

FOR CHRIS MANN OPEN SPACE 22

...tongue on all the...
...so you white...
...my thanks or...
...my choosy...
...ever tol y...
...learn english...
...up y been...
...only th own...
...fine...
...loss...
...is th...
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...black...
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...that has...
...very nice...
...the world...
...may...
...streets...
...money...
...everybody...
...wrong...
...who...
...dinosaur...
...city...
...island...
...of people...
...cockroaches...
...about...
...all in...
...ro mar...
...R come...
...n nice...
...3 t 4...
...vish...
...coppers...
...please...
...space...
...didn't...
...treasure...
...tarantula...
...time...
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...good...
...real...

The OPEN SPACE magazine

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issue 22

for Chris Mann

spring 2020

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02/04/2015 at Roulette

cover image and montage © Brigid Burke

The Open Space Web Magazine, edited by Tildy Bayar, Dorota Czermer, Jon Forshee, and Dean Rosenthal is an online magazine dedicated to creative discourse in media of formulation other than print. The contents are constantly being updated, and content relevant to this issue may be viewed/heard at:

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FOR CHRIS MANN

b. Melbourne, Australia 1949
d. New York, United States, 2018

from “goes something like this”, video by George Quasha



FOR CHRIS MANN – The Open Space Magazine #22 WEBPAGE
Curated by Elaine R. Barkin and Produced by Jon Forshee



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INFERRING CHRIS MANN

Elaine R. Barkin



To those of you who so generously responded to our invitation to participate in a remembrance of Chris Mann, we at Open Space thank you most heartfully. In this issue of *The Open Space Magazine* and on our webpage and in the many expressive languages in which you chose to respond, a depth of loving sadness is revealed as you've each, in your own voice, conveyed your wonderment at having known and having worked with Chris. And we, certainly I, were astounded by the openness with which you shared your grief, your loss, your memories, your love and your selves. As a non-member of the Chris-Circle, I was immediately taken with, taken in by, the ease with which we all communicated, those of you there in Australia and here in the U.S. The more so insofar as I've had a special fondness for Australia since my first 6-week long visit in March-April 1986, a breathtaking time that included Sydney-birds-Brisbane-flying foxes-the Gold Coast-birds-Mullumbimby-Melbourne-Hanging Rock-birds-Ballarat-kangaroos-fairy penguins-koalas-Alice Springs-goanna-Uluru and a 4 AM sighting of Halley's Comet in the outskirts of Alice, telescopes lined up and adjusted for us to view the streaker in the Southern Cross sky. All of which, and more, including two subsequent visits to Oz, engendered a sense of comradeship between, amongst us all. On my part at least.



Most of all and most significantly, this Chris persona, whom I'd met just once during the 1980s in upper New York State and whose work I knew of via Kenneth Gaburo, a University of California colleague, became somewhat more known to me as your texts, music, videos, poetry, artwork, memories and stories arrived ... , yet ultimately and unsurprisingly an "unknown unknown". Chris's bifurcated self str**ADD**led knowingness *farmished* with vaudevillian *shtick* humor: how then to 'make sense' of his-self and his milieu, along-the-way inventing a body-language-music-of-gestures in multiple dialects that queried itself at the same time at which its extents of comprehensibility swerved from some to none, as in first encounters with much New Music. Words poured out, improvised stretches, collaged together, truth, sense, what is, grammar, rules interrogated. Voiceless utterances gushed from fingers, dizzyingly dancing along up-tempo, signing in Strine, secretively.

Chris Mann—brilliant, multilingual, multicultural, willful, nonconforming—Outsider-Insider simultaneously, ancient heritage as outcast reified. For sure, to conform is to lose individuality, despite the occasional need for compliance, yet the self-made outsider often craves companionship, hence the cultivation of like-minded innovative comrades with whom to originate collectively, each able to remain unique, each becoming the other. Just as meaningful was Chris's inferably apparent, perhaps even 'everyday', need to pursue this collective and solo life of the imagination in public spaces, before receptive, sophisticated albeit occasionally puzzled audiences. Consummate performer, real-time composer-poet, calculated *collaborateur* with a dash of witty *saboteur*, he switched among who he imagined himself to be, who he presented himself to others as being, and the "whos" he thought he really was. Scribbling, chattering, juddering his life away with charm, naiveté, ingenuity and synchronously tormented and exquisitely cruel wit, much like the cute Teddy-bear cholla cactus that suddenly seems to jump and stick it to you, leaving its spikes under your skin.

Alas, I was never to experience Chris's gestural-speech-music in person and thus 'missed' those re- and de-constructed, prepared and extemporaneous, heavily nuanced enquiries and possible answers he asked of himself and of us. Pondering all the while, tempo *prestisissimo*, whether thought, meaning could truly ever be communicated, whether language sufficed as medium, moving from within one mind to that of an-other. And being with whom must have been dangerous and fun.

July 2019

INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS MANN

Philip Blackburn, interviewer.

Interviewed by Philip Blackburn, New York, July, 2002, for the American Public Media American Mavericks web site; Preston Wright, producer.

PB: So, Chris Mann. Who are you, and why do you do what you do?

CHRIS MANN: Testing, testing, [to tape machine] is anybody in there?

Say your name for the record please.

This is the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1952.

Welcome to *This un-American Life* on public radio. Three desert island disks. What would you take and why?

"One of the three things that I have in common with Philip Glass." That's the title for the disk. I don't know what the other two are, but our parents sell records, which is his explanation as to why he finds it very easy to confuse money with music. There's a record which we used to sell which had six minutes of recorded sound on one side which was a Mercedes SEL 350 or something doing the standing quartem, going through the S-bends at Sebring [Raceway] or something like that. All of the car enthusiasts used to come in and buy it, and drag their high-fi out to the garage, and tune their engines to this car. I was really impressed.

So that's one.

That's one. And the other side was blank. It had six minutes of recorded sound on one side, where every other record in the store was I think 5.95. This was 6.95. I think it was put out by Audio Fidelity, but I wouldn't swear to it. There was a record that I wanted to make—which was stolen from a Monty Python skit—which has a series of alternative track endings. This then became a model for a record which was produced in Queensland where the first five minutes was universal, and after the five minute mark, there were a series of braces and Amtrak Y-junctions, where the bias of the needle would determine which resolution. They made a horse race and five different horses won, depending on what sort of equipment you played it on. People used to bet on the record, particularly when the racetrack was wet up in Queensland. That would probably be the other one. I always wanted to take that as a model and make a bigger version in a less sort of narrative form, but also one you could bet on.

The third one, I don't know yet. Maybe Tammy Wynette or something.

Why?

The irony that the texts of Ludwig Wittgenstein's that stayed in press for his lifetime was the text he produced as a primary school teacher, which was this word book. Tammy Wynette was a primary school teacher. I always understood that Wittgenstein got the job at Cambridge because he was a failed primary school teacher.

What are your current fixations?

There are two avenues. I just discovered the Greeks, which for me is late. I've studiously avoided them for years, so I'm very excited about Plato at the moment. It's interesting to do Plato as a mediocre playwright. The dialogs are—it's a form of conversation theory. I'm doing Plato as a subset of Levinas, which is for me quite interesting. It's the obvious thing that had never struck me before, that it's all structured as dialogs.

I've been working with Holland Hopson for the last year making this software which is doing phoneme recognition in real time. So it's the idea of modeling the performance space as though it was a vocal track. So "E's" always appear front right, and "O" always appears back left. We have various little schemes going. One doing predominantly vowel recognition, one doing predominantly

consonants, one doing pitch, one doing speaker manipulations and phasers. We designed this lovely little patch the other day which has the side effect of making you quite nauseous. It's playing with middle ear stuff, which I'm very happy with.

That has its own peculiar rationale because I can't do that as vindictively as I'd like because of the travel time. English is whatever it is, it's like 72 phonemes a second. Chris Mann is probably slightly in excess of that. This means you have to make these resolutions in very short millisecond frames, so the travel time from a speaker which is then 50 feet away, you are either in the only ideal seat which is like DVD audio, or you are peculiarly disadvantaged. Phonemes start arriving out of order. That's not in itself uninteresting, but I haven't figured out what kind of texts to conjugate around that.

What's the most mind altering work of art you've experienced. Visual art, poetry, dance, theater, something other than your own.

It's probably 4'33". I mean it's a touchstone for me. In its form as an anecdote. In its concept form or as score, it's neither here nor there for me. As Christian Wolff said the other day—he was at Quaker school—"What the hell was the fuss about?" But as an anecdote that you tell in the pub, that I've found really nice and dangerous. It's like "what is red and invisible? No tomatoes." I understand that as the definition of Duchamp.

Do you think it describes your own work as well?

Oh, I'd like to think it did. If I was that ambitious. My work is better understood as "What's brown and sticky."

Chris Mann?

A stick. Excuse me, I spent a long time in sixth grade. I had to repeat it several times.

Just into Greeks, now. Your most memorable or inspirational performance, or event of some kind.

I remember being incredibly impressed by Marlene Dietrich. I don't know how much of it was the performance, and how much was being told that what she does, that before she goes onstage, her greenroom time is spent with Ajax cleaning the toilets backstage. I found that a really incredibly impressive definition of an industrial attitude. That I liked. Documents of Cage—I think of him as a sort of Buster Keaton. He has that same timing.

Cage performances, the way he reads them?

The reading particularly. He's the most gifted stand-up comic I've ever come across.

Does that relate to your own readings and performances?

In terms of the sit-down comic? Yeah.

What have been your career highs and lows? Excluding this one.

There was this beautiful moment at the Paris Autumn Festival in 1980 something where we were doing something... I was in the middle of the piece, it was 10:00 or 11:00, so the techs knock off. The techs were from Radio France and so they knocked off. They just pulled the plug and walked off. I was again really impressed. I thought, "I want to be on their side." That was a bit startling. I'm down on Europeans today.

At ORF, I was working with *The Machine for Making Sense*, and the Austrian radio techs wouldn't take our word for anything. We'd set ourselves up a couple of hundred of times, and we obviously didn't know what the hell we were doing so they wanted to take over. Under the worst of circumstances it would take two hours. They took ten. Which meant we had to be there for lunchtime, which was very nice. We got a voucher and went to the canteen and there was a special on mushrooms. I spent the balance of the day being incredibly ill and then there was the performance at 9:00 which was then for the art radio section of the European Broadcasting Union. Everybody tottled in their ties and hairdo's. I walked on with a bucket. Throwing up onstage, that was nice.

Career highs and lows seem to be similar in your mind. What trait do you like and dislike most about yourself?

My tendency to ramble on.

What is your vital daily ritual?

I'd be lying, because for a bunch of domestic reasons I've been celebrating summer by retiring from the ritual. But, for the last 15 years, I have to do my Tai Chi in the morning.

How do you spoil yourself?

Chocolate.

If I wasn't making music I would be...

Well, I was for years a chainsaw operator and a tractor driver. This is how I discovered environmental recordings. It was when... Oh what's his name?... I have the earliest known onset of Alzheimer's. I'm just a noun-free zone, it's nothing personal. David Moss was at NPR 30 years ago and he commissioned a bunch of environmental recordings. The environment for me in those days was a Czech tractor, which was a Zetor-5745. I set up the mic, turned on the tractor in the barn, laid down underneath the tractor and read this text. In the middle of which, the representatives of the local town council came by investigating why we didn't spray all the ragweed that year. So they were standing in the door of the barn, looking at this idiot reading a text underneath a tractor. I don't have any other skills I can retire to.

This leads directly into the next question. What is your greatest fear?

Being struck dumb, obviously. The pause in relationship to that was when I was six, I bit my tongue off. I had been sitting on a fence, fell off, and bit my tongue off, and came home with my tongue in my hand, and said, "Mom." She grabbed me by the other hand and marched off to the doctor. He sewed it back on.

Maybe being stuck dumb doesn't terrify me in the way that it may.

They could put it in backwards next time, maybe.

Upside down. I would only be able to speak Swedish.

How are you like your music?

Irrelevant. Someone asked me a question a while back, which was not unrelated. I explained it in terms of, "There is this moment in primary school where they explain the difference between language and music, and something gelled, you know you were seven or eight. I was away that day." I'm really interested in the fact that sense making is an act of charity. Senses and intelligence, which is bestowed by the listener on someone who is trying to wrap their mouth around an idea. The issue of silence with Cage was the invention not of listening, but the invention of composition.

This is what humans do, this making sense. We do it very graciously and we do it very generously, and we are so practiced at it that we do it unconsciously. The grace of it is that we do it stupidly. I find that incredibly attractive. It's that humility of things I would like to have said.

Who do you think is the most significant unrecognized composer—apart from yourself—and why?

There is a beautiful piece of David Dunn's, which I'm incredibly impressed with which is a listening exercise that has to do with listening at a proximity and listening at a distance. It's an incredibly detailed, orchestrated listening piece. I think it's fantastic. I don't even know if it has a name. It's a score. Listen for 30 seconds to something here. For 5 minutes to something in the mid-distance. It's monstrously difficult in a way. It celebrates difficulty in the way that the neo-complexists celebrate difficulty. It's one of those bloodsport things.

All of my heroes are people in Australia whose wives haven't even heard of them. I love that thing about—I think it was in Ulysses—they threw this big party, and Nora and Jim are tucking themselves into bed that night, and Nora says to Jim, "Have you got a copy of that I think I'd like to read it. Everyone thought it was quite good."

Present your list of the official mavericks. React as you please.

I love the politics of Nancarrow. Lou Harrison will be a patron saint of everybody because of what he said about Northwest Asia.

Which was?

He used that as a definition of Europe. It's incredibly useful to use this in Europe because it upsets them to no end.

Why Nancarrow's politics?

He was fighting in the Lincoln brigade, and he decided that Mexico was an altogether more attractive place. Frida Kahlo and the relationship to Leon Trotsky. The connection between Leon Trotsky and Marcel Duchamp. I like to think of Nancarrow as sort of working that out a little.

If there are individuals like John Cage, or people you know lots about.

It's not that I know lots about them, but I recently was introduced to the fact that Morton Feldman and John Cage in the early 50s were not paid-up members by any stretch of the imagination, but were really interested in Scientology. Which was something which I hadn't tweaked to at all. I found that really intriguing. In the clear notion. When I have nothing else to do I'm craftily knitting together a little conspiracy with Ron L. Hubbard and John Cage. I thought that would be sort of quite fun.

Speaking of Cage and conspiracy, can you tell us anything about Hy Cage?

Not much. There is this moment... So 4'33" is 1952, 1932 is... there's this cartoonist for Etude magazine, which is this piano teacher's rag. He does this piece where little Johnny, I think it is Johnny... Mom comes in and says, "Johnny you haven't been practicing.", and Johnny says, "But Mom I have! I've been playing my composition." Then in the last frame is his composition which is this series of rests and whatever it is. So it's clearly a silent piece.

In 1847 Karl Marx has the line, "Silence is therefore the only possible means of communication."

Which is what I think it was that Hy Cage was referring to. I'm not sure this is what John was referring to. Marx also speculated a bit later, I think it was in the 1870's, it was somewhere in Volume III, I think, of *Das Kapital*, he has this little moment where he talks about the distance from the silverware to the table as being this strange cultural space. This goes a long way to explaining Duchamp for me—but anyway.

That's all I know about Hy Cage. I don't know him to be a reader of that, but it's quite possible. One of the pieces that I'm doing is the Schoenberg/Marx brother's tennis match. Who was the person who always wanted to be Schoenberg's student? I can never remember.

Adolf Weiss?

No. No. No. The populist. Gershwin! Gershwin, Harpo, Oscar Levant, and Schoenberg used to play tennis every Wednesday. If not Harpo, then Groucho and sometimes Chaplin... blah blah blah. That was the standard foursome. I always understood that John Cage was the ball boy. Is it possible that it's him. Yes, but then I suspect Schoenberg's finger is in the pie there somewhere. Schoenberg used to apparently carry around, I didn't know this either, he used to travel round with a violin case. People would actually query him, "Arnie, I didn't know you were a fiddler." He was not a fiddler. He had table tennis paddles and a net in the violin case. He was a maniac table tennis player.

What's American about mavericks as opposed to Australian mavericks? Where do you fit in?

There is an Australian tradition that I think is really strong which is about betraying, or being a traitor to a form. There is the idea of conceptual depth where you can actually choose to do something badly for whatever reason. This tradition goes back to, at least the 1840's. I don't know of that in the American sense. I don't know of any equivalent of that in the American sense. The next sort of mention of that, that I know of, is something like the painting school in Berlin in the 70's and the 80's. It's much more vindictive for example than The Portsmouth Sinfonia or Fatty Acid. It's much more vicious. So that's how I would distinguish the Australian from the American. Americans are just nicer people. There is an Australian "So what" quality which informs a lot of stuff. Which is why when you asked me for a list—a bunch of people that no-one's ever heard—Syd Clayton, and Paul Prendergast, who I think... Syd Clayton did everything that Marcel did, and everything that Albert Ayler did, and he lived in Wonthaggi.

He was enormously generous, and the only time he ever left Australia, he left by boat and went to India. He was there for six hours and didn't cope, and went home. That was his sole adventure over the water. He got nervous when he saw a cab stand. He didn't understand traffic lights.

There's that "So what?" quality. There's also this strange perverse thing in Australia of, you do it because it's like betting on flies running up a wall or something. One of the governing notions is what we call "desert time." It's that thing of, "I'll see you at quarter past." We agree to meet sometime, and we agree to meet at quarter past, but we don't know is this quarter past 10, quarter past 2? Is this Wednesday, Thursday? Is this in August?

I'll go with this lovely story that Alan Marshall used to tell about when he lived in the bush and a bush fire was coming through, and he had to make this decision about what is it he's going to save. He took the books of Alan Marshall translated into Czech and Hungarian. He stuffed those into his wheelchair and wobbled on down the hill. He kicked himself afterwards. I mean of all the things... it's really

stupid. In 1983 when there were the bush fires at the back of my place, I very thankfully wasn't there, people were standing down in the local football field having been evacuated because the fire is being clocked at 100 miles an hour and there is nothing you can do. They're standing there in the middle of the football field in their pajamas with their parenting and their cooking books, and the kid's homework assignment, and the dog, and the fire is jumping from one hill over to the other which is five miles. It's jumping right over them. I don't know that experience. I don't observe that in the American mavericks.

