is) everywhere (a type of nowhere) at once – it, itself, touches upon many genres of knowledge – metaphysical, philosophical, erotic, physico-chemical, biological, ontological, spiritual, mechanical, psychoanalytical, and so on. It is wrought and grotesque all at once; an engine, a generator, of intellectual sensual thought (a teaching, a learning). Any fragment (element) of the *Large Glass* has explosive capacity in terms of what it might be *saying*; each fragment is equally available and excessive – excessively more than is possible to know from looking, and yet a

trace (salvage) too, and a trace (or in Duchamp's words an *apparition* or a *souvenir*<sup>17</sup>) that is almost-knowable, and almost-knowable in the first instance by genres – architecture, sculpture, painting, drawing (the cracks across the glass made by accident) – and by, in the long term, the slow attention to associations (by analysis, interpretation, correlation, techniques (e.g. glass, nature, joints<sup>18</sup>).

*To-do* another version of the *thing* – fragment, quote, shape, sound – that is already itself (a chord sequence, or Freud's reading of the Oedipus myth) is to treat time as a space of immense elasticity; and, in that space we, as gleaners, cast spells, conjure words and objects – turn little scraps into 'this and that' (into mountains of possibilities – a book, a philosophy, an art practice), and in the *turning* produce more waste, more residue, motivating the invention of new language with which to consider process: what *is* going on? Octavia Paz invents his *is going on* in this tiny extract about the *Large Glass*: 'The glass turns the drops into a ray of light. Again the act of looking, through which the universal magnetism is conveyed. The magnifying glass throws the ray onto the combat marble. Struck by its luminous energy, the marble jumps up and hits the first summit. In this way it sets in motion the clockwork mechanism of the Boxing Match. The first fall of the rams that hold up the Bride's garment makes the Juggler of Gravity give a little jerk. The ball attacks again, 'very hard'; the rams fall again, the first one is unfastened, and the Juggler pirouettes' (Paz, 1990, p. 58). Theatre; we are at the theatre; writing/drawing is theatre – a venue, an architecture, an encounter.

We glean to keep making/moving/walking (from ourselves as archives, from others in our (real) midst everyday, or on our shelves, or in our cinemas, and so on) and to stem the mourning for what is lost to us anyway, irretrievably, and what is overlooked and cursorily dismissed – all the labour that wears (away) the body, all that is crossed out, over-written, erased, deleted (but still in mind, the surface of mind written on, and written/printed on the body/skin in the same movement/moment (the body as *waste-book*<sup>19</sup>) – and here I am writing of the writing/drawing that has a paper-base and is based on paper, and resembles a signature (the law of identity (but not identical to *me*), as identity is still an authentication), usually, in worldly affairs, ceremoniously *given* at the table.

I listen, I glean, I try to make a little sense, to stop myself falling through the gaps (the gaps, or cracks – the chasms between – are where the relationships amongst things and facts and concerns and desires are stored; to fall through is to become part of the distributed and the scattered (more atmospheres, postcards (sendings)). I glean so as to *remain* (to fall and rise again), and so as to *reach* into and across the gaps, to build, by spreading out – a fragile bridge (a bench), a makeshift raft (tables of one kind or another), in hope digression and

improvisation will save the day, will redeem/reproduce me (or my history) for an instant – not for anything in particular, just for living (remaining).

#### Postscript One

“Touch on any part, on any sight, a sock, a hole, a wall, pictures, a resistance to museums, yet pictures always on the wall, and defining eras by those pictures. Wander looking for the odd lots, stop in front of something smallish, a little unofficial, by someone who did the best he could. That’s all. Or a self portrait by a woman no one ever hears of. She. Sincere, intransigent. Or a few squares floating, by an escapee. One or two lines on a page. That’s all I need ...”(DuPlessis, 1990, p. 164)

#### Postscript Two

The large drawing by Michael Geissler was initiated by several ‘scraps’ (left-over) from a second-year design-studio – most of them scavenged from the tables, two of them donated (thank you Charlie). This writing and the drawings (here represented by fragments) are a result of observing students’ vulnerability about their ‘process’ drawings on the one hand, and their frustration and irritation and disappointment at what amounts to the production through labour of many many beginnings (in other words, the learning of turning thought into image, into form, by practice), on the other hand; but what was more troubling and exhausting was the disbelief by students that their humble, awkward, delicate, doubtful marks are always potentially available to them; that these are open to further thought, for later consideration, for a persistence that is a matter of keeping hands and eyes attentive (and mobile) – that the work produced in the dark of every beginning can itself be gleaned (it is the remains of oneself that can be gleaned ‘tomorrow’). We told the story of the artist T. J. Kempsey who’s practice makes use of the ‘remains’ of the world by re-composing for instance a group of chairs outside a café, or smoothing the edges of a pot-hole, or taking photographs of peeling posters to make new posters, of pausing to re-adjust the print in a doctor’s office, to make a book of found pages, and so forth. A few students discovered evidence of Kempsey’s work in their everyday meanderings. About a third of the way through the drawing by Michael strange tightly formed pen-lines appeared out-of-the-blue on the surface of the paper, judiciously placed; the drawer of these lines is still a mystery; they were accepted into the drawing. The drawing appears to be a cross-section of a city (or part of a city) whose below-ground structures are at least as intricate as its above-ground structures; it seems, as an overall ‘situation’, a machine of some kind, with anti-machine tendencies and voids like fault-lines, or perhaps a type of inter-related furniture scene (an event awaiting) reaching up into the sky and down into the earth ...