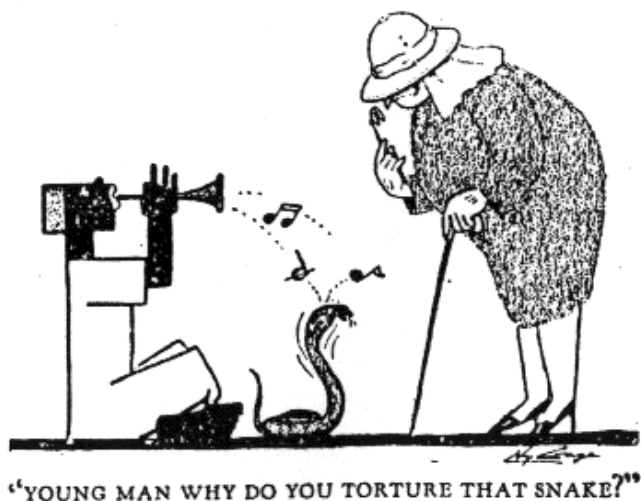
Do you think there are other kind of influences that the American environment, urban East Coast/ West Coast, you've got Jerry Hunt down in Texas. How does geography in all that favor?

My relationship to Ron Robboy was this whole thing about that there is actually much more communication between the west coast of America and the east coast of Australia in the 1850's, 1860's, 1870's, 1880's, than there is between the east coast and the west coast of America. To travel the Pacific was two weeks. To travel across the United States was six weeks. There is documentation that jazz happens in Sydney and in Melbourne before it's known all of in New York. Ron was very excited about the Jewish Cowboy. The model for the Jewish Cowboy is the background to a Yiddischer Cowboy in the 1890's, which is the definition of New York. Which was Rosa Luxembourg, Karl Kautsky, and all these people depend on the advent of the Jewish Cowboy. The Jewish Cowboy is based on the Jewish bushranger in Australia in 1842 or 1838. It's Teddy the Jewboy.

Jerry Hunt rigging up chess computers to synthesizers is something which I understand in Australia. It's sort of not needing to prove that it works, but needing to find out what happens, and being perverse enough or having a rainy Sunday afternoon when there is nothing on TV, so you might as well invent something. That I understand. I feel myself much closer to Jerry Hunt than to some of these other people here that shall remain nameless.

Note: Many thanks to Warren Burt for his knowledgeable and meticulous editing of the Interview; his Commentaries appear separately. The cartoon below may or may not have been drawn by Hy or John Cage in the 1930s. The caption is: "YOUNG MAN, WHY DO YOU TORTURE THAT SNAKE?" — ERB

Audio link to interview <https://soundcloud.com/innovadotmu/chris-mann-2002-interview>



COMMENTARIES TO CHRIS MANN/PHILIP BLACKBURN INTERVIEW

WARREN BURT

David Dunn: Purposeful Listening in Complex States of Time.

<http://static1.l.sqspcdn.com/static/f/288545/5477319/1264209903233/Plicsot.pdf%3Ftoken%3DSPX5LGQDjV7rGvTggs3sIqpLyE8%253D>

Hy Cage: Cartoonist who published in “The Etude” magazine in the early 1930s, under the name of “Hy Cage.” 10 or so cartoons were found in a search of back issues of “The Etude” at the Sousa Library Archive at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2001 and 2002. Since the topics of the cartoons all deal with new music, silence, Zen logic, etc. there is considerable interest in the connection, if any, with John Cage and his later work. There is also the stylized “Hy Cage” signature, which bears some graphological similarity to John Cage’s later signature.

http://musicmavericks.publicradio.org/features/slideshows/slideshow_cage1.html has a collection of 10 Hy Cage cartoons.

Syd Clayton (1939-1994) Australian bass player, composer, improviser, music theatre producer. One of the first people to investigate free improvisation and graphic notation in Australia. In the late 60s and early 70s, he produced about 14 evenings of music theatre at La Mama Theatre in Carlton, Melbourne. One of his magnum opii was “Lucky Number” a piece using only 4 pitch classes and lasting 9 hours, performed at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in 1989, by Warren Burt. Clayton lived in Wonthaggi, Victoria, a small seaside coal mining town in southeast Victoria for about the last 15 years of his life.

<http://www.rainerlinz.net/NMA/22CAC/clayton.html>

Alan Marshall (1902-1984) Australian writer. His most famous book was “I Can Jump Puddles,” a fictionalized autobiography dealing with his undaunted childhood adventures while crippled with polio.

Ronald Robboy (b 1950). Cellist, Yiddish scholar, performance artist, composer, based in San Diego, California. Member of the San Diego Symphony (retired 2017), Fatty Acid (conceptual art, comedy classical music ensemble) 1972-1979, The Big Jewish Band (1980 onwards) a Klezmer ensemble. Etc.

Teddy the Jewboy: Edward Davis (1816-1841) Australian bushranger (bandit) who terrorized northern New South Wales in the late 1830s, but who was known for his elegant attire and for sharing the booty of his raids with the poor. The only known Jewish bushranger in Australian history. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davis-edward-1964> Chris Mann made a performance piece and text about Teddy the Jewboy, which was performed at the Cremorne Theatre in South Brisbane in June 1995, starring Jimmy Djamunba and Joan La Barbara. <https://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/event/27722>

the backstory –

Lyn Gallacher

I first met Chris Mann by mistake. It seemed like a disaster at the time. It was 1986 and I was in Melbourne with a film crew, due to meet a sculptor called Guy Boyd. We were looking for his foundry. Guy was about to pour the last big bronze he would ever make. It was a fine moment for film, or would have been, if we could find the right spot. Like a true professional in charge of production, I'd absurdly written the wrong street number on the back of my hand. It turned out to be a second-hand shop. On close inspection, however, there was a path around the back. It looked more like a private dwelling than a foundry, but with a truck full of cameras, lights, microphones, make up and an unimpressed crew, there was a need to be bold. This was the path that led me to Chris Mann's house. He looked a bit surprised but was sort of interested in the project. The large bronze sculpture about to be poured was that of Jacob wrestling with the angel. It reminded Chris of his own current project, a ballet about Nebuchadnezzar, which finally, after months of arcane research turned out to be four words long. It went, 'Barabbas had a dad' and that was it. It was printed in tiny type, on ticker tape. To this day I still have no idea how it became a ballet. Such was my accidental stumble into the alien and exotic world of the Mann family: a happy stumble from which I've never fully recovered.

As I say, much of Chris Mann's work eludes me, but if I were to try and unravel the meaning of his line about Barabbas, I'd have to suggest that it has something to do with parents. His father particularly. Barabbas was, of course, the insurgent who, according to biblical accounts, was freed rather than Jesus. Jesus may have been the son of God, but Barabbas had a dad too, and his dad would have been equally cut-up if he'd been

crucified. So why would the grief of one father be more important than another, just because one is a deity? I don't know, but the question makes me realise that the way gene pools shape our mad life trajectories has something to do with fathers. And although we're all individuals, fathers are the jumbled personification of our own conflicts and contradictions. Chris Mann being no exception. So, to the backstory.

Discurio was Chris Mann's parents' record store. They were Ruth and Peter. Their record store grew out of their recording label Score, and grew into something more than just a record store. It was a cultural gateway that defied the conservative gatekeepers of a very British 1950s Australia. Discurio was the crack in the wall that allowed people to escape a drab mono-cultural existence in a suffocatingly small-minded city. Discurio helped to transform Melbourne.

These were the glory days of vinyl—heavy, dusty, black plastic discs with a hole in the middle. In Discurio you were encouraged to put headphones on and listen. It was amazing. You could hear sounds that took you somewhere else, sounds that set you free. With headphones on the world was bigger, brighter and infinitely more interesting. And a record? Listening to a record is a very particular experience of sound. It is not an MP3. It's not compressed. It's not digitally reproduced. The sound is physically made there and then by a needle running along a groove at the speed set by the record player. Magic. RPM 33 $\frac{1}{3}$, the industry standard at the time, Chris told me he used to believe it stood for Ruth and Peter Mann, their initials RPM, and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$, was the combined average of their two ages when they started the store.

Ruth and Peter Mann came to Australia as post-war German migrants. They came at different times and from different sides of Germany. Let's start with Ruth. The story I got from Chris (which is not necessarily the correct story, but it is his story, so it's the

one that matters here), is that Ruth was serving in her mother's lace shop in Cologne when an Australian lady walked in. It would have been 1939, so of course the Nazis were already looking for Jews, like Ruth, to persecute. This lady asked Ruth, why don't you leave? And Ruth said, I don't have a passport. The lady then offered to take Ruth on as her maid if she would come with her to Melbourne, which is what happened. Ruth got her passport, arrived in Melbourne, and through some very close friendships she'd made on the boat travelling out to Australia, was very quickly able to get two more passports, one for her mother, Johanna, and one for her brother, Fred. They arrived in Australia in late September 1939. Fred, Ruth's brother, is important to the story, because it's Fred who introduces Peter to Ruth, and Peter is Chris's father. Before Peter met Ruth, he was another lost European intellectual, working somewhere in a North Western Victorian forest, cutting trees. Like Ruth, he escaped the rising tide of violence in Europe by coming out to Australia, where, as with many other refugees without resources, he was firstly interned and then put to work as a manual labourer. This is how he met Fred, who was by now part of the same story. They became friends in a small country town on the Murray River called Albury, and it was in Albury that Fred suggested to Peter that he might like to meet his sister, Ruth.

I know this is the kind of linear narrative Chris hates, because it makes too many assumptions, joins too many dots, steals focus. Too bad (I'm talking to him even though I know he's dead), if you don't put one thought after another in some kind of order it just becomes impossible. And what's wrong with that, he says laughing loudly.

Anyway, back in rural Australia, it's safe to say that except for WWII, Chris Mann's parents, would never have met. They were from different parts of Germany and were different sorts of people. Berlin Jews, Peter's tribe, were urban, sophisticated, educated, non-practising, assimilated Jews who were embarrassed by the folksy rituals and medieval rules associated with Synagogue-going Jews. Peter is more of a protestant.

Ruth is from Cologne. She's kosher. She is from a tribe where Bar Mitzvahs for young boys are mandatory. So, Chris, and his younger brother Tim live lives that dance between worlds. They grow up being careful never to appear as a hero in the wrong story.

After Ruth and Peter marry, they move to Melbourne, to River Street in South Yarra. It's an industrial street and as enemy aliens they're required to report to the police station whenever they leave the parish. Australia was not very civilized administratively speaking. The Are-You-Jewish question went off the German census in 1945, but it was still being asked on Australian immigrant application forms until 1955. Ruth and Peter were married as Ruth and Peter Liebermann, but Chris's birth certificate, less than nine months later, records him as Chris Mann. He thinks his birth heralds the moment when the family decided to become less of a target—the name change being a form of camouflage that sticks. Messing with proper nouns then becomes a habit, and finally a career.

From the very beginning of their life together, Ruth and Peter refused to see fixed boundaries around generally accepted ideas and meanings. Definitions in Australia at the time were manipulated by class and so, in their eyes, needed aeration rather than subservience. Ruth and Peter came from an active, contemporary European culture, which involved dialogue, debate, singing, listening, arguing. They could hear the local language in Australia in a way that the locals couldn't. And while it mystified them that Australians wanted to be English, they also heard and understood something within the local dialect, a form of thinking, that could be used against itself. This became their project. Ruth bought the first ever domestic tape recorder in Australia and began to record the sound of children at Chris's kindergarten. She'd then sell the little 3 inch take-up spools to the parents who had no way of playing them back. It was however, a business that grew, and grew, producing the first recording of Barry Humphries as

Dame Edna, the first recording of the indigenous opera singer Harold Blair singing his native songs, and the first ever spoken word recording of Australian literature with Peter O'Shaughnessy reciting *The Sentimental Bloke*. Alongside this there was folk music, classical music, the recording of plays and even Bible readings. It was a very eclectic list.

No one else had attempted to capture the Australian idiom in the way the Manns did. And it still astounds me today that it took a couple of German immigrants to get the conversation going. They didn't sell much, but Ruth and Peter were on about other things. Because of who they were, and coming from where they came from, and having been through the things that they'd been through, they perceived the world differently from ordinary Anglo-oriented Australians. They would have liked to have made money, sure, and the shop, which happened later, was a better bet. But money didn't happen through the record label. And it's important to say that *Discurio*, the shop, took off not because it was an outlet for *Score*, but because the Manns became the local distributors for *Folkways Records*. That was when they had a lot of customers coming through the door. They sold Dylan.

When I last met Chris, it was in New York, in winter. His Tribeca apartment was filled with generations of plants, books, papers and unpaid bills that seemed to be sliding to the floor. I can still hear him smacking his lips and grinning as we sat at his table. I was unsure of where exactly to balance my liquorice tea without it spilling onto something important. Chris didn't help, he just leant back in his chair with a *crrreeaakk*, and I knew then that the chair had as much right to participate in this conversation as anyone else. We did, however, have a job to do. I was there to play back to Chris some of the old *Score* recordings, and then make a radio program from his reactions. It was hard work, but great fun.

Chris wouldn't normally allow this much nostalgia, but he knew his days were numbered. He told me that he was considered to be a spoilt child. He said this is how others saw him, but he remembers it differently. He remembers all the time asking, how do I get them, my parents, to notice me. Really notice me. This generation of post-war children, who were born in a country half-a-world away from their parents' home, couldn't understand why their mothers and fathers were emotionally absent for much of the time. Chris says he felt responsible for this. He remembers personally wanting to protect his parents from further disaster, particularly his erudite, absent-minded father who was always out of place in the real world. Chris calls his lot refo kids. By this he means the children of refugees and says he's a by-product of war. Yet, of course, he was lucky. Lucky for loads of reasons. One being that without the war he wouldn't exist. Another being, that the 1960s were just around the corner and in that moment, Melbourne would begin to change emotionally, technologically and culturally. The city of conservative churches, establishment schools, traditional British beliefs, and the world's biggest cultural cringe, would begin to open itself up to new ideas. It meant that the problem for Chris Mann's generation in Australia, was how to now best escape provincialism, which is not so much an aesthetic problem, as a question of history. This, then that, if you like.

Vinyl records are loops, and as such could be said to be gene pools of sorts themselves. The needle goes around in a groove and in that groove we're safe. The tone arm holds the stylus tight. The freedom only comes when the sound hits our ears—then we hear things we didn't before, then we escape our parochial, parental loop. Chris understood sound to be a 'perspective generating machine' and when he became a performer of compositional linguistics (a term he coined himself) he was doing just that. So, no surprise that he called his band Machine for Making Sense.

Ruth and Peter are a momentary amalgam that produces Chris, and Tim (who now runs an eccentric café in inner city Melbourne called Grub). Both are the product of Peter's aesthetics and philosophy, and Ruth's shop sense. These two refo kids also inherited the anxious dread of their parents. This fear was behind the creativity that drove Chris. It also manifested itself in the fear of getting stuck, not in Europe, but in Australia. When he lived in St Kilda, in Melbourne, he made a point of never going anywhere without his passport in his top pocket. But when he did escape, like every other migrant, he took his past with him, distance being no barrier to emotional damage. Yet, in New York, he felt at home, among his own kind, not because New York is a town of migrants, but because it's a town of broken people. There he felt the distance his parents had travelled. It was everywhere in the downtown streets. So much so, that when we went out to dinner that winter in Tribeca, he refused to stop for oncoming traffic as he crossed the road, just like his father. The dangerous stream of cars, trucks and taxis was a tribute to his 68 years of being a son. For many of those years he was also a father himself, twice blessed with the opportunity to pass the anxious dread onto the next generation. I cannot imagine what it all amounts to. It's all I can do to cross the road. But once on the other side I'm thinking, backstory? ... eek ... dunno how to get there but wouldn't start from here, says Chris in my ear with a snort.

ta

for Chris Mann

speech & the body of resistance

body

politic body

capital

body data

exchange value

the subject

sentenced

klanglang

((())

ram

ma syn

t

he subject sings

western subject things

its ethos its

colonial sum its

unitary

its erasure

1 x 1 = 'north-west asia'

'yr oppressor's grammar'

it's

hacked

a vernacular splice

((())

a coding

a protective act

laughter

ie. hope?

('meaning is a pissy little concept')

causality on steroids

a beige empirical

mean

i

as if learning language for the first time (and again

(yr voice yr scores yr gifts)

at the speed of speech

listening the possible

((((())

mean

i logic

(you dummy)

a cogent (spat the subject)

philosoph
o ysics
l form yber of the sub
in ation genet j
theory ymol e
i inguistic c
c ritique
s

(x the philosophy and technology of speech)

compression th
in polyma
formation nn compositional
da i
ta n
da g
da u
it bit nit wit nit pick witt i
gen s
stein ein t
wiener i
champ du cage c
as a gift of the gab s
uro blooms

(any questions?)

gaps snags impediments
speaking thinking
speaking
music
speaking hand
speaking bodies of

re
use fined
de at the edge of distinction and what is kindness?

'listening - the aesthetics of not knowing' (((((((

(ta)

Amanda Stewart
January 2019

NOAH CRESHEVSKY

CHRIS MANN

A CORRESPONDENCE

chris mann

Thu 7/20/2006, 7:00 AM

(the irrationality of the total is the attraction for me..

chris mann

Sun 7/23/2006, 11:01 AM

(re. "Free Speech")

its so nice to be able to hear something you know really well for the first time...smart. joyous.

thankyou.

noah creshevsky

Thu 1/18/2007, 10:43 AM

...i'm toying with Any Questions again. a masterpiece, really. i will keep at it (unless you stop me) until i get you right. i'd like to put you here and there as i put Tom Buckner, if you don't mind.

chris mann

Mon 2/12/2007, 1:34 AM

... dont know that i'll be able to revisit the text til we're back end march and can set up a studio, but in that i'll be recording then anyway, another page shouldnt be too much of a drama..what god couldve done if only hed had money...

noah creshevsky

Sun 3/4/2007, 12:52 AM

i finished a new piece with you as soloist. it's called Intrada. it's 3 1/2 minutes long. john zorn...will produce a cd of it on tzadik. i want to begin with Intrada and end with Free Speech. that makes you alpha and omega. right is right.

i do not yet know if there is money to pay you. will you let me use these pieces? are you short of money? i really don't know. for all i know you have a great fortune. i hope so.

chris mann

Sun 3/4/2007, 1:09 PM

... looking forward to listening to both Intrada and the full disc.
and i must have too much money coz i always find the discussion of money embarrassing.

chris mann

Sat 4/14/2007, 4:44 PM

...looking forward to listening, even if it is to me.

noah creshevsky

Sun 1/27/2008, 8:03 PM

... you know what i do well and what i do not do well. deconstruction is my primary subjectverbobject. i mean i'd more than love to collaborate with you and to become more one with 'theuse'. you've become more one or at least two with some of my talkingpieces, but how can i penetrate 'theuse'? that's the question. i have a memory of an agreement to come, but i'm not sure how.

chris mann

Tue 5/13/2008, 7:37 AM

lovely question. and narcissism is def undercelebrated. but i like it too. and i'm not usually that good at me too ism. i mean, i like to think of my stuff as an invitation to a conspiracy, so it would be of course churlish to police too severely how that invitation is interpreted, but that in no way qualifies the pleasure when someone offers intelligence and insight by way of response. thankyou.

noah creshevsky

Fri 8/8/2008, 1:55 PM

the cd with YOU on it is out...notice in this piece (Intrada...) that it ends with a single harpsichord note, as though we just hauled that player in to play his/her one note. no union wages or theatrical conventions on a cd, you know.

noah creshevsky

Sat 7/9/2011, 1:20 AM

... you know my work, and i know your work, so i think the question of mine has a degree of chutzpah, but is a relatively fair question. where do i find the most music from you to make the most music from me?

chris mann

Fri 7/25/2014, 5:39 PM

... the protocols for the blood cancers seem to change twice a year, so if you wait a bit theres always a new way of looking at it... theoretically more dramatic than the flu, but really thats all i did as part of a stem cell transplant. which changed my diet and curled my hair. otherwise, was recently promoted from the two month to the three month checkup which periodically serves to focus my attention, but all that i've noticed is that the last piece was longer.. hows your end of the hyperreal?

noah creshvsky

Wed 2/4/2015 10:50, PM 22:50

You could have heard a pin drop

You were sensational

As I told you when I introduced myself to you
quite a long time ago:
"I love your work."