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the politics of dangerous waste, in this case 'nuclear waste', and the consequential issues of trauma, disaster, memory, and monumentalising, see Peter C. Van Wyck's *Signs of Danger, Waste, Trauma, and Nuclear Threat*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2004
- <sup>2</sup> 'Furniture is for doing things, and for being beautiful; but it is also for instantiating, and illuminating, certain kinds of *political* ideas. In *Das Kapital*, for instance, Marx introduces some insights about the nature of commodities by, as it were, putting a few things on the table. 'A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing and easily understood,' he says. And yet: Analysis shows that in reality it is a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it ... The form of wood is altered by making a table out of it; nevertheless, the table remains wood, an ordinary material thing. As soon as it steps forth as commodity, however, it is transformed into a material immaterial thing. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in the face of all other commodities, it stands on its head, and out of its wooden brain it evolves notions more whimsical than if it had suddenly begun to dance.' (Kingwell, 2006, p. 175)
- <sup>3</sup> 'We all sit somewhere when we think, yes, and chairs hold us up while we work out our thoughts on desks and tables. But more importantly, what we sit upon or write upon are themselves thinking things; not just tools that help us in chosen tasks, but aspects of humanity whose very presence is thought.' (Kingwell, p. 179)
- <sup>4</sup> The quotation continues: 'This is the way in which, for example, a philosopher of kinds, natural or non-natural, nominal or real, would speak of tables and chairs. Individual instances are linked together by an articulable essence, consistency with a given design, or certain inductions that can be run, for good reasons, over the class of objects so

styled – a good reason being, in this case, something like the combination of cultural and physical factors entailed by ‘because you can sit in it.’ But to leave the matter there is to fall into a mundane version of the furniture demolition of the Cartesian philosopher. Here all tables are equal because they are all merely extensions of our instrumental tasks and bodily dimensions. This misses a deep point about tables. A ‘good’ table, a table worth having, isn’t just a handy surface or prop; it must also be striking, beautiful, elegant, or witty – or some combination thereof.’

- <sup>5</sup> Ulmer’s strategy of chorography is one of discovery as invention, an organizing of any manner of information for the making of space (metaphorically and really) that is locational; the location is horizontal rather than vertical. Ulmer’s teaching of a poetics of method, and its history, deserves much more subtle unfolding than there is room for here.
- <sup>6</sup> See: de Certeau, M. (1984). *Making Do: Uses and Tactics*. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- <sup>7</sup> The significance of ‘the animal’, dead or alive, as a way to learn, to bring to thought what one’s own skin and presence is in relationship to any ‘other’, and to the animal-self, in acts of collaboration between different ‘fields of knowledge, and between different species. Joseph Beuys’s performances with a Hare and a Coyote are, as Gregory Ulmer writes, in concert with Jacques Derrida’s *gram*, ways to think and make nomadically: ‘The method of grammatology, then, shared by Derrida and Beuys, is the display and displacement of the literal sense of the root metaphors of Western thought – dialectic and rhetoric, science and art. At the same time that this analytical function is at work, a further pedagogy of creativity is also set in motion, intended not only to show people the principles of creativity and how to put them into practice but also – and here is the particular power of the new pedagogy, beyond deconstruction – to stimulate the *desire* to create (not necessarily in ‘art’, but in the lived, socio-political world).’ (Ulmer, 1994, p. 264)
- <sup>8</sup> In Beckett’s play *Quad* the square is inexhaustive potential: ‘To exhaust space is to extenuate its potentiality by making any encounter impossible. Consequently, the solution to the problem lies in this slight dislocation at the center, this sway of the hips, this deflection, this hiatus, this punctuation, this syncope, this quick sidestep or little jump that foresees the encounter and averts it. The repetition takes nothing away from the decisive and absolute character of such a gesture. The bodies avoid each other respectively, but they avoid the center absolutely. They sidestep each other at the center in order to avoid each other, but each of them also sidesteps in solo in order to avoid the center. What is depotentialized is the space, a “track ... just wide enough for one. On it no two ever meet.”’ (Deleuze, 1997, p. 163)
- <sup>9</sup> The *Large Glass* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*) ‘... is a double glass, 1091/4 inches high and 691/4 inches long, painted in oil and divided horizontally into two identical parts by a double lead wire. ‘Finally unfinished in 1923, the *Large Glass* had its first public viewing in 1926, during the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* at the Brooklyn Museum. It was broken when it was being returned from the museum to the house of its owner; the damage was not discovered until years later, and Duchamp did not repair the work until 1936. The dividing line, which serves both as horizon and as the Bride’s transparent garment, was smashed; it is now merely a thin strip of glass held between two metallic bars. The scratched surface of the *Large Glass* is like the scarred body of a war veteran, a living map of campaigns endured. Duchamp confessed ...: ‘I love these cracks because they do not resemble broken glass. They have form, a symmetrical architecture. Better still, I see in them a strange purpose for which I’m not responsible, a design ready-made in a way that I respect and love.’ (Paz, 1990, p. 35)
- <sup>10</sup> *Social Sculpture* is the name Joseph Beuys gave to a particular way of thinking and doing creative practice, or more generally ‘human productivity’, where theory becomes theatre or performance: writing as sculpture, for instance. Beuys wrote, in his introduction to a catalogue for his solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1979: ‘My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture, or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture *can* be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone: *Thinking Forms* – how we mould our thoughts or / *Spoken Forms* – how we shape our thoughts into words or / *SOCIAL SCULPTURE* – how we mould and shape the world in which we live: *Sculpture as an evolutionary process; everyone an artist*. That is why the nature of my sculpture is not fixed and finished. Processes continue in most of them: chemical reactions, fermentations, colour changes, decay, drying up. Everything is in a *state of change*.’ (Ulmer, 1994, p. 227)