You speak like I think, only better
You speak like I live

I was very happy to be there with you.

noah creshvsky

Tue 9/18/2018, 12:22 PM

Dear Barbara,

.Chris was a great man. I loved both him and his work. No matter how long I stare at this screen, I will not find words to tell you how sorry I am to lose him.
My condolences to you, Tím, Oskar, and MaHong.

Noah

[Note: "Free Speech" and "Intrada" can be heard on the For Chris Mann web page.]

AYE, LYREBIRD

(Nod to Chris Mann)

Oi! Starting out from something now. Take a captain cook. A look lifted toward height. Launching please. There is. Golden flower tugged. Grasping the birds' tail. Right hand sweeps down. Releasing into flight. Being not being. Yup. The ear twangs. One cannot forget lyrebird chainsaw silo echo that ole chestnut! Prickly as. Split open. Ground down. Roasted. Being face to face, we'll be yarning. Revved. Avago! Take a whirl. Crank up the noggin. Begin beginning going in. Hold the ball. A gesture that moves beyond itself. Shift body weight concept to movement. Boing knot bing. Naught. Slant flying. Diddee? Composing schtick colliding stars, particles, particulars. Ah say. All askew and made (k)new. Awakening to the other. Upwards to the left. Speech of the one disappEaring. Downwards to the right. That kin of Larry! Nods to cooker burroughs. Play ping pong lingo. Dab hand chops through deft weave farms indeterminacy history talk clay of thought, 'mongst others. 'Angon. Salto mortale spettacolare. Tongue tryst dialectical tap tap tuppung hats off tipping top notch toe tap. Crows throw sTones. Questions. Ideas from hear there everywhere. Words, scythe, saw, parry, punch, crunch. Waaa! Chutzpah. Play guitar. Clockwise sweep palms facing. Keeping silence singing out loud. Patter polished plain as ruby pRose (rose is a rose etcetera) stirred shaken sampled spliced remixed. Near near. Use your noddle. Kulcha up to our arses. Fair go! CircUlate. Touch the ground. Quest just ass thirst fast. Embrace tiger. Turning body back. Up over the head. Brush past. Stewth! If it opens a way press. Bringing into the light work all of a piece. Needle at sea bottom. Sink downwards. Pass. The hole undoes. Draw through thought. Through and through. Oh u! Turn. Spiro/spero. Flippant musician that Fool for wisdom known. Hey Ho Hey Ho. Snake creeps down. Rising on yOur right. Drawn forward behind. Touch the face. A distance here BetWeen two points short. The hook. A hand. 2 B or not too bee? Urgent question? Fair dinkum? Impossibility of possibility. Bird of passage poised. Coming to rest. I (aye eye) and Thou. Back o' Bourke. Cloud hands floating up soft soft a step forward. Facing up. The body journeys never so empty as pointed to the horizon. Crossing over going up. Being born of non being. There is. No(w)t. That bird swoops sunlight in your pause. Illuminating. Ooroo!

berni m janssen

Obit tribute: Chris Mann 1949 - 2018
for The Open Space Magazine
π. ο.

I first saw Chris Mann during the Vietnam War, he was holding up a student newspaper & was complaining about something in it, at a Cantrell's film night at the **Pram Factory** / in Carlton. Next thing i know, he's discovered the Anarchist Press **"/***" (slash asterisk) which i was involved in (in Johnson St Collingwood) & he wanted to buy an unbound bootleg copy of **The Society of the Spectacle** by Guy Debord (which Terry Bennett + Andrew Stein had printed but not yet collated, stapled, or distributed) (it was rare to see a copy of that book anywhere in Melbourne in the early 70s). He then showed up at one of the launches of **Fitzrot** (my 1st poetry magazine). I asked him, if he'd like to read in the open section & he said yes, but his poetry was *heckling*. Fair enough i thought provided he was good at it, & he was — very! Only ½ way thru the proceedings Alan Wearne (another poet) had enough of this heckler, went over & smacked Chris in the head. I had to drag them off. I told Alan that that was his poetry!!!! & we all settled down wondering what to expect next. Next time i saw Chris was at the Albion Hotel in Carlton (where everyone went to drink) & he said he was doing a gig at **La Mama** & i should come along. When i did, there were only 4 other people in the audience, apart from me & the friend i bought along. Chris read his poems to some musician's latest electronic invention, which didn't sound all that good. The most notable thing about that night tho, was the arrival of the Dadaist poet Jas H. Duke from Europe, who wanted to read. After that, Chris'd drop around my place, with a photocopy of some great poem he'd just written. I'd invite him in, & he'd say he couldn't cos his car was still running out on the street. After awhile i got jack of all this *Hey* look at my new poem, no care for any of ours, car running outside, & off into the dark, so i told him, if he didn't turn off the engine & come inside to fuck off & NOT knock* on the door. Which, he respected, from then on. On another occasion, we were doing a gig in Sydney at a pub, & the "performance" poetry world was there, & Chris realizing that no amount of *avant-gardism* was going to cut it with this street-cred crew, so he literally *ad libbed* the whole performance standing up, with his wise-arse comments, jokes, attitudes, witticism, lyrics, and his Old English, & Anglo-Saxon catchphrases. It was a stellar performance, but i never saw him do that again, ever. On the train back to Melbourne i got food poisoning? or Flu? – or was that both? -- don't know — but Chris stood by me & helped me get home, & i appreciated his compassion & care which i never forgot. After that we became great friends, seeing each other continuously, in & out of each other's pockets. The Experimental composer's group was performing every Monday(?) in **Page St** in Clifton Hill, & (as we were nearby) he'd often drop in to see Thalia (the visual poet) or me + Jeltje (the poet) (who he had a crush on). Chris's family were immigrant Jews who came out to Australia in the late 30s & set up the **Discurio** a music shop in the heart of Melbourne where i also read poetry in that little passageway between the shop stores in Little Collins St. It was virtually the only shop in Melbourne you could get Folkways records, Blues, & Classical music. Martin Friedel (the composer & winner of an Emmy) said, he still has fond

memories of Peter and Ruth Mann's **Discurio** / "Kept me sane and hopeful in doing nothing Melbourne in the 60's". In fact, the first words he ever attempted to put to music "came from Chris way back 1972". Chris was very much involved in the experimental music & composers scene in Australia & was involved in a number of groups, notably the **Machine For Making Sense** with Rik Rue, Amanda Stewart, and Jim Denley, while **Chris Mann and the Impediments** included Carolyn Connors. Our relationship was renewed some years later again when Chris joined up with Katy Munson (who he had a child with / Oskar). Meanwhile Chris had gone to La Trobe University get an education of sorts. He failed of course, or rather they failed him, cos "all he would do" for essays was a meaningful quick "scrawl" on a single-sheet of paper. They respectfully told him, not to be too upset; if it was any consolation to him they would have failed Wittgenstein. But Melbourne (nay, Australia) was too small for Chris, especially since the likes of Kenneth Gaburo, Henri Chopin, Herbert Brün, Richard Kostelanetz, & John Cage respected + included him in their international *avant-garde* canon. Chris's poetry or poems were what Gaburo termed "compositional linguistics", & as such Chris regarded himself more of a "composer" rather than a "poet", but we agreed that it was ridiculous that he wasn't recognized as a "poet" here. His neglect in Australia was / is a tragedy. I bought out an A6 booklet of his great lines which i called **The Essential Mann**, cos i wanted to highlight the art of his single-lines which most people couldn't "see" cos his work was so opaque on the page – a problem of "density" i guess. So i took a magnifying glass to some of the lines. He brought out a number of publications under **collective effort press** in those days, & in 1985 i anthologized him in **Off The Record** the penguin Books performance poetry anthology, the only time he'd been anthologized in Australia. In 1996, Chris made the decision to leave Australia. I thought it stupid; arguing that his work was *here* not else where (in the States or Berlin etc). He disagreed. And left. As Oskar (his son) said, "Launching Place was Chris's way of being connected to the past - to his parents" as was / is Melbourne for Oskar himself. When i went to the Weltklang Festival in Berlin in 2003 Chris flew over from New York to be there, and along with Amanda Stewart (who was curating an international sound poetry gig in Berlin at the time) stayed with me. After my performance their cheers in the audience were the loudest, and along with Michael Kowalski who came over from Hamburg it felt like i had my own personal cheer squad from Australia there. Around 2014 Chris developed cancer. When i contacted Chris, he emailed back "life on the other side is still a little slow, but getting there".— "No sin in taking it slow!" i emailed. In May of 2018, he emailed me "you know david markson's readers block'?", i told him i didn't like novelists. He got upset, & after a few more to-and-fro's that was the last contact i had with him. When Oskar was little, Oskar said, he would pull Chris's arm to hurry up at the Post Office, "but now I'm the one holding up the line" he said. "Language is the mechanism whereby you understand what I'm sayin better than I do" Chris once said, and for Oskar and a few of us all, Chris Mann was the mechanism for all of us to understand ourselves better than we once may have. I'll leave it at that. — too much more to say really. A whole generation of poets & composer devastated by neglect & ignorance here. RIP Chris: π.ο.

for Chris Mann

not that he doesn't show his hand

since his material is the gamut of contemporary "theory" --
the thought, discourses, and fragments knocked off them

allowed to cross-cut and cut across each other
but at such velocity as will not afford
the inalienable if quasi atemporality
of being-a-site-in-a-text

that nevertheless is one

(is a text)

not that this thinking doesn't show its hand

that a music
or rather
a convenience of performance
derived from the practice of musical performance
in any case stand-up
in front of
an audient socius

neither comedic
professorial
nor rhetorical

but in lieu of
context, space, textuality, discourse

for what one might think might be

concretized
in a rollercoaster of pitched sonorities
warped dialectics sudden
releasements
enforcements
shifts in velocity

manifest

For Chris Mann

un-re-appropriatable
appropriations

not that he doesn't
show his hand

A music
in place
of discursive context
yet dredging the riverine
of its text/thought interface
everywhere outed
as uttered

hidden generosity and gentlenesses

obtuse?
aloof?

There never was
a rug
pulled out
from under --

mind's
eyes
twinkling.

Chuck Stein

MEMORIES

WARREN BURT

Our wonderful friend Chris Mann has left us. Sept 12, 2018, in New York, of complications of a blood cancer. Born March 9, 1949, it's quite a surprise that of all of us (a group of roughly contemporary artist friends) he would be one of the first to go. I remember when, back in 2008, I was in a New York hospital with a nerve disease (where it sometimes looked like I would be one of the first of our gang to go). Chris returned from a trip to Europe, rushed to my bedside, and the intensity of our emotion-charged greeting surprised both of us greatly. Well, I didn't go then, but now he is gone leaving a lot of us behind, family, old and new friends. We all live in webs of interconnection, and every time someone passes on, we're usually surprised to find just how extensive those inter- and intra-connections are.

Chris attended Camberwell Grammar School, then the University of Melbourne, where he studied Linguistics and Chinese. As a child, he had participated in Wattle Records recording sessions run by his parents, Peter and Ruth Liebermann, both émigrés, who were ethnomusicologists as well as managers of Discurio, one of Melbourne's first extensive record stores. I still have, somewhere, a Wattle Records single of Dougie Young, Aboriginal Country and Western singer – "The Land Where the Crow Flies Backwards," – which Peter produced, and which Chris claimed, he was the recording engineer on. During his Melbourne Uni years, Ron Nagorcka recalls Chris winning an orientation-week swearing contest. Years after that, in "If Structure is an Empty Glass," a super-8 "conceptual-art-comedy" film I made in 1978-79, I filmed Chris in full flight, in extreme closeup, screaming dire imprecations at all and sundry, which I slowed down, with newly available digital-rate changing technology.

In the early 1970s, Chris became involved with a group of people who established The New Music Centre, a collective multi-arts space. I first met Chris in 1974. I was a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, living in a tiny one-room apartment in La Jolla – down the hill from the University and about 2 blocks from the ocean. Ron Nagorcka, who was studying at UCSD that year, told me that Chris was coming, mainly to meet Kenneth Gaburo, and that, since I was soon moving to Melbourne, I should meet him. About 2 in the morning there was a knock on the door, and there was Ron with Chris. Ron's tinier apartment, right on the sea was too small for them (Chris's inebriated state might have also helped that), and "here he is you take care of him." The next morning, Chris and I walked down to the ocean and soon got very bad colds. For about a week we traded wisecracks and coughs from one side of the apartment to the other. I drank orange juice to get better. He drank bottled margaritas. He got better one day sooner. What this proved, neither of us could figure out. Chris did meet Kenneth Gaburo – to have an argument with him, he claimed. Kenneth, as I remember, made mincemeat out of Chris, and deposited Chris on my doorstep at 2 am. A little while later, chastened, Chris returned to Kenneth, and began a productive collaboration that lasted up until Kenneth's death in 1993.

When I arrived in Melbourne, in July 1975, I seem to remember it was Chris who picked me up at the airport. He was going to drive me to La Trobe University, where I was going to start teaching. On the way, he stopped at the Albion Pub in Carlton (now an upscale cosmetics shop (how the mighty are fallen!)). Just to introduce me to the local culture. In the car, one of the first things he said to me was, "Ground Rules: We speak the same language, but it's not

the same language.” I embarked on a total-immersion program of learning Australian English (with an American accent). Many years later, now, I’m chagrined that so many of the Australianisms that I learned have now disappeared from the language. My early-20-something students at Box Hill Institute speak what seems to me like a hybrid of Australian English heavily diluted with American cinematic English, all with an Aussie accent. But “Bluey” for a redhead? Forget it.

I remember Chris in those early days as a macho person, one who was concerned with establishing his status as top-dog-on-the-heap. When Ron Nagorcka and I were doing a performance at La Mama Theatre in Carlton just a couple of months after my arrival, Chris showed up and tried to bust up the show. I made it very clear to him, without falling out of character, that I would not tolerate such behaviour at an event I was participating in. I chased him down the street, screaming, brandishing a burning log, in fact. I didn’t hear from him for several weeks. Then one night, at – that’s right – 2 am, there was a knock on the door. It was Chris. “I’m sorry,” he said, “can we be friends?” That was the beginning of 23 years of intensive collaborations which reached their climax in 1998 with a trio performance by me, Eva Karczag, dancer (with whom I’d been collaborating since 1976) and Chris, at the New York Improvisation Festival. I still remember that performance fondly.

In Arthur and Corinne Cantrill’s film “The Skin of Your Eye,” which documented the early 1970s counterculture in Melbourne, there is a sequence of a poetry reading at the Pram Factory in Carlton (now the site of Brunetti’s café (how the mighty are fallen!)) in which Chris, very drunk, and in full flight, is breaking up a poetry reading by, I believe, Kate Veitch. Many years later, there was a revival showing of “Skin of Your Eye.” I was planning on going, and asked Chris if he would be interested in going since I knew he’d never seen the film. He said no. He explained that when that poetry reading occurred, he was on a week-long bender, remembered nothing about that week, and was afraid that if he saw the footage, he might remember what had happened and he felt it was wise that those memories of the past remained buried.

At one point in the late 70s, early 80s, Chris was teaching in the Aboriginal Studies program at Christ College in Oakleigh, which was part of Australian Catholic University. I remember one project of his that involved getting a lot of cheap cassette players, and just before summer break, he gave one to each of the students in the class, along with a box of cassette tapes, and told them to go home and record any members of their family who could speak Aboriginal languages. It didn’t matter which – just get as much of the language down on tape as possible. The students returned after the summer break with an archive of Aboriginal voices and languages. I wonder what happened to that archive.

The maturing of Chris over the years, both artistically and personally was gratifying to watch. I remember when Oskar was conceived, Chris was living with Katy Munson by this time – Chris changed pretty radically – I could see it in his body language and posture. I can’t remember if it was before or after that we had had a conversation about how, when men learned they were going to become fathers, how the “hormones suddenly kicked in,” and they often changed their behaviour and appearance significantly. I think that was before Oskar’s conception, because I remember remarking about this change to Chris after his change, and he agreed with me.

Politics was an ongoing obsession with Chris; there was one period (76-77?) where he was having an ongoing dialogue with some Trotskyites. I met the poet Alastair Spate, who was

deeply involved with Trotskyite internal politics at that point. In any case, Chris continued his dialogue with them for quite a while. I was fascinated by the internal politics of the movement at that time, but after a couple of talks with Alastair, decided that I didn't need to pursue that avenue any further. I had a lot of time for Noam Chomsky. Chris didn't. "Chomsky was an early NATO setup," as one of his one-liners went. We both were fascinated and horrified by developments in China during the Cultural Revolution. About 77-78, Chris actually went to China, and he asked a number of embarrassing questions to a group of musicians there. Mostly about amateur art activities which had been happening since the Cultural Revolution (and remember, we were involved in an idea we called "radical amateurism"), and how did the provincial opera company he was talking to relate to that? I think they must have thought him either a naïve Westerner, or more likely, completely incomprehensible, but eventually, when they did understand, all hell broke loose. It turns out that our Western (effete?) take on "radical amateurism" was something that the Chinese provincial opera company had no interest in whatever.

Sometime around when Oskar was 6 or 7 or 8, he was attending St Kilda Park Primary School. From school, he brought home the following joke sequence: "How do you catch a unique echidna? You nique up on it, of course. A tame echidna? Tame way." I remember that Chris was tickled by this, and in fact, it found its way into one of his poems. As did many of the one-liners, clever neologisms, jokes, puns, etc. that he encountered in everyday life. But Oskar, at that age, was a rich source of material for Chris's poetry, as well as being the object of his and Katy's parental affections.

In the mid-80s, Chris managed to get a position, funded by the ABC Staff Union, of artist-in-residence with the Broadcast Music Department of the ABC. One of his projects was called "The Blue Moon Project," This began when Chris noticed that many of the leading "modernist" composers of the day – Stockhausen, Babbitt, Gaburo, Mel Powell, Herbert Brün, had been jazz pianists in their youth. (I still have a lovely memory of Herbert Brün ragging "The Internationale" in his Urbana, Illinois apartment.) Chris wondered if you could get them to record an old standard, such as "Blue Moon," you would learn a lot about their subsequent musical development based how they played the tune. This was the sort of conceptual idea that Chris would have, and then pursue rigorously. Invitations went out to people around the world. If I recall, hardly any of the elder generation of modernists responded but I know that many others did. The only two Blue Moons I can recall offhand were Ronald Al Robboy's narrative about what Blue Moon meant to him, and David Dunn's jet-propelled quasi-minimalist Synclavier version. Chris's idea was that the versions would be played on the ABC Breakfast show, at the same time each morning. The Announcer was Clive Stark, a rather proper gentleman. He and Chris developed a good-natured disputatious relationship about the project. On the last day of the project, Clive gave a performance of his own performance that had something like "Blue MOAN!" as the main motive. As an idea it was definitely in the category of one-liners, but as a conceptual art project, which went on for quite a while, it had the advantage of playing with the establishment media, and actually providing lots of variations on the theme to the public, in a very high-profile manner. Something about the project always seemed a bit off-balance, a bit off-kilter, and I think that's what Chris absolutely wanted.

Beginning in the mid-70s, and continuing for many years, Chris and I were regulars at Cleopatra's Lebanese Restaurant when it was on the corner of Fitzroy St and Esplanade in St. Kilda. Around the same time we bought a cassette at Cleopatra's of Sheikh Abdel Bassett

Abdel Sammad singing the Holy Quran, and in Chris's car at the time – a 30s Mercedes Benz staff car – we drove around the streets of St Kilda with it blasting out the windows.

Listening to recordings of our collaborations over the years, I can hear Chris's method of delivery developing. In *Syntactic Switches*, made in 1977, Chris adopts a very stentorian mode of delivery – very slow, clear, and punchy. Quite preachy. By the time of "anyway you can always put language down to experience," his delivery is very fluid, very musical, and fast – the phrasing and fragmentation of the linguistic line is much more elaborate, and the delivery is non-stop rapid-fire and verging on hysteria. By the time of his last recordings, in 2017-2018, he has introduced pauses into his reading, and the phrasing is virtuosic, and the pacing reminds me of nothing except the finest of actors performing Samuel Beckett. He's added gestures to his reading, too. In fact, his performance really became a total physically engaged artform – the body, the words, the speed, the manner of delivery all merged into one completely embodied theatrical presence.

In 1987, five of us, me, Chris, Walter Billeter, Kris Hemensley, and Les Gilbert, applied to the Australian Bicentennial Authority for a commission to make a two-hour radio piece for ABC Classic FM, "Words and Sounds in the Australian Landscape." To our great surprise, we got it. Chris at this time was interested (obsessed is maybe the better word) with the "Israel in the Kimberleys" idea that Doc. Steinberg, formerly Lenin's Minister of Justice, had advanced in Australia in the 1920s-40s. The idea was to settle the Kimberley region with Jewish refugees, building a new region of Australia with European migrants. Apparently, the proposal got as far as John Curtin, the then Prime Minister. Curtin, reputedly a rabid anti-Semite, "put the kibosh" on the plan. Chris wanted to visit places associated with the proposal. He was also fascinated by Wolf Creek Crater, a large meteor crater and magnetic anomaly about 150 kms south of Kununurra. So we wrote a visit into the Kimberley into our proposal, and again to our surprise, the ABC agreed to provide support. It was quite a road trip. The visit to Wolf Creek Crater was a highlight. At that time, the "facilities" at Wolf Creek Crater consisted of a couple of picnic tables and I think a dunny. We had been to the general store at Carranya Station, the nearest settlement to the park, where Chris engaged in some banter with the woman behind the counter. He made, if I remember correctly, a Wittgenstein joke. "Wittgenstein?" the lady behind the counter said, "I prefer Hegel myself." "Excuse me, ma'am," Chris said, "I'm not being condescending towards country people – I live in the country myself. But where do you hear about Hegel and Wittgenstein out here?" "From ABC Radio National, doesn't everybody?" the woman replied. We were gobsmacked – one mission of ABC Radio National was, and is, to be a kind of Australia-wide university of the air and we were sent to this place by the ABC, and here was the general store manager telling us that the mission was successful. She also gave us a lot of good advice about Wolf Creek Crater – how there was no accommodation there, and very little else in the way of facilities, how there was no water there (we bought several large containers from her), and how we were unlikely to encounter anyone else at this time of year. The obligatory warnings about snakes, etc. We bought some provisions and I bought a Wolf Creek Crater T-Shirt and Chris bought a smaller one for Oskar. 31 years later, I still have mine, and occasionally wear it. I'm sure that Oskar has long since outgrown his.

We drove the not inconsiderable distance to Wolf Creek Crater, arriving shortly before sunset. The ground was, as we'd been warned, crawling with ants. We were driving a pickup truck. Chris dossed down in the back of the truck, I decided to sleep under the stars, but on top of a picnic table. I think neither of us slept all that well but waking up in that remote environment

was quite a lovely experience. Then we began exploring the crater. It was fairly easy, in the early morning cool, to ascend the crater, but very difficult to get to its bottom. And the day heated up fast. The bottom of the crater had a small grove of trees and a sinkhole in the centre. We searched for a way to make a sound that would resonate in the crater, without success. It was too big, and too diffuse. I think we first tried walking around the rim of the crater after our initial ascent, and then headed down into the crater – it was hot on the rim, and hotter in the crater. Chris summed up our attitude to the adventure with a line that mentioned something like “two loons frying their synapses” or something like that. We made several good recordings of environmental sounds, and recordings of Chris reading in various environments, but a recording of the resonance of the crater was just impossible. Then, about 4 in the afternoon, we heard a distant droning. Fortunately, we were recording. A tiny private plane flew from south to north, low over the crater, ringing and resonating the crater beautifully. When we finally got back to Carranya Station, we asked the woman behind the counter about the plane. She said it was a local Aboriginal bloke who flew from about 200 kms south up to Hall’s Creek usually twice a week for supplies. We remarked that his timing was elegant. She replied that his timing usually was. That recording absolutely made the final mix in the piece – it’s remarkable and we were remarkably lucky to get it. Chris and I had both espoused, in our own ways, ideas of “radical amateurism.” On this trip, we learned (as if we hadn’t known it already) that some environments, like the West Australian desert, are fairly unkind to any kind of amateurisms, radical or otherwise. Still, we stumbled through, and returned to Melbourne with lots of material.

In 1981, Chris and I were commissioned by the Astra Choir to write a piece for them. Chris was at this time studying New Guinea Pidgin, incorporating it into his poems. This was the height of the “cassette movement” in our segment of the new music world, so we decided to write a piece where the choir performed based on what they heard over the headphones from their cassettes. There were 40 members in the choir, so that meant that we had to make a process that involved 40 cassettes. I believe that we recorded Chris reading his text, and then made a patch involving my Aardvarks IV electronic music box that chopped up and routed the text to 8 different cassette recorders, and we did this process 5 times, producing the 40 cassettes which if they all started simultaneously, would produce 5 simultaneous readings of the poem, scattered about the choir. Chris recorded two different poems and we made two movements – one for each side of the cassette. The piece was first performed at the Religious Centre at Monash University – a round chapel with a circular shaped corridor around it. The first movement was performed just before interval, with the choir out in the corridor, and the audience inside. Then came interval, and after interval the choir was inside the chapel with the audience. Both versions began with John McCaughey, the conductor, giving a downbeat, and the 40 members of the choir started their machines simultaneously. The phased “CLICK” of 40 cassette recorders starting simultaneously was a wonderful sound. Then the members of the choir would perform, imitating what they heard on their individual cassettes through their headphones. It was an interesting performance, with an ingenious setup although it would be impossible to perform today – what has happened to those cassettes? And with what technology would you perform it? I’m glad the recording still exists, showing a quite wonderful moment when conceptual art and new music were quite happy bedfellows. One of the interesting things about the piece was that the 40 choir members imitating Chris doing half-Pidgin half-English texts, quickly became an interestingly textured crowd sound. By doing the two movements before and after interval, the audience provided their own textured

crowd sound during the interval, unconsciously providing a counterpart to the choir's textures.

Also as part of Chris's ABC Residency, he produced a piece called "Quadrophonic Cocktail." He found a text from 16th century England based on Dampier's Journals, which described Australia from a European perspective. Chris then had this text read by the ABC Newsreaders, distributed over four channels. This was broadcast quadrophonically – two channels on ABC-Classic FM (stereo) and one channel each on ABC Radio National and ABC Local Radio (both mono). So with three radios, you could hear the entire four-channel recording. Chris, along with a number of us, was interested in mistakes, randomness and incompetence. In this project, he had set up circumstances to get plenty of those. Quite a unique undertaking. I don't think that in the current climate, such free-wheeling experimentation with the media would be allowed to exist. And more's the pity, as they say – the Quadrophonic Cocktail joins a distinguished history of unsung Australian artistic experiments. Chris could be tough and harsh and uncompromising – especially in regard to politics. (He was always expecting people to be both rational and clever, and was continually disappointed when they were, alas, neither.) At the same time, if you pulled back a couple of layers of armour, you found a person of great tenderness and sensitivity underneath.

We would often practice our "Marxist art criticism" on each other, getting quite strident in our reading of each other's work. To an outsider, it might have sounded like we were having a bitter debate or were slagging off at each other quite viciously. We weren't – we were just practicing conceptual flexibility and toughness. Although it may sound weird, that was the activity that I pretty much missed the most after Chris moved to New York in 1996. I have found very few people here who could match Chris's incisive analysis of culture and how it works on us. One of his early slogans was "We demand the right to be worked on!"

Also, I should write something about our working methods in all the voice and technology pieces we did together. Usually this involved Chris asking me if such and such was possible with the technology, which usually, at the time, it was not. I would tell him this, and he would then ask what was possible that could get close to that. I would then scratch my head and eventually figure out something that would be possible – we would try that out. I remember working with one early sound modification program (Sample Vision by Turtle Beach) where we would record a phrase of Chris speaking, then set up the parameters for some kinds of voice modifications. The slow speed of the programs and the slow speed of the computers at the time meant we would then retire to the kitchen of my West St Kilda flat, and make tea. By the time the tea was made, usually the processing was done, and we could hear if that particular modification was useful or not. I think these modifications were used in "of course," one of our long pieces from 1986-89. When, years later, some app or other would appear which could easily do something we had taken hours to do in the 70s, 80s, or 90s, I would tell Chris this, and direct him to the app in question. In almost all cases, he remained rigorously unimpressed by the current realizations.

The one-liner, of course, was one of the essential elements of Chris's oeuvre. What many people may not know is that for a number of texts, these were written down in absolutely rigorous chronological order. Probably in later texts, he moved things around, but I remember a period in the 80s where he was absolutely insistent on absolute chronological order as a structuring principle in assembling his texts, and he insisted on this in the electronics and voice works we did, as well. Which was fine with me – I was a great fan of that kind of structuring at that time, as well.

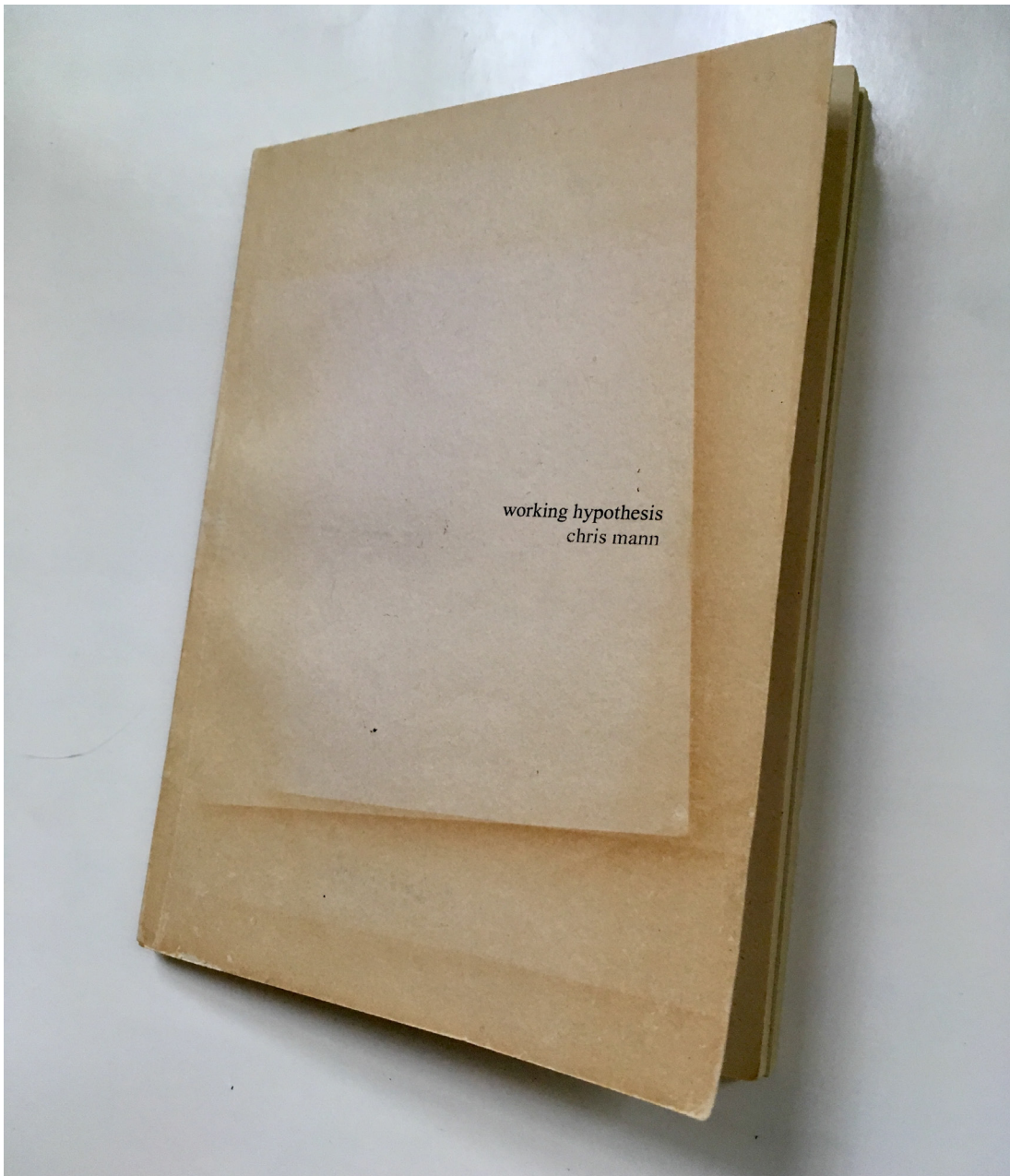
This commentary started out to be an obituary, of sorts, for Chris. But I found that kind of thing almost impossible to write. It's only now, about 6 weeks after his passing, that I find that the memories of our years together are surfacing, allowing me to produce this reminiscence. I hope it is useful or entertaining or whatever to all those of us who knew and loved Chris for all those years. And also for those who didn't know him.

October 26, 2018

Daylesford, Victoria

Chris Mann Outside A Present

Dorota Czerner



Chris Mann, *working hypothesis*

Station Hill Arts / Barrytown Ltd, 1998.

Purchased from Amazon Marketplace in September 2018.

sunburnt books are an integral part of the antipodean literary experience
etched parchments abound

CM:

Time is outside a present.

It arises.

A la apology.



Chris alone outside a present.

Present enough.

Like Thelonious. Leaning out of the red trolley, alone in San Francisco.

Hanging in by a thread of the railing.

Leaning out toward the invisible "us."

The streetcar un-named,
liberated from any further *demand, desire and denial*,
three D inductions (a pathology of explanation (...

"The name which can be named is not the unchanging name, says the Tao.
... *a placebo of absence*))) The nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth".

For Chris Mann

Slow down Chris. Slow it down.



(a close inspection of the red car reveals at least five other heads,
extra hands somewhere inside the dark car, knees, hats. Strictly speaking
no one is ever alone when wanting to be left alone, but only too alone to bear one's
own singular signature
inside the car, I mean time.) I apologize

OUTSIDE A PRESENT,

which is a bit of a curveball,
just like the past is a lazy form of responsibility that wraps the revelation by admitting... to what?
that we are doing fine just listening?
Hang on, Chris.
Hang in there.

Present is a closet inside a flat and in that sense, we are all deeply closeted.
Though some less than others, like those wise-eyed-star-nebulae-gazing-freaks who are
ever so softly transitioning toward the next curve. Night-wise. Indigo connoisseurs.
Positively Mandala-ic.

Back when we met in the Mandala Room

(at GQ's house, Bastille Day 2002, his 60th.)

You read something. "It" falling flat outside of my-then-present
under-standing.

I didn't get it. I apologize.



A flat is supposed to look like a rolled-up curve to an outside observer, which is a bit
of a curveball,
our trying to get out of our own closet and falling flat on our face, again and again.
Not getting it.

The Mandala-ic vs. the Formulaic. Quite !

My point being, you read so fast I didn't get a thing, only your voice,
Chi rising, **Chi** dispelling -then **Gong-Gong-Gong** before any words could be grasped
-**Chi Gong** and your **Chi** positively gone,
its whole sense un-clanging itself for me to return the call, at last
the grinding cutters of the wheels rise,
cornering the question of somehow getting it, or getting at it,
above the noise

A man who feels that time is on him, will lift himself & fall back.
The tower of Pisa.
Hanging, above the street, the silhouetted man-hat-block.

For Chris Mann

The street is white.

Erased from the cobble-stone patterns, outside of it all.

Planes going overhead have become the new screeching tires. JUMP!