- <sup>11</sup> 'It's true that when we quote, with or without marking the fact, with or without a known source, authors start to proliferate. The Author becomes uneasy. Sometimes there's a sense of pressure from what had to be missed out. Quotation marks a sort of weak place, like the places on the earth where there are joints between tectonic plates. It's still the earth, but there can be chasms, eruptions, earthquakes there. There's feeling of the ancientness and the capacity to surprise that the writing's crust can have.' (Wood, 2006, p. 54)
- <sup>12</sup> 'And just as the image must attain the indefinite, while remaining completely determined, so space must always be an any-space-whatever, disused, unmodified, even though it is entirely determined geometrically (a square with these sides and diagonals, a circle with these zones, a cylinder 'fifty metres round and sixteen high'). The any-space-whatever is populated and well-trodden, it is even that which we ourselves populate and traverse, but it is opposed to all our pseudoqualified extensions, and is defined as 'neither here nor there where all the footsteps ever fell can never fare nearer to anywhere nor from anywhere further away.' Just as the image appears as a visual or aural ritornello to the one who makes it, space appears as a motor ritornello – postures, positions, and gaits – to the one who travels through it. All these images compose and decompose themselves.' (Quoting Samuel Beckett, Deleuze, 1997, p. 160)
- <sup>13</sup> 'Despite our habitual preoccupation with the experiences, emotions or motives that writing may evoke, quotation reminds us that writing is more like drawing, more consequentially a matter of the recording of lines and shapes, then we tend to think. The form of letters and words gives itself as freely to the 'illiterate' as to the 'literate' would-be reader. This is what makes it possible to learn to read.' (Wood, 2006, p. 55)
- <sup>14</sup> The ellipsis stands in for: '... that interests Kant and the rest of us so much ...' (Wood, 2006, p. 55)
- <sup>15</sup> Ulmer writes of Beuys being engaged in a mode of Writing, in terms of how he describes himself and his work as *transmitter's*: "I want the work to become an energy center, like an atomic station. It's the same principle again: transmitter and receiver. The receiver is the same as the transmitter ... The spectator becomes the program.' Indeed, the best way to appreciate the specific nature of this Writing (rite-ing) is not as art, science, or philosophy, but as pedagogy: 'To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration. If you want to explain yourself you must present something tangible. But after a while this has only the function of a historic document. Objects aren't very important to me anymore. I want to get to the origin of matter, to the thought behind it. Thought, speech, communication – and not only in the socialist sense of the word – are all expressions of the free human being.'" (Ulmer, 1994, p. 245)
- <sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the value of the creation of rubbish/garbage in terms of it being the way we make knowledge (which in the final work is hidden) see: Scanlon, 2005)
- <sup>17</sup> 'The *Green Box* says that *the coefficient of displacement* – that is to say the farther or the closer each shot [or each projected desire] is to the target – *is nothing but a souvenir*. A strange hermetic affirmation that, however, is not impossible to decipher: what we see is only a souvenir (vague, imprecise, unfaithful) of what it really *is*. Knowledge is remembrance. Amorous, desiring remembrance.' (Paz, 1990, p. 56)
- <sup>18</sup> 'Joints are dangerous links: they tend to dis-joint (everything in nature is joined and a group of joints is form. Hence, all designs and construction in the arts and architecture are specific calculation[s] for re-joining into unity, artificially assembled [material], and the control of decay.' (Kiesler, F. 1994, p. 114)
- <sup>19</sup> Waste-books were used in accounting as the general ledger for the transactions of the day or week, etc. in their rough form, and from them the balance sheets would be drawn up; the waste-books showed how a business was operating, how it could be refined (alchemically: how it could be turned into gold); it was from the waste-books that the wealth of commerce was delivered or transmitted; the waste-books were the garbage bins where things were thrown to wait or be sorted out. (Scanlon, 2005)