(an online comment about 9/11... on its 18th anniversary)



Hang in there Chris. For another minute.

DC,
Lower Manhattan, September 11,

the phrases in italics are borrowed from Chris Mann's *working hypothesis*

A Postcard to Chris Mann

Ronald Robboy

In early 1983, Chris Mann, then still living in Australia, came for some weeks to San Diego, California, where I live. I no longer actually remember him telling me why he came—I cannot conjure any memory of his voice telling me what he was doing here. But I have long assumed he must have been wanting to spend time with composer Kenneth Gaburo, who had been a mentor to him and who must have then been living outside San Diego in the rural foothill community of Ramona, though not for much longer, because I think that was the year Kenneth left for Iowa. As it happened, I myself would not be around. I was leaving town at just the time Chris was coming, so I would be away, also for some weeks. Though he and I would largely miss each other, it worked out well in another way: he would stay at my place. I know he arrived here before I left, because we did spend a bit of time together. As I reconstruct this, I think this was the visit when he arrived unannounced, not having told me he was even going to be in San Diego, just coming up and rapping on my bedroom window, right at the head of my bed. Can this have been that time? I was right there, inches away from his knuckles on the other side of the glass, and though it was the middle of the day with the sun high in the sky, I was, um, indisposed, that is, with company. So, I sent him away, but only after learning he was to be staying in town, and maybe it was right then that I offered him my place.

Before I left, he did come back for me to show him around, to tell him where things were and so forth. And I think it was that evening, sitting at my kitchen table, that we ate pickled herring, of all things, as we downed several ice-cold shots of vodka, which was not anything we had ever done before or since, by which I mean neither the liquor nor the herring. I drink little now—not that I was ever a big drinker, even if I did have a bottle of vodka in the freezer—and at the time of his passing, Chris had drunk no alcohol at all in many years. Vivid as that herring-and-vodka memory is, though, I cannot say for sure that it was the same day he came over to see what was what in my place. But if it wasn't the same day, I don't know when it would have been. He was not in San Diego that much; or if he was, he didn't visit me. Or maybe he did, because he did seem to know where I lived and how to get there, having shown up unannounced that way. So, who knows?

I lived alone at that time in a classic Spanish-colonial-style bungalow courtyard, comprising two duplex cottages, easy to imagine as a setting in a hardboiled L.A. murder mystery, where a detective maybe goes to interview some secondary character. ("I found Miss Birdseye in a faded Spanish courtyard, one whose luster had sailed some time before the Armada...") I am guessing the one I lived in was built in the 1920s. It was located barely a half block from the northern end of Park Boulevard, where the streetcar line that used to run from downtown up through Balboa Park would turn east on Adams Avenue—right where, twenty-five years before that, there had been an ostrich farm adjacent to Mission Cliff Gardens overlooking the abrupt plunge down to the valley and its old adobe mission. One day during the years I lived there, I answered a knock at the door by a man and a woman of my parents' generation, maybe a year or two younger. Part of what made it hard to judge their age, and what made them so genial, was their youthful excitement, mixed with a sort of bashfulness. I don't remember where they said they were from, or even if they had, but it wasn't San Diego. It turns out that, during the Second World War, he'd been stationed somewhere in the Pacific and she waited for him in San Diego, there in her (my) Park Boulevard Spanish bungalow. They wanted to know if they could come in and see the place once again.

Obviously, he had been back on one or more leaves during that time, and this had been their episodic make-up-for-lost-time love nest between the prolonged and terrifying separations. She became, in that instant in front of me, an honorary cast member in the evolving noir mysteries I had been filming there in my mind.

Whatever else there was for me to tell Chris when he came over for his preview, I somehow found reason to bring up fire safety and what to do in case of a conflagration. What that “to do” was, I have no idea now. Grab some master tapes of my group, The Big Jewish Band? Or the Super8 master of *Der Yiddisher Cowboy*, an epic home movie Warren Burt and I had made several years before? Or maybe some books? My place was pretty much crammed with books. But which ones to grab? Looking back now, I think that from among what I had by then collected, what I most treasured, or if not most treasured, most wanted to flaunt with Chris as audience, were

- (1) the huge volume of bound issues from 1904 of the *Fraye arbeter shtime* (Free Voice of Labor), the New York anarchist Yiddish weekly, not a tabloid but a full broadsheet, that only ceased operation in 1977; and
- (2) the four-volume *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur, prese un filologye* (Lexicon of Yiddish Literature, Press and Philology), a monumental biographical dictionary of Yiddish writers by Zalmen Reyzen. It was the author’s magnum opus, published one volume at a time in Vilna between 1926 and 1929.

In 1976 or early 1977—or maybe it was still a year later, but I don’t think so—not having ever heard of it or knowing what it was, I had stumbled on the Reyzen (frequently spelled Rejzen or Reisin), all four volumes, high on a back shelf of a Fairfax Avenue bookstore in Los Angeles. It went on to play an outsize role in my education, and even made a cameo appearance in *Der Yiddisher Cowboy*, where I held up a volume to the camera. So, maybe I asked Chris to save that, in the event of a fire. Or maybe I asked him to do something else entirely; I don’t remember. But I do remember—and we both talked about this since then, more than once or twice—that I raised the specter of fire. I brought it up enough times that he commented, laughingly, not on the possibility of fire, but on my bringing it up so many times. You should know, though, my fears were not entirely baseless. These were old buildings—well, more than fifty years old, anyway. They had wood frames under their stucco, and the interior plaster walls were held in place by an aged matrix of dry, thin lath. And this was Southern California, its Mediterranean climate even then fire-prone. Directly behind the duplex with my apartment were the garages for the courtyard. Facing out onto a back alley, they were separated from my place by only a narrow walkway, and were equally flammable, it seemed to me. They were rented out as storage space to persons unknown, or used by the landlord himself, a curious and altogether likable civil engineer from Hong Kong who had turned to real estate more or less full time. “It’s the only game that counts,” he told me. But he liked renting his courtyard to artist types. At one point it was musicians in all four cottages. He called us his conservatory. By the time Chris was house-sitting, though, I was the only remaining conservatory member; none of the other tenants played music. In addition to the garages in the back, with what seemed to me to be their highly combustible mystery contents, along the outside of my bedroom outer wall, and separated from it by another walkway, ran an old wooden fence made of thin, unfinished, desiccated redwood pickets spaced closely together. (I don’t think they were cedar, but this was some time ago.) The fence ran all the way to the alley, with a gate on the alley extending from the garages. The garage structure was not quite as long as the back of the duplex, so between it and the fence there was some cramped space where either the landlord or his handyman had piled several shoulder-high stacks of shipping pallets made of soft pine one-by-threes. Together with the old garage and the fence made of what can only be described as dried-out kindling, these all looked like they were designed to start a fire. Even without those shipping pallets—I am visualizing a cramped cluster of modular chimney columns, themselves entirely combus-

tible, slatted across with flammable surface areas—my place would have been rapidly consumed had a fire broken out. My musical instruments were fully insured, covered by a professional floater policy; but there were the other, seemingly irreplaceable contents: my archives and books. All that was what was informing my state of mind when Chris and I were speaking, though I don't know why it was just then that it was coming to a head for me. Chris, if not dismissive, seemed to think I was overreacting, and comically so. How else should I have taken his laughter?

* * *

In London, where I had never been before, I visited the Tate Gallery, as it was then still known (its main museum is now called Tate Britain). Among its collection is an extravagant full-length portrait of Mme. Guilhermina Suggia (1885–1950), a leading cellist of her day, that had been painted over the course of several years from 1920 to 1923 by Augustus John. I bought a postcard of the painting and sent it to Chris, in care of me at my address.

Though Augustus John is regarded by many today as having been a society portraitist—some might even say *merely* a society portraitist, a term that connotes, though not outright dismissal, a sense that he had a glib technique coupled with a certain shallowness and lack of serious purpose—he was nonetheless an important figure in British painting and considered a modern master in his own time. He was also in some ways almost a caricature of the Bohemian artist. He befriended Roma, who at that time were still all but universally known by the pejorative term Gypsies—including by John himself—and, affecting their ways, he had traveled in their caravans across Dorset and his native Wales. Though he was married to Ida Nettleship, until she died following childbirth, they lived in a ménage à trois with his model-turned-mistress, Dorothy McNeill—whose name he changed to Dorelia, which he found to be more “Gypsy” sounding—along with his many children by both women. He became especially known, as I said, for his society portraits, their signature panache rendered by the techniques he had developed for working with great speed to capture passing moments. Mme. Suggia, for example, did not “sit” for her portrait, in the sense of sitting still and holding a pose, but was in motion, actually playing the cello and “not merely pretending,” as she put it. She was, in fact, practicing the Bach cello suites much of the time, and John's technique allowed him to constantly revise and paint over what he had already done as the final expressive portrait took form.

Soon after I began writing this, I talked to a painter friend, partly just to share the Suggia portrait with him, in case he'd not seen it before, and also to hear any thoughts he may have had about Augustus John in general. We talked for quite a while as he speculated about various strategies the artist may have employed painting the cellist, and near the end of our conversation he pointed out some similarities between the Suggia portrait and two well-known paintings by John Singer Sargent. The first was *Madame X*, the scandalous full-length portrait of New Orleans-born Virginie Amélie Gautreau, painted in Paris in 1884. (Like Mme. Gautreau, Sargent was also an American expatriate.) Her carriage is oriented directly, no, *audaciously* toward the viewer, but her face is turned sharply to her left, creating a striking profile that forms a counter-focus to her luminously white décolletage—she used a pale lavender face-and-body powder, specially compounded for her, to give her skin an almost radioactive glow—all emphasized by the backward thrust of her naked shoulders. The ninety-degree turn of her head causes the muscles of her bare throat to stand out in sculpted relief just the way the throat muscles of Mme. Suggia do, who is likewise seen in vivid profile. Suggia's head, however, is turned in the opposite direction, that is, to her right, so that the profiles in *Madame Suggia* and *Madame X* are symmetrical doppelgängers of one another, like two bookends counterpoised.



Madame Suggia, 1920-3, Augustus John OM (1878-1961)

Oil on canvas, 73½ x 65 in. © The estate of Augustus John.

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In the wake of the scandal created by the shocking portrait of Mme. Gautreau—the painter’s reputation in France was damaged beyond repair, and hers even more so—John Singer Sargent fled Paris for London, only to become a towering figure in British painting, and a celebrated portraitist in particular. Given the fame of *Madame X*, to say nothing of its notoriety, and taken together with the other Sargent portrait that my friend was reminded of, it is hard to imagine that Sargent was not lurking in the back of Augustus John’s mind as he painted *Madame Suggia*. That other Sargent portrait that my friend thought of was *Dr. Pozzi at Home*, of 1881. Samuel-Jean Pozzi was a leading Parisian gynecologist. A dandy and notorious rake, he was said to have been a sometime lover of the married Mme. Gautreau; and it was further said that it was through their intimacy that she was put in touch with the expatriate American painter who had done the doctor’s portrait. *Dr. Pozzi at Home* is a study in red. He is clad in a floor-length scarlet robe, looking either like Satan, or like, as many commentators have observed, if not the pope himself, then some other high-ranking Vatican official. From inside his robe, only the ruffles of a white shirt peek through at the collar and wrists, along with, at robe’s bottom, the point of his right shoe, exactly as Suggia’s does from beneath *her* red gown. The only skin showing is on the good doctor’s face and naked throat (where not covered by a *meticulously* trimmed beard and mustache) and on his elaborately posed hands. His right hand appears to be gesturing as if to hold the robe closed at the collar (Suggia’s neckline, of course, plunges); and on his left hand, the first two fingers are half-curved over the waist cord that holds his robe closed, so that his hand is ever so casually draped hanging from the cord. The net effect is that his hands and fingers—oh, those sensitive, probing fingers!—look very much like Mme. Suggia’s, which are likewise stretched across the cords of her cello strings.

Born in Portugal, Guilhermina Augusta Xavier de Medim Suggia would later be based in London for many years. But before London, she was for a time a protégée and colleague of the renowned cellist Pablo Casals, with whom she collaborated and concertized extensively. They lived in Paris together for

several years, and though she even used the name Casals as her own during this period, there is apparently no evidence that they were ever actually married, according to her biographer Anita Mercier. When Suggia and Casals finally parted ways, her career and reputation—as Mme. Suggia, not as Mme. Casals—grew, if anything; and for many years she was highly respected by colleagues and was an in-demand soloist. It may be, however, that her portrait has become better known than she. A fair amount has been written about her, but her recordings are rare. (Like everything else, though, some can now be found on YouTube.) I confess that I myself did not know her playing until I began working on this remembrance of Chris. What I did know about her was from the various tellings of an incident involving yet another figure from the first part of the twentieth century.

Donald Francis Tovey (1875–1940) was a signally gifted British musician who, though active as a composer, pianist, conductor, and editor, has long been best remembered as an analyst and annotator. When I was in high school, I studied the entries he had contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s iconic Eleventh Edition—collected separately after his death as *The Forms of Music*—and I especially pored over the many concert program notes he wrote, mostly for the orchestra he conducted at University of Edinburgh from 1914 until shortly before his death. They were collected as *Essays in Musical Analysis*, and their six volumes, published by Oxford University Press, were probably the first books I ever special-ordered from a local bookstore, something that felt very bold at the time, and about which I was of course very proud. (There was also a supplementary seventh volume, on chamber music, which I encountered a couple of years later on Manhattan’s Fourth Avenue—by then at the very twilight of its reign as the city’s used book quarter—along with his copiously annotated edition of the thirty-two Beethoven piano sonatas.) A hero of mine, Tovey was also the subject of a biography I read around the same time by his former student Mary Grierson, who had become his assistant and then colleague before finally going on to succeed him as the conductor of his orchestra in Edinburgh. Tovey had been, while still a young Oxford student, befriended by the great violinist Joseph Joachim, who had himself famously been a friend and collaborator of Brahms. (Something I did not know before, but just happened to read—something that would have jolted Chris’s attention back from wherever it would have strayed by this point—is that Joachim was a cousin, three times removed, of Wittgenstein.) Tovey learned a great deal from Joachim, who was a link not only to Brahms, but directly to Robert and Clara Schumann; and Tovey cherished his time playing chamber music with the older man, which they did together with Robert Hausmann, the cellist in the Joachim Quartet. Joachim took Tovey under his wing and, lending his prestige, appeared with him first in Berlin, and then in London in 1901. There, in Britain, the seventy-year-old Joachim also agreed to perform the Brahms Violin Concerto, which he had years before premiered (as had he, with Hausmann, the Double Concerto). According to Grierson, when Joachim expressed a desire go through the concerto in his hotel, Tovey, without a score, sat down at a piano and rendered the entire accompaniment from memory. Joachim was stunned: “After an hour with Donald, I feel as if my head were on fire. I have never seen his equal for knowledge and memory.” He also wrote that, “Of all the musicians of the younger generation that I know, Tovey is assuredly the one that would most have interested Brahms.”

For all that, by the mid-to-later 1960s, when I became fascinated by Tovey, his own compositions were largely forgotten, and I knew hardly anything of their actual music. I did know, though, that he had written for cello, and in particular, for Casals, with whom he had a close relationship. The two had met around 1909—Casals had been with Suggia for several years already—and, bonding immediately, began performing together. At the close of the summer of 1912, Tovey joined Casals and Suggia, along with several other guests, at the beachfront villa that Casals had built at San Salvador, near his birthplace of El Vendrell in the southern Catalan province of Tarragona. The other guests were the composer Enrique Granados with his wife Amparo, as well as twenty-year-old Mieczysław Horszowski, then already more than a decade into what would become a ninety-year-plus career (!) as a particularly beloved pianist and teacher. Something happened between Casals, Suggia, and Tovey, the details of which vary depending on which accounts one reads, but nowhere are they exactly spelled out. Precisely what happened will

certainly never be known, but the upshot was that Casals, who was prone to jealousy in any event, became explosively so. Suggia biographer Mercier paraphrases violinist Adolf Busch (whose limited-edition memoir I have not seen myself): “Tovey reportedly said he was surprised while taking a bath by a pistol-toting Casals, and was forced to jump out the window in a state of *déshabillé*.”

The quarrel damaged not only Casals’s friendship with Tovey, causing a decade-long break, but spelled the beginning of the end of Casals’s relationship with Suggia. From what is known about Tovey, it is hard to imagine his having made a pass at Suggia under the circumstances. His own life was bizarrely under the sway of his former private-school headmistress, the German-born and over-protective Sophie Weisse, who had a deep influence, even a control, not only over his career choices, but over his seemingly spare romantic life as well... but that is another story. The other guests there—the Granadoses, and poor Horszowski, who Mercier says witnessed the explosion—must have been mortified. Not helping matters, the three principals, that is, Casals, Tovey, and Suggia, all wrote letters to their close mutual friends seeking alliances and interventions.

The whole affair occupies at least some real estate in much of the literature on each of the three. Casals himself almost never spoke of Suggia again—for sixty years—but his biographers do. A chapter in Robert Baldock’s well-documented Casals biography almost turns into an admiring, if critical, biography of Tovey, whose “eerily spectacular intelligence was matched by a quite remarkable opacity to human feeling.” From the kind of language Baldock uses, Tovey might now be thought of as having fallen somewhere on the autism spectrum. (It is Baldock who also ascribes, though not in so many words, a pathology to the relationship between Tovey and the iron-willed Miss Weisse.) Here is a description, by Tovey acolyte and loyal biographer Grierson, of the heartbreaking denouement.

Driven by a desire to get things clear, and encouraged by well-meant but ill-advised friends, Tovey made further efforts to straighten out his misunderstanding with Casals. He rushed off to Liverpool, where Casals was playing; but instead of attempting to see him, Tovey spent the evening in his room at the hotel, drafting a long and elaborate letter, in which he endeavoured to explain clearly his point of view. Expressions of anger and grief, and explanations which would have sounded natural and spontaneous in the spoken word, were thus frozen into an unnatural stiffness, and the letter could not possibly have been answered by anything else than the short, formal reply which came from Casals, closing the incident.

Much of the other Casals literature leaves the reader with the sense that it was Suggia who must have been sexually provocative, inflaming the vulnerable Tovey into some indiscretion. That was certainly the impression that I formed at eighteen or nineteen, again reading Grierson.

Guilhermina Suggia was then a young woman at the height of her beauty, if not at the height of her powers as an artist. Maybe she played with fire—maybe the hot Mediterranean summer had a disturbing effect on the finely balanced emotional poise of three ultra-sensitive people—and certainly Tovey showed that unhappy lack of *Menschenkenntnis* which Miss Weisse deplored.

Oy, I think that *I* was the vulnerable one who’d been inflamed. I certainly had no idea what *Menschenkenntnis* was. But a lack of it, it appears, is what Baldock would later translate as opacity.

How much of any of this I remembered when I bought the postcard, I cannot say. I was then in my early thirties. Thinking back now, though, it seems I *must* have remembered the Tovey connection. After all, I had read the Grierson biography at the end of my teens. Now, I’ve encountered a biography not of Tovey, but of Suggia, the one by Anita Mercier. It was published in 2008 and is quite good, with ample documentation and several appendices that include not only a bibliography and a discography, but Suggia’s own published writings (including her 1923 article “Sitting for Augustus John”). Mercier herself provides a welcome revisionist reading of the 1912 blowup. Other writers had presumed Suggia to be

flirtatious, capricious, even “volcanic,” while Casals was thought of as the disciplined and “serious” one. Mercier adduces contemporary documentary evidence suggesting, rather, that it was Casals who was given to eruptions of violent jealousy and “irrational tantrums,” as she characterizes them, while Suggia appears to have been the more composed of the two and at least as coolly focused on her own professional ambitions as Casals was on his. Mercier’s reading is frankly feminist, allowing that the deeper cause of their rift could have originated with Suggia’s unwillingness to make Casals’s career be their mutual priority. “In the final analysis, it was impossible for Suggia to live with Casals because her needs were being eclipsed...she could not stay with him and move forward at the same time.” Viewing the portrait through this lens, I now feel a little guilty, because I think I was sending it to Chris to laugh at: to laugh at her, but also—and this may be a mitigating factor—to laugh at me.

I think I always felt, justifiably or not—I mean, Chris and I *never* talked about it, which is in itself interesting—that my connection to the entire conservative concert-music world would have been a source of amusement to him. On the one hand, I earned my living playing the cello; but on the other, we were too hip to talk about *that*, after all. So, Suggia’s eccentric portrait and my buying him the card reproducing it, taken together, strike me as an expression of that dialectic writ large. Now that he is gone, though, it has dawned on me how often, beginning maybe fifteen years ago but probably not quite that far back—I know it’s been at least twelve, though, because I have email documenting it—Chris started mentioning the piano lessons his daughter, MaHong, was taking. That would have been, at least in part, because he was an active participant. His son, Oskar, was born when Chris was thirty-five, but MaHong is much younger, and Chris was well into middle age when he began taking her to lessons. It was also, I now realize, because the lessons, and the very fact of his daughter taking piano lessons, did not seem “funny” to him, and he thought it perfectly natural that I, a cellist with a professional orchestra job, would find it all of interest. He would find occasion to mention her progress and to talk about their family piano; to air her different teachers’ differing pedagogical philosophies; and even to mention that her “preferred” teacher lived at the Ansonia Hotel. I don’t mean to say he talked about these things constantly. But over the course of some years, he would now and again drop a salient comment into whatever conversation we might be having. That last nugget, for example, about her “preferred” teacher, was Chris’s pointed response to a long article I had forwarded him in 2007 about Isaac Leopold Rice, the attorney, financier, musicologist, and submarine manufacturer, after whom the Rice Gambit was named (a “now-forgotten” but “particularly audacious sequence” of chess moves, in the estimation of Joseph W. Slade, the article’s author). Rice’s wife, Julia, herself a musician, was active in the Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise, among whose efforts was a campaign to quiet river traffic on the Hudson off Manhattan. This led to the possibly foreseeable result that ships began directing their horns and klaxons at the Rices’ Riverside Drive apartment as they steamed past, driving Julia and Leopold to move to the Ansonia, the palatial Beaux Arts residential hotel still standing today on Broadway between Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth.

* * *

When I returned home to San Diego, Chris was not to be found. I had been expecting to see him, but he was gone. All that was left to show he had been there was the postcard, sitting on my kitchen table. The visual memory I have of it was that there was nothing at all on the table except the postcard, conspicuously placed right in the middle, message-side-up, and behind it and off to the side, the electric toaster that sat in the back left corner.

Excursus

Picture a California hippie artist–intellectual sitting around his Spanish-style bungalow—enormous old palm trees outside the window looking for all the world like the Golden Age in Andalusia—reading Rejzen entries aloud to himself as he masters lexicon loshn [language], his own pseudo-Kuzari...

That was taken from a description of me in the late 1970s. I wrote it in the early 2000s for a Yiddish scholar in Toronto. *The Kuzari*, a canonic work of medieval Jewish literature, was a twelfth-century apologetic in defense of Judaism. It was written, originally in Arabic, by the Andalusian Hebrew poet and philosopher Judah Halevi. Its conceit is that a rabbi, engaging in Platonic dialogue with the king of Khazaria on the Eurasian steppe, convinces the king of Judaism's superiority to classical philosophy, to Christianity, and to Islam, upon which the Khazars convert to Judaism. (The historicity of this eighth-century mass conversion remains a subject of debate.) "Rejzen entries," of course, refers to the entries in Zalmen Reyzen's *Leksikon*, whose four volumes appeared on my Save-in-Case-of-Fire list. They clearly served as a model for the still more specialized and even more monumental *Leksikon fun yidishn teater* (Lexicon of Yiddish Theater), by Zalmen Zylbercweig. During Zylbercweig's lifetime, in addition to his numerous original plays and translations as well as several monographs and collections on various Yiddish theater topics, he somehow managed to publish six large quarto volumes of his theater *Leksikon*, totaling more than 3,000 double-columned pages. (At the time of his death, a nearly completed seventh volume was already typeset in galleys but remains unpublished.) The first and second volumes appeared in New York and Warsaw, respectively, in the early 1930s. After the Second World War, he published the remaining volumes at intervals in New York and then Mexico City, the last appearing in 1969. Zylbercweig's *Leksikon* contains not only biographical entries for thousands of actors, playwrights, musicians, and behind-the-scenes producers and theater managers—each with its own thumbnail halftone photo headshot—but also numerous entries on the theater troupes themselves and, in some instances, on entire topics, such as the *purimshpil*, the rowdy holiday pageants that reenacted the story told in the Book of Esther. It is impossible to imagine the vicissitudes Zylbercweig must have encountered with his quixotic project, hauling around all his notes—I can only imagine the thousands upon thousands of index cards he must have maintained over the decades—as he moved first to America from Poland, and then in the late 1940s, following the unimaginable loss of the millions murdered and the destruction of virtually the entire Yiddish culture in Eastern Europe, from New York to Los Angeles. There, in the City of Angels, after about five years of apartment living, he and his wife were able to buy a house on Drexel Avenue, two and a half blocks—or, really, closer to three—west of Fairfax. It was in that house that he prepared the remaining four of the six *Leksikon* volumes that were to see the light of day, and where he must have reviewed the galleys for the never-published Volume 7. As it happened, the Zylbercweig home, at 6517 Drexel Avenue—the address appears on the copyright page (in English) at the back of each of those four postwar volumes of the *Leksikon*—stood across the street from a small Spanish-colonial-style house at 6520 Drexel that hardboiled mystery writer Raymond Chandler had moved into with his wife in 1943. That was the year, following on the success of his novels *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely*, that Chandler was contracted to co-write a screenplay with director Billy Wilder for *Double Indemnity*. (Wilder, in fact, ended up doing most of the writing.) As for Zylbercweig and Chandler, they would not ever have waved to each other from their front yards, because after living there only about three years, that is, until

1946—which is to say, about two years before the Zylbercweigs moved onto the block—Ray and Cissy Chandler moved away from Los Angeles and settled a hundred-and-some miles farther south, in the exclusive seaside enclave of La Jolla, where houses with views out onto the blue Pacific were perched atop cliffs overlooking the rugged coastline. (Coincidentally, or perhaps not so, while still in Los Angeles Chandler would have encountered a north-south street called La Jolla Avenue that crosses Drexel at the east end of the very block on which he and then the Zylbercweigs lived.) In describing La Jolla, I did not intend the word “exclusive” in the general way it is often used simply to connote a wealthy neighborhood. The non-elect were not excluded from La Jolla merely because they did not have money. I mean that, until the 1960s, property purchasers in La Jolla, now a suburb of San Diego but still with its own post office and ZIP code, were required to sign a contract, known as a covenant, agreeing that they would not *ever* re-sell their property to persons of color or to Jews.

The fires came. Terrifying and implacable. They were the worst that southeastern Australia had seen in more than a century, and the loss of life set new records, records that were not broken again until recently. I am speaking here of the great Ash Wednesday bushfires—nearly two hundred of them—that erupted across Victoria and South Australia virtually simultaneously on February 16, 1983. Cumulative years of acute drought, unrelenting ovenlike temperatures, and erratic high winds all conspired to ignite thousands of square kilometers. The Ash Wednesday fires were so called because the day they broke out happened to be the holiday of Ash Wednesday, which initiates the Christian penitential Lenten season. It fell on February 16 that year. Survivors described advancing walls of flame sounding like a hundred freight trains. Giant fireballs hurtled through the air. In a flash, entire stands of gum trees burst into flame as the vaporized eucalyptus oils ignited like napalm. Melbourne was surrounded by fire, and entire towns—Cockatoo and Upper Beaconsfield to the east of Melbourne—were razed to the ground. Fire crews were helpless in the face of such powerful firestorms. Writing these words today, in 2019, I don’t see them as anything out of the ordinary. I still live in California, and fire seasons that behave that way—that are no longer confined to a few short months, as summer turns to fall, but can now persist for much of the year—are no longer the exception. They appear to have become the rule. But that day, February 16, 1983, and its massive fires now represent, for me at any rate, the first day of the future.

When I returned home from my trip, as I said, Chris was gone. My neighbor at that time across the wall in our duplex was the writer Mel Freilicher. He told me that Chris had hurriedly flown back to Australia because of the fires. To be honest, I am not sure I had even been aware of the fires while I was in Europe, and Chris’s absence when I returned came as a complete surprise. But it is not surprising that he would have felt a need to return. Chris’s family had a house on a property east of Melbourne in the thickly forested hills north of Launching Place, a small town along the Warburton Highway west of Yarra Junction. At some point as the news grew of unstoppable fires relentlessly roaring across Victoria, Chris packed and returned home, though he evidently had waited long enough that the postcard from London arrived before he left, suggesting the fires were not initially threatening Launching Place. I never asked him about that detail directly. But neither did he ever contest that he had left the card for me, and however unlikely his delaying so many days before returning to Australia may seem now—how long did it take for postcards to reach San Diego from London in 1983?—I have no other explanation for how it came to be sitting on my table.

* * *

Ruth Katz had worked, we are told, as a shopgirl in Cologne. It was only by sheer luck that, at the eleventh hour, she was able to flee Germany. In 1939, an Australian national happened into the retail store where young Ruth was a salesclerk, and the two began a conversation. Upon hearing that the younger woman was unable to leave the country—the Nazi government had voided the passports of all German Jews the year before—the visitor said she could secure passage for Ruth if she would come work for her as a maid in Australia. Ruth accepted the offer, and aboard ship en route to her new home, she befriended others who were able to get passports for her mother and brother. It all sounds like a conversation Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman would be having with Captain Renault (Claude Rains) in *Casablanca*, but I have heard this story about Ruth more than once. Before the year was out, Germany and Australia were at war and none of this would have been possible. Because Ruth and her brother were then seen as enemy aliens by Australia—it remains unclear to me what country or countries' passports they carried, if any—they were mobilized into the nation's defense but prohibited from carrying arms. I have heard various accounts of the work they did. In a late-in-life Radio National interview on Australian Broadcasting (ABC), Ruth's sister-in-law said Ruth and her brother were put to work at Albury, at the state line between Victoria and New South Wales, offloading freight from wide-gauge rail cars on one side and transferring it to narrow-gauge on the other. Or was it standard- to broad-gauge? I don't know which had what, but the country still did not have a uniform gauge at the time even for the trip from Melbourne to Sydney, so all passengers had to disembark there in order to switch to different trains. "Albury, all change!" ran the announcement that carved itself into popular memory.

There, in Albury, Ruth's brother is attached to a "weird battalion," as Chris has described it in a timeless present tense, "which is like fifty percent Jews and fifty percent Cypriots," who all "apparently get along really well." Prohibited as they were from carrying arms, they had the free time and, Sergeant Bilko-like, the means as well, to control the black market at that busy station where every single passenger had to file out of one train and, now a captive audience, pass across the platform to board another. One of the other Jews in the unit was Peter Liebermann. He had left his native Germany early, in 1933 at age sixteen. It is not clear to me whether this was foresight—I don't know if Peter left on his own—or that it was his mother who took him out of the country, for at some point she too ends up in Australia. Let's say, for purposes here, that he came first, alone. He may, then, have indeed had foresight, but he was also a dreamer; for when he did cut ties and make his exit, he took nothing with him but a scarf, which he understood to have come from the Paris Commune, and a copy of Lao-tzu. (Here, for the founder of Taoism, I use a pre-pinyin transliteration—Lao-tzu instead of the now standard Laozi—to evoke the romance of that desperate time [think: Malraux and *Man's Fate*], though I am fully aware that not all readers will locate romance for themselves in parsing different transliteration systems.) To give you an idea of Peter Liebermann's class station, though—Chris has called him "a German intellectual" to signal how impractical he was—the scarf had been given him by his wet nurse, which I have to admit may say even more about Peter's abiding relationship with his mother than anything about his class or political ideals.

Working together in an official capacity as laborers, and evidently in an unofficial one as black marketeers in their unit, Peter Liebermann and Ruth Katz's brother became friends. The latter took Peter home with him to meet his sister, and within three weeks—this was still in early 1942—the two married and, at some point, shortened the Jewish-sounding Liebermann to become Ruth and Peter Mann. In 1948, Ruth became pregnant with Chris. Peter's mother accused Ruth of doing so to keep Peter from going to Tibet to become a Buddhist monk. Given that he and Ruth had been married for six years, it is hard to see exactly what it was that caused his mother to question Ruth's motives in such an accusatory way, assuming the pregnancy was even by design, but apparently it is true that Peter did imagine himself chanting in far-off Tibet.

In the event, however, he did not go. And Ruth, now a mother, acquired a tape recorder. I do not know its make or any technical details, but to appreciate how extraordinary this was, Chris's family believes it was the first "domestic" tape recorder in Australia, that is, the first to be held in private hands

and not be in institutional use by, for example, the ABC or the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). Ruth used it, circa 1954, to record kindergarten children and then sell the small reel-to-reel tapes to their parents as keepsakes. This was somehow irrespective of the fact that none of the parents had any means of playback. Soon enough, Peter and Ruth started Score Records, which was associated over time with a minor galaxy of Australian firsts, including the first commercial recordings of Aboriginal song and of European-derived Australian folksong; of Australian poetry and of the archetypal Australian comedian Barry Humphries; of American folksinger-activist Pete Seeger and of the anarchist British-German-Australian cartoonist and cabaret performer John Olday. Australian theatrical director Peter O'Shaughnessy's 10-inch LP *The Sentimental Bloke*, produced by Score when Chris was six, was "the first spoken-word recording of Australian literature, *evah*," as Chris declared, his grandiloquent Churchillian elocution laden with no small irony. Chris underscored that point—that his German-Jewish refugee parents understood that (white) Australia had its own culture, that it needn't be a British import—in "RPM 33 1/3: Australia's Pioneering Sound Recording Family," a nearly hour-long feature about the Manns and Score Records produced by Lyn Gallacher for an ABC *Earshot* program that was broadcast in 2015. At this writing, it is archived on the ABC's site and can be downloaded as a podcast. I borrowed liberally from it for information about Chris's parents, though I had also heard a good deal directly from Chris himself at various times. Peter Mann, I have gathered, was the producer and engineer on the Score recordings, and probably made the lion's share of A&R decisions. But it is clear that Ruth, beginning with her vision to introduce that first tape recorder to the scene, played a large role in the venture. Indeed, the entire family was enlisted. Chris, who as a child thought *rpm*—as in "33½ rpm"—stood for "Ruth and Peter Mann," told me he has early memories of sitting at the dining-room table gluing labels onto release-ready discs for distribution.

At some point, Ruth and Peter Mann expanded their enterprise by opening Discurio, a now-legendary record store in Melbourne that carried far more than Score recordings. To read diverse memories of it now scattered across the internet, Discurio was the place to get hold of hard-to-find international, classical, jazz, folk, ethnic, and other recordings in Australia. They also added a sheet-music component to the business that sold to individuals and, on a larger scale, to schools. At this historical remove, Discurio may well be better remembered than Score Records, its having probably touched more lives. But when the last generation that had direct experiences with Discurio passes—Chris's younger brother, Tim, took it over after the parents died, but he eventually became a restaurateur and Discurio is no longer in business—the situation could reverse and it will be Score that is the better remembered, given the longer-term survival not only of the Score recordings themselves (and the inevitable archiving of them in digital formats), but of their discographic data and the mere fact of their having been made at all.

It was Ruth Mann who made the decision to buy Coonara, as the property at Launching Place was known. So I was told by her grandson, Oskar, who lived there until he was twelve. (He was born in 1984, though, after both Ruth and Peter had died, so he never knew either of them.) I don't know the year the Manns moved in, but I do know the four of them—Ruth, Peter, Chris, and Tim—all lived there together. There were several structures on the property and a creek running through. Like the surrounding nestling hills, it was wooded. The main house had a grand L-shaped veranda that wrapped around its north and west sides for shade from the intense Australian sun. During Oskar's boyhood, Chris, who had inherited Coonara (Tim having inherited Discurio), kept some sheep and cattle on the property, probably a modest number. They also had one horse, Oskar said; but he believes that before his time, when Peter and Ruth were still alive, there had been many more.

For Chris Mann



Coonara, near Launching Place, Victoria, seen from the front.
Courtesy of Oskar Mann.



Looking south, down the veranda along the backside of the house.
Courtesy of Oskar Mann.



Wooded surroundings.
Courtesy of Oskar Mann.

In his twenties, certainly, Chris became increasingly independent and was making his scene and spending more time in Melbourne as well as doing some traveling. It was in 1974 that I first met him, and that was when he passed through California. After Chris's mother died, in 1979—strangely, my own mother had died the same year, also at a relatively young age, about two months before—his father began dividing his time between Launching Place and Melbourne, and was also traveling out of Australia. Peter Mann was on an extended stay in London when he died suddenly, several months after the Ash Wednesday fires.

* * *

In recent years, until Chris's death, he and I, along with composers Warren Burt and David Dunn—all of us longtime friends of one another—shared occasional group emails. Statistically speaking, Warren sent by far the most, in terms of sheer volume; David the least. For those who know them, this will come as no surprise. Chris and I were more of the Greek chorus. The emails included the usual stuff, forwarding funny things mostly or, more seriously, recently completed work. But sometimes a message was just plain newsy, about careers or illness, for example. In early February 2019, just as I was writing these lines about the Mann family in Launching Place, David and I received email from Warren saying that *he* had been ordered by fire officials to evacuate from Daylesford, a town in the Victoria foothills a hundred kilometers northwest of Melbourne. "Our house is highly unlikely to be in danger," he wrote, "but there will be smoke and ash and constant fire trucks and waterbombing helicopters everywhere." Warren was right; that is, he and Catherine were allowed to return home shortly. But temperatures across Australia have been staggering for weeks on end this year. Even Tasmania, which we think of as downright chilly, has had dozens of raging fires. In late January, Melbourne only hit 111°F (!), but at night it never went below the low 90s. And I read one report that in Port Augusta, South Australia, it hit 121°F. The Ash Wednesday bushfires were, indeed, the first day of the future.

I wrote Warren back, wishing him and Catherine the best, and telling him that, coincidentally, I was just writing about Ash Wednesday, 1983, and Chris's dash back to Launching Place from San Diego. Here is Warren's reply to me and David.

I remember that day well. After Chris left Ron's place, he flew back to Australia. I, meanwhile, had seen Tim (Chris's brother) and gotten the keys to Chris's car – I met Chris at the airport, and we drove straight out to Launching Place, where Chris showed his ID to the Country Fire Authority guys, so we were allowed to drive into the fire zone to check on his property. We activated the hoses and sprayed down the barn, the caretakers cottage and the house. We could see flames on the other side of the ridge above the farm. We were ready to leap into the swimming pool/frog pond to protect ourselves when – the wind changed – and the direction of the spread of the fire reversed, and we, and the farm were saved. I remember we sort of collapsed into each other's arms with relief at that point. I vowed to never get that close to a bushfire again.

Alas, with the new future, I am afraid he is liable to get close again and again. Ditto for me here in California.

For years, Chris and I joked about how funny it was—I was going to write that we thought it was weird, but no, we thought it was funny—that I had a sudden obsession with fire when talking him through his house-sitting responsibilities, and how much funnier it became that *his* house turned out to be the one I must have been thinking of. And then there was the postcard with Mme. Suggia's portrait. For I also remembered that, in my message to Chris on the card, I had lapsed once again into worrying about fire, and when I would later mention this to him, it always made him laugh more, not least because he had left that card behind for me in lieu of any kind of other note or explanation about the Australian fire.

When I received an invitation from *Open Space* to contribute to this memorial to Chris, I knew immediately what I wanted to write about. In my mind, I could see the postcard so clearly, and I even knew exactly where, after thirty-five years, I still kept it, along with a great many other postcards, ones that I'd received from friends in the 1970s and '80s, during what was for many of us a pre-email heyday of a kind of postcard theater. Sometimes the picture on it would be funny; sometimes the message would be; sometimes both would or sometimes neither; but the aggregate effect would be a kind of performance. My plan was to scan the card that I'd sent Chris and use that as an illustration—rather, as *the* illustration—for a remembrance in which I would talk not just about the worries over fire, about the premonitory postcard to Chris, and about the actual fire in Australia, but also about my old place, and Mme. Suggia, and—at some length—Donald Francis Tovey, whom I suspect Chris would have found so transcendently irrelevant to his own interests as to be of interest. Saying that, of course, makes me wonder if I ever did actually mention Tovey to him. If I had, it would have been in connection with Suggia, of course, during any of the times we were laughing about the postcard that was sent and then left behind.

That was the plan, but to my dismay, the card was not to be found where I was certain I had put it years ago. I looked through what must have been hundreds of postcards, but *Madame Suggia* was not among them.

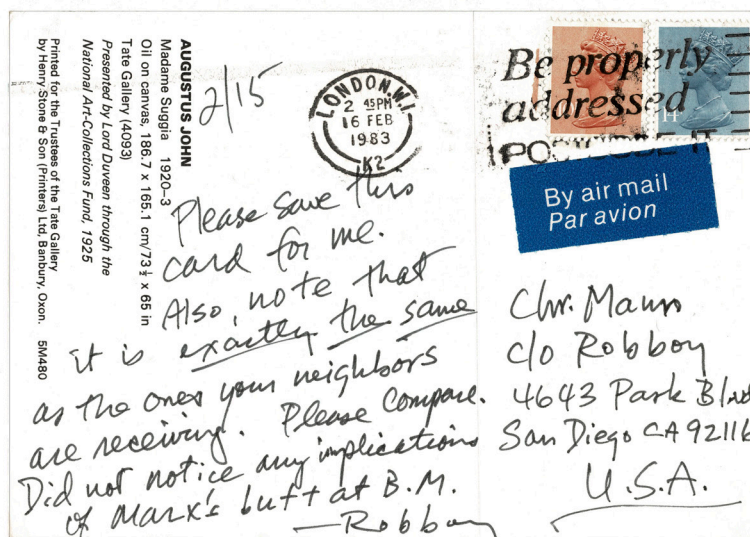
Correction. I did find an unused copy of the same card, which I obviously bought at the same time. It had Augustus John's painting on one side, but no message or addressee or postage on the other. I had saved the unused postcard along with the many stamped and postmarked ones that had been sent me. But as for the card I sent Chris, no dice. I won't say that this changed everything. It did not cause me to abandon my entire plan. But I was disappointed, partly because I would not be reproducing the postcard, reenacting some of that postcard theater of our younger years, but mostly because I could not share the text I had written to Chris, the text worrying about fire, albeit in the wrong hemisphere.

As I played with alternatives and the piece took shape, missing the postcard itself turned out not to be so important. It was crucial to include an image of *Madame Suggia*, the portrait, but showing it as it appeared on the postcard per se was not essential. It is a famous painting, and I knew I could reproduce an image of it from another source; or I could provide a link to an image online, or even leave readers to their own devices to find the portrait on the internet using, for example, these search terms: *Augustus John Suggia*. Images of it abound. (Some readers have no doubt already done similar searches for *Madame X* and *Dr. Pozzi*.)

Working on this piece, I spoke several times with Oskar Mann, who, though born the year after the Ash Wednesday fires, did live there at Coonara for the first twelve years of his life, as I said, and I was interested in his memories. At some point in one extraordinary conversation, I told him about my not being able to find the postcard, which, I assured him, was not going to be a problem even if it was a disappointment. Oskar's reply was that, surely, I was going to find it stuck in a book somewhere. That's what *he* does, he said. He slips postcards—or maybe he meant any kind of snapshot or page from a notepad—into books, only to find them later. Prophetic words they were. This piece was largely completed when, quite unexpectedly—I had long since given up looking for the card—I came across it stuck inside the back cover of *The Cello*, by Elizabeth Cowling (Scribner, 1975). The message on the postcard was dated February 15—a Tuesday, that is, the day before Ash Wednesday—but it was not postmarked until February 16 at 2:45PM London time. According to the Wikipedia entry “Ash Wednesday bushfires,” the first alarm was reported at 11:30AM Adelaide time, which would have been 1:00AM in London, barely after midnight but nevertheless also already on Wednesday the 16th. (Adelaide is ten and a half hours ahead of London.) If we are to take the postcard's February 15 date of composition seriously, that is, assuming I wrote the message on Tuesday sometime before midnight, that would mean it was written at least an hour before the fires broke out—or at least before any was reported—and by the time the card was postmarked at 2:45PM, on Ash Wednesday afternoon in London, it would have been 1:15AM on Thursday in Adelaide, and a quarter to two in the morning in Melbourne, by which time the infernos were already raging. The postcard, in other words, was very much contemporaneous with the disaster, its writing and subsequent postmark seemingly straddling the near-simultaneous eruptions of the many fires. I had no memory of that precise correspondence.

What the postcard is *not*, however, is evidence that anything else that I remembered was correct, other than it did picture *Madame Suggia*. The message has *nothing* to do with fire. Instead, what it has is some embarrassing juvenile humor. “Did not notice any implications of Marx's butt at B.M.,” it concludes. Oh, my, that is painful. For those in doubt, “B.M.” stands for the British Museum. I have no memory of whether, when Chris came by my place for me to show him around, we had spoken about Karl Marx, or about the British Museum and whether I would be visiting it, but we certainly might have.

Beginning in 1850, when Marx first secured hard-to-get permission in the form of a so-called Reader's ticket granting him access to materials in the museum—and, crucially, authorization to occupy a carrel in the Reading Room—he famously glued himself to a chair there as he poured over immense amounts of economic and political history and theory, as well as news of current events. It was in the museum's old Reading Room, for example, that he wrote *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In 1857 the skylight-domed great rotunda, designed by architect Robert Smirke, opened as the *new* Reading Room. Among other work Marx drafted in the new room was his *Grundrisse*, and it was also where he conducted the research for and probably much of the writing of *Das Kapital*. The British Library—which is to say, the collection Marx used before it became a distinct entity apart from the museum—physically relocated to a different site in 1997. But as I understand it, Marx's desk remains in the museum's rotunda as a tourist attraction.



Postcard to Chris Mann from Ron Robboy, London, February 15, 1983.

Thinking of all this now, I've revisited a book I had all but forgotten and had probably not looked at since re-shelving it in newly built bookcases more than twenty-five years ago, several years after having married and moved out of the Spanish courtyard. (Chris was never to any of the other places I've lived in since then, so he never set foot in the aisles between the floor-to-ceiling cases I've now long had in my studio. And though he never explicitly acknowledged to me his pride in the configuration of his own bookshelves—crawling I don't know how many feet perilously up the industrial-height walls of his loft—we shared a clear, if tacit, understanding that he was as pleased with their architecture as I am of the denser stacks under my eight-foot ceiling.) The book I've revisited is *Marx in London: An Illustrated Guide*, by historian Asa Briggs. It even has an undated black-and-white photo of a research station showing a desk and chair. The photo carries the caption, "Karl Marx's reputed seat in the Reading Room." Looking at it now, I can, as a matter of fact, convince myself that I see a slight impression of someone's bottom left on the chair's upholstered seat, but it seems foolish to assume that it was left by Karl Marx and only by Karl Marx—even if the chair was indeed his, and that it had not been reupholstered since the nineteenth century. The book was published by the BBC in conjunction with their television broadcast "Karl Marx in London," which Briggs wrote and narrated and which aired in mid-1982. It was, in other words, still a current title at the time of my February 1983 visit, and though there is no reason to suppose it was necessarily at the British Museum that I bought my copy, I must certainly have found it somewhere in London on that trip.

In fact, I have no clear memory of actually going to the British Museum at that time. Neither do I have even the haziest memory of ever seeing Marx's seat, that is, his chair in the flesh, as it were. And if I were to claim that Chris and I had talked beforehand about Marx or about the museum or about both, would there be any reason to believe or trust me? Not only was my memory of the message on the postcard spectacularly unreliable, but this throws into question my memories of all the subsequent joking around about it that I did with Chris. Was he just being polite when I would say the message was about fire—polite because either he, too, did not remember, or maybe simply because he was a mensch? Or are my memories of the jokes with him about it—even the recent ones—also delusional from start to finish?

One thing the message on the card makes clear is that Chris was not the only one to whom I'd sent a copy of *Madame Suggia*. ("Also note that it is *exactly the same* as the ones your neighbors are receiving," it emphasized.) I must have sent one to my neighbor Mel, at the very least, and maybe to others. I'm not sure that has any import now, but it does come as a surprise. What comes as an even bigger surprise are the message's first words:

"Please save this card for me."

So, Chris did not leave it behind as a strange runic gesture—which, make no mistake, would have been something he was certainly capable of—or in lieu of a goodbye note or as an explanation for why he had to depart so suddenly; and his leaving it certainly did not imply that all my talk of fire had been weirdly prescient or constituted any kind of eerie coincidence. He left it not because it said anything about fire at all. He left it because he was simply accommodating my request.

But to return to my original plan—or rather, to my original Plan B, for what I thought was the absence of the postcard—the solution I settled upon was to reproduce the painting more directly, rather than reproducing the postcard reproduction of it. I gained permission from the Tate itself, who sent me a beautiful high-resolution digital file of their own photograph of the painting. But before they could send me that image—they hold the rights to their *photograph*—there was another hoop to jump through. Copyright to the painting itself is still held by the estate of Augustus John, who uses a third-party photographic image library to administer permissions. Chris, of course, would neither have shown concern nor had patience for any of those protocols. More than that, he probably, on what I will call para-ideological grounds, would have actively opposed seeking permissions. (The beauty of that formulation, "para-ideological," is that he is not here to dispute it.) I'm certain he would have said: just bloody download one of the great many images of the Suggia portrait that can be found on the internet, no questions asked. (Question: did Chris use "bloody"? I can hear him say it.) But I felt differently. I wanted something that could function as a stand-in for the postcard-and-its-text, something with comparable conceptual heft, and I feel I found it in the *caption* crediting the portrait, a caption cataloging all the details of all the fingers in this pot that claim an interest in rights to the image. Going to that much trouble also reflects the depth of my feeling and respect for Chris: I would gain permissions for *Open Space* to use the image in my article, in perpetuity, from not one but two stuffy institutions and agencies. Mind you, they really did want to know, was this for a limited time or in perpetuity? I sought and gained permission for in perpetuity, of course. Didn't they understand? Chris is gone from us forever.

Rest in peace, my friend.

Subjective Beats Metaphor (1983), by Chris Mann and Warren Burt

Linda Kouvaras

[Extract from Chapter Three: 'The Dawning of Australian Sound Art', *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age* (Farnham, Surrey ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate/Routledge) by Linda Kouvaras]¹

The chapter from which this essay is extracted gives an overview of the 1970s evolution from late modernism to nascent postmodernism within the field of post-experimentalist sound art. Its focus is particular is on Melbourne's CHCMC (Clifton Hill Community Music Centre), the originating venue and nurturing laboratory for much contemporary Melbourne sound art experimentation, where Chris Mann was a key figure. The following text presents a work by Mann and his off-times collaborator, Warren Burt.

Postmodernism's impact upon society and cultural expression throughout the 1970s was registered in experimentalism and heralded the emergence of sound art. Issuing from the energized field of modernism's shake-up of all things cultural, the expressions in sound — and associated text — are tangibly anarchic. What distinguishes the fault-line where experimentalism crosses into sound art, are the fascinating tensions apparent through shifting from one aesthetic sensibility to the next. The transition period embodies both a modernist and postmodernist ethos, giving a sense of both pre- and post-. The crossover point is therefore not a simple, two-dimensional 'line', but is rather something more far-reaching and wider, with tangential offshoots that laid the foundations for sound art making in subsequent decades. This chapter considers the attitudes, theories and works of Australian post-experimentalist composers active during the late 1970s and into the early 1980s in the forging of postmodern sonic articulations.²

¹ <https://www.routledge.com>Loading-the-Silence-Australian-Sound-Art-in-the-Post-Digital-Age/Kouvaras/p/book/9781409441564>

² For a brief overview of the roots of Australian mid-twentieth-century experimental music, see Warren Burt, 'Australian Experimental Music 1963-1990', *Leonardo Music Journal* 1/1 (1991): 5-10; Jon Dale, 'Once Upon a Time in Melbourne', *Wire* 272/October (2006); and Julian Knowles, 'Setting the Scene: Developments in Australian Experimental Music since the Mid-1990s', in Gail Priest (ed.), *Experimental Music: Audio Explorations in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008): 9-36.

A work that epitomizes such an approach is *Subjective Beats Metaphor* (1983) (for speaking voice and electronics), a collaboration by Warren Burt and Chris Mann.³ This work inhabits a modernist/postmodernist border, dealing with a number of key ways in which the music/noise dichotomy has been addressed over the twentieth century as a dispute at the margins of the embodied and the disembodied, the scored and the unscored, the accidental and the intentional, sense and nonsense, culture and nature. *Subjective Beats Metaphor* deploys electronic voice manipulation, illuminating constructions such as subjectivity, the authorial voice, accent and syntactical meaning.

This work extends the tradition of Dadaist and Lettrist nonsense sound poetry of the 1920s to the 1940s.⁴ With chance procedures operating from both the narrator/performer (Mann) and the sound manipulator (Burt), much of *Subjective Beats Metaphor*'s agenda avoids emotion and its processes in music making, in favour of objective, formalists quests for purity and expansion of the medium. It also plays with the Cagean principle of moving to a position beyond composer/audience subjectivity.

Mann recites an original text, the reading of which is electronically modified and distorted by Burt; Mann can hear only the 'treatment', through headphones. The audience hears the combined outcome of this process. Mann is unable to meaningfully inflect — or reflect on — his reading, and this forces a determinative (though unwilful) modification of the anti-aesthetic 'rant'-like text. Rather, Mann is rendered robotic, de-personalized, without subjectivity. In Mann's words, he is reduced to a biological vocoder, transmitting information with a neutrality that [approaches] that of a piece of electronic equipment'.⁵

The work performs a distinctly anti-high-art gesture: the reading is inflected with a strong working-class Australian accent (produced from memory, as Mann cannot hear himself to moderate it) and its 'anti-

³ Warren Burt and Chris Mann, *Subjective Beats Metaphor* (for speaking voice and electronics), NMATAPES 2 (Melbourne: NMA Publications, 1983), commissioned by the Paris Autumn Festival. My discussion of this work appears in modified form in Linda Kouvaras, *Modernist and Postmodernist Arts of Noise, Part 2: From the Clifton Hill Mob to Chamber Made Opera's Phobia*, *Sound Scripts: Proceedings of the Inaugural Totally Huge New Music Festival Conference 2005*, eds Jonathan Marshall and Cat Hope (2006), at http://arn.cci.ecu.au.edu.au/symposium_view.php?rec_id=000000007, accessed 3 March 2006.

⁴ See, for example, Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrism to Class War*, 2nd edn (Stirling: AK Press, 1991); Marc Dachy, *Dada: The Revolt of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006); Richard Sheppard, *Modernism, Dada, Postmodernism*, *Avant-garde and Modernism Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

⁵ John Jenkins, Chris Mann, in *22 Contemporary Australian Composers*, Jenkins and NMA Publications (2000; 1988), at <http://www.rainerliz.net/NMA/22CAC/mann.htm>, accessed 14 August 2005.

aesthetic' pitch is evident in much of the choice of vocabulary and syntax.⁶ Much of the monologue is akin to a fractured inner dialogue or letter home from a faux naïve Australian traveler in London, for example:

as they say down under fuck off... we are on the other side of the world to you so that means when we sneeze you fart ... whatja say t that then in that me metaphor has done a bunk n it don look too good order schmorder I think so imply a lot Christmas so now the question is is it more real to go by bus or by car?⁷

However, the subjective voice of this narrative is dismembered by the reading and by its treatment (as well as the 'nonsense' aspects of the text). It does act out a quest for objectivity and scorn for the purely emotive.

The work also toys metaphorically with notions of subjectivity at a more fundamental level. The very act of listening to a voice — ours, another's — is, as it were, amplified in this work. We hear our own voice through bone to the ear's inner regions, but others hear it 'de-boned'. Douglas Kahn describes this 'presence produced by the voice' as entailing 'a degree of delusion' because of the difference in the sound texture between that of the speaker and that of the listener or addressee.⁸ *Subjective Beats Metaphor* throws this phenomenon — which we understand at an unconscious, intuitive level, even if we are not in the habit of articulating this — into sharp relief.

Engaging further with the act of listening, *Subjective Beats Metaphor* attenuates the process of voice recording. As Kahn states, after the invention of the phonograph,

The voice no longer occupied its own space and time. It was removed from the body where, following Derrida, it entered the realm of writing and the realm of the social, where one loses control of the voice because it no longer disappears. From bone to air to writing,

⁶ This play can be related to the rise in the use of Australian vocal mannerism in theatre, radio and film at this time. For example, in the works of Barry Oakley, David Williamson, John Romeril, Barry Humphries, the Pram Factory, La Mama as a whole, etc., Katharine Brisbane and others identify a self-conscious combination of working class Australian strine with sophisticated linguistic play as a chief dialectic within these works, drawing in part upon the precedents of Banjo Paterson, *The Bulletin*, etc. See, for example, Katharine Brisbane, *Not Wrong Just Different: Observations on the Rise of Contemporary Australian Theatre* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2005).

⁷ The text for *Subjective Beats Metaphor* is reprinted and called 'other' in the second issue of *New Music Articles* (1983): 3. Also see Chris Mann, *other* (2001; 1983), at <http://www.rainerlinz.net/NMA/repr/images/Other.jpg>, accessed 16 January 2009.

⁸ Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 7.

permanence outside the subject invites greater mutability, where the primacy and purity of the voice are subjected to machinations and imaginations of culture and politics.⁹

In the Burt/Mann collaboration, these ‘machinations and imaginations’ are implemented *in* performance, on the spot, as it were; Burt’s ‘imagination’ (and Mann’s) subject the voice to the loss of control on the part of the speaking subject.

Because Edison’s speaking machine was also a listening machine, it could reverse the loop of utterance and audition. Unlike humans it could not speak and hear simultaneously, but the displacement and the delay it introduced could establish a new circularity that enabled a person to hear his or her own voice for the first time without the [cheek] bones.¹⁰

Subjective Beat Metaphor upends the facets of sound recording described here and in so doing, displaces subjectivity. When Burt manipulates Mann’s voice, he becomes the ‘machine’s listener’ — so a human being plays the part of a machine; Mann, as ‘speaking machine’, cannot ‘speak and hear simultaneously’ — so a human being is ‘robbed’ of primary aspects of normal subjectivity. The crucial stage of the ‘circularity’ (enabling speakers to hear their own voice ‘without the [cheek] bones’) is absent from the process of sound recording in *Subjective Beats Metaphor*.

In regard to the spoken text, the modernist abrasion of ‘worldly’ sense here is stark. The verbal delivery slips in and out of linear intelligibility. The electronic sounds make no ‘sense’ in correlation with the spoken words. The sounds unpredictably, ‘accidentally’, erode the integrity of the text. The humour suggests a parody of the abovementioned modernism’s ‘secret language’ where meaning is opaque, known only to the creator. Simultaneously, the audience is aware that meaning is being eroded at a significant level for the performer (Mann) who cannot hear or discern the verbal significance of his performance. Semantic clarity is sacrificed for the modernist-experimentalist celebration of sound properties for their own sake, inflected with the joy of ‘unplanned’ noise discoveries.

Just as integral to this piece and its effects is an impression of merriment and play. The work pokes as much fun at modernism as it does at tradition: for instance, it turns Pierre Schaeffer’s ‘acousmatics’ — that is, ‘a noise one hears without seeing what causes it, [... marking] the perceptive reality of sound as

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

such, as distinguished from the modes of its production and transmission'¹¹ — on its head: the audience can quite easily see what is causing the noises, but the (arguably) primary noise producer, Mann, cannot control the noise because it is Burt's whims that doctor it.

As Douglas Kahn notes, 'Modernism ... entailed more sounds and produced a greater emphasis on listening to things, to different things, and to more of them and on listening differently'.¹² And it is technology that contributed significantly to this, as witnessed by Kahn's description of the speaking machine (which is 'also a listening machine') above.¹³ The consequences of all this in such a work as *Subjective Beats Metaphor* lie in multiple aspects, including power relations, where the meaning of McLuhan's aphorism 'the medium is the message' is toyed with in terms of trust (in the performance situation), playfulness, disorientation (on all three angles — performer, manipulator, audience), and dichotomies between human/machine and chance/control.

No Re-wind

SBM and other early Australian sound art undertakings in the 1970s/80s can be seen to build on early-twentieth-century precursors, particularly the legacy of Futurism, Dada and exemplar John Cage. They demonstrate (and exhorting us to accept) that music could be perceived beyond merely the concert hall situation and that unconventional sounds could constitute music. This sensibility was starkly personified in the work and philosophy of sound-poet Chris Mann, and exemplified vividly in his and Burt's *Subjective Beats Metaphor*.

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¹¹ Pierre Schaeffer, 'Acousmatics', *Audio Culture*, eds Cox and Warner, p. 77. Also see Chapter 1 of present volume.

¹² Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 8.

¹³ See note 9, above.

For Chris Mann



Alfalfa Aromatics

The, The Grape Carrot Vine Nux-Vomica

The Fenugreek Pistachio

The, The Watermelon Walnut Note

The on Pomegranate

The Sesame Language and of Flax Fu-Lin

The, The Coriander Balm

The of Cucumber Gilead Chive, Narcissus, Onion Cassia,

Shallot Pods and Garden Carob Pea

The and Olive Broad

The Bean Fig Saffron
The and Almond Turmeric, Ricinus, Safflower, Sugar
Jasmine. Beet Henna and
The Lettuce Balsam-Poplar
The Manna Spinach, Asafoetida
The Gakbanum Date-Palm, Oak-Galles Cumin, Indigo
Brassica Rice and Fu-Tse Pepper
The Sugar “Gold” Myrobalan “Peach”

Alvin Lucier
January 13, 2019

ON TRANSCRIBING CHRIS MANN

from: speakingisdifficult and theuse.info

a note on the process of drawing & the nature of the subject: may i begin by directing a set of graphic transcriptions.. and soon decide this is a way to approach the subject of the work of chris mann and suspect,, as most have found difficulties fronting both the poeTry (poliTics, and philoSophy .. on the page or in these performances . . and, this is partly because . . how he has . . deployed grammar on the printed page, to form what he chooses . . to frame what is spoken . . i mean his cycle of unending propositions . . his most irritating impediments (a kind of prosthetics that sends language begging . . then there's the negations . . the loops, and this stuff is a theory of how the mind works what's said is an alternative to music, or he says, "the brains basically fat, an Abstract Machine coz

looking is a form of believing :)(: faced with the one unrelenting slab of unrestricted sentences an enabled text but one absent of familiar structures even stanzas or a column that might facilitate or prevent the word being sung or paragraphs or conventional punctuation(s . . for some that disregard the page and those that are deaf to the dead art of printers ink are tormented tenfold in the case of mann . . where every possible place is saturated . . coz yOure the subject obviously and you will hear what is worth remembering, mirrors the claim with all its resources and multitude of directions, as though there were a school of philosophers called the Additions, a place where english starts and he says things like, "gift", (isayisayisay, whowasAnd as language is what you do at nIght, his visual acuity as explained in his story so far Pic. The Selfie. The camera, the camera obscUra, the bright dAy. So Who invents the wEather ? a quaint comment about the subject of light, and yet never to be sure that the noun needs a cure these words texts scores whatever they are, what are they? a form of anxiety woven from crosswords and search engines or a scrabble board an attempt to articulate as music at the edge of language that invents the future. It is an aid to teaching friends or something like a diction-ary . . without end, anxiety, a cry for help. Imagine writing a rhyme like the digitals clearly carcinogenic,) i can't not think that means phallus . . on deep listening mode and fused in his absentee punctuated course it continues, "(clearly)" an insecure slut that swings bOth ways, then he confers (data, what the fucked call Promiscuous, or Intelligence, (Intelligence, bourgeois survEillance (Look it Up), the certainty of the vulgar pun is knowledge that slips past most of us undetected except as a flashing in the mirror or returning in the loops of logic that echo the [past] almost accidentally, and nothing here makes it easier. mildly autistic Chris Mann suggests what words say about fantasy (should I say that, it's something he is toying with and mostly he's getting away with it, "all the fucking time" in the poetry of disappointment (sic). Everything has a cost even subtlety and those few poets who talk about economics and I can think of two and Ezra Pound is one and . .

There is a concrete monumentality to the page of Mann, be it an actual printed sheet or a digital page that scrolls on the screen, or a commitment to sit through a live performance, (essentially a durational conceptual art piece). One recent example is www.theuse.info that is the source of my Mann transcriptions drawings. the drawings are a kind of medium . . that's the duty of the transcription, and he's correct in saying that, repetition disintegrates so easily into hAbit, and defines it further in the line "(habit, that not Accessible to memory. This is a part of the philosophy written in his particular legalese jargon of poetry in order to expose the witness who has only themselves to blame when examined (uncovered) to [what motivates], as extracted from context. To

draw the voice the first time – the first instance is a trace synced to the monologue . . the second layer is applied using a more fluid medium and at a slightly later date, relating to what is offered in the expanded field of the computer program. This is just like using the devise as an instrument, playing the Mann (as he had so devised). One is aware of the mirroring offered by this ‘other’ echo of the past or contrapuntal interior that the theuse deploys when it is fully activated. Wary of the nonsensical, Chris has alluded to the nature of doubling as (i mean for information to be information it has to be revErsable no?), Yet this makes me think of Nathalie Sarraute’s characterless players set within her societal dramas, who communicate and oppress each other by ‘the use of language’. These writings have an undulating profile composed by certain trough marks rising to peaks continually interrupted by silence which is a justified essential part of music. Musically, and in these concessions to the continuum, pauses are clearly marked on the manuscript he performs from or that are memorised. The space in-between represents something significant. The glossing that is so characteristic of Mann’s live performances is an expressive form of grammar made of improvised glottal vocal treatments which intentionally frames the subject. It is a method he developed and used like a piece of musical ornamentation, an essential gesture employed to articulate and link his vernacular obsessions to his global network. As a philosopher Mann utters, Additions attempt to invent the future. But to follow such a rare and perfect sentence he laments, while it’s nIce to be a reference, (though the dead of course are fucking unBearable.

RUARK LEWIS

Sydney 18012019

DRAWINGS & TITLES (the captions)

#2 the intro (don’t you have a phone?)

#3 chewey

#4 what did you say, now?

#5 corrections

[The drawings included here, # 2-5, are excerpted from a set of 25, “a kid of automatic writing, Chris’s words embedded there beneath the ink”. See www.theuse.info - RL + ERB]

7/01/2019



the intro (or don't you have a phone)

7/21/2019



PLEASE CHECK THE TOP OF THE CARD

11 / 01 / 2011



what did you say, now

The image shows a single page of paper that has been almost entirely covered by a dense, chaotic scribble of black ink. The scribbles are made with a pen or marker, creating a complex, textured pattern of overlapping lines and loops. The ink is very dark and appears to be applied with significant pressure. The overall effect is one of complete obscuration of any original text or markings that might have been on the page. The edges of the paper are visible, showing a slightly off-white or cream color, but the central area is completely blacked out by the ink.

corrections

Speaking Gaps

Gary Hill's *Wall Piece* and *Language Willing*¹

George Quasha

This is that hole that everything must pass through. ... What is the point? It's always there; on again; on again. It waits without pathos. Waiting is human. This point wants to show me something inhuman. It wants to bring me to my knees. It wants me to pray, it wants me to see through seeing, it wants me to act like knowledge. It wants acknowledgment. It wants me completely at the edge. It burrows itself in, blows up and begins again plural — Points. Cells.

Wall Piece

Wall Piece

Beating your head against the wall usually means repetitively and pointlessly trying to do the impossible. What about hurling your body against the wall, especially while reciting a text one word per hurl? Some 500 of them in the installation *Wall Piece* (2000)² in which this event is projected life-size on a wall. The act, witnessed, has a curious shock value; it's hard to understand why someone would want to do it. The cold, excessively brilliant flashes of light serve as a double-edged sword of "clarity," a strobe at once image-producing and image-obliterating. It communicates a violence—to the self, with all the futility of beating flesh against a relatively immovable object; and, as a consequence of its body-crunching impact, it passes its violence on to the viewer. It's painful to watch, and to watch it all the way through takes some endurance—because it's impossible not to feel the discomfort,

¹ A longer version of this piece comprises Chapter Fifteen of *An Art of Limina: Gary Hill's Works and Writings* by George Quasha and Charles Stein, Foreword by Lynn Cooke (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2009); the book, with a thousand illustrations of Gary Hill's work, is now fully available online at https://www.academia.edu/28928186/An_Art_of_Limina_Gary_Hills_Works_and_Writings. An earlier version of this essay was written by George Quasha at the request of Sandy Harthorn (curator, Boise Art Museum) for the traveling exhibition of four works—*Wall Piece*, *Language Willing*, *Accordions* (*The Belsunce Recordings*, July 2001), and *Crossbow*—for the following: Boise Art Museum (Boise, Idaho, 2002-03); Arizona State University Museum (Tempe, Arizona, 2003-04); Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture (Spokane, Washington, 2004); Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Halifax, Canada, 2004); and Salt Lake Art Center (Salt Lake City, Utah, 2004-05). Published in *Gary Hill: Language Willing* (Barrytown, New York: further/art, with Boise Art Museum, 2002).

² Single-channel video/sound installation: for technical details see http://garyhill.com/work/mixed_media_installation/wall-piece.html. For a brief outtake from the installation see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHSEzNZ10dA>.

indeed the pain, of the contact of flesh and wall. Yet it persists, resolute, seemingly even passionate in its commitment to “say its piece”—to *say the piece*, to carry out its undisclosed rule by which it completes whatever it is that it is doing, until “all is said and done.” It relentlessly carries out the logic of its design, however absurd that logic may seem.

Understanding the context and construction of *Wall Piece* helps in discovering the uniqueness of that logic. The piece is hardly alone or even unusual in its use of violent action, pain, absurdity, and sheer endurance. Artists have flung themselves against the wall before—long before. Thirty-one years previously, in dialogue with the stringent conceptual realization that came to be known as Minimalism, Barry Le Va ran at top speed from one wall of the Ohio State University Gallery to the other, fifty-five feet away, and hit the wall front on, and then repeated it for an hour and forty-three minutes. He was apparently testing “an absurd thesis: If one tries hard enough, it is possible to run through walls.”³ It was called *Velocity Piece #1: Impact Run, Energy Drain*. The title says all; the piece does what it says. And like many artists over the past few decades, the fact of pain and extreme effort leading to exhaustion was business as usual; indeed some, like the celebrated Marina Abramovic, have carried, and still carry, the danger and stress to “heroic,” even life-threatening proportions.⁴ It’s easy to see that, however challenging *Wall Piece* may be, viewed in the context of minimalist, conceptual, and body-centered performance art, the fact of danger, pain, endurance, and survival is hardly for Gary Hill a core concern in and of itself. Rather, what he’s after is something closer to a quality of discourse, a kind of speaking, even an aspect of poetics and language-driven discovery, and in what it expresses, a cry in the wilderness of man-made walls.

What might be called *repetitive startle*—a seemingly self-contradictory notion, since the startle response presumes the unexpected—embodies the

³ See Carter Ratcliff’s astute discussion in *Out of the Box: The Reinvention of Art, 1964-1975* (New York: Allworth Press, 2000, pp. x-xii).

⁴ See *Marina Abramović: objects performance video sound* (Oxford: The Museum of Modern Art Oxford & Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1995), ed. Chrissie Isles. Of course the motivation of her work, as well as its impact, is a rich and complex matter in its own right.

“neurotic” language bind of involuntary psychological pattern and its attendant undesirable emotion. Here an almost Beckett-like driving urge to express depressed questioning of life’s value is countered by arbitrary interruption, cross-currents of action, speaking, and illumination: the slam of the body, the burst of the word, the disjuncture of light. The strobe that created the image in the first place, illuminating the body each time it hit the wall by flashing at the point of body contact, runs against a second strobe in the installation flashing about once per second, laid on top of the projected image in a cross-rhythm. This second strobe sometimes sustains, sometimes off-sets, sometimes obliterates the image. As the body hits the wall, each time configuring differently, a word *torques* into audibility, a twisted echo of the thwarted body, making the word a grotesque but *radically new* expression. And the new expression is also the site of some kind of new awareness.⁵ Its extreme qualities might raise extreme acts of interpretative questioning, verging on the absurd: Is this a technique for survival of suicidal depression? A homeopathic like-curing-like answer to compulsive head-banging, remedied by *impulsive* body-language slamming? The word is made flesh, quite newly—incarnation as act of self-aggression, perhaps in some sense echoing all boundary-breaking violence, right down to the sexual act and sperm’s penetration of the egg. Is such violence a spur to volcanic counter-burst and the eruption of birth itself? The ceaseless rebirthing that sustains the life-process, the necessary moment-by-moment jolt of self-awakening? Pretty clearly, getting free of self-confinement and the language trap is seen here as breaking through one’s own walls.

If the art *impulse* is a liberating force, broadly resonant for the “human” generally, that impulse for alienated being nevertheless appears as a local, context-specific event; after all, to paraphrase Heraclitus, *we’re estranged from what is most familiar*. The parallel art *question* may be, what does it take to *show us* our true condition, and what’s really at stake?

⁵ See for instance our discussion of related issues of performative impact on consciousness in *An Art of Limina*, op. cit., in Chapter Sixteen and of “conscious shock” in Chapter Seventeen: Performance Itself, under “The Performative Field.”

Each of the Gary Hill installations discussed here offers a unique context that attempts to reframe the issues with a new “pulse.” Video-based installation art does its work in both the *spatial* and the *temporal* and can serve to give an experience of their inseparability within the body’s sense of itself, how it paces itself in the very act of seeing, hearing, feeling—and languaging. “I’m going, watching myself go,” he says in *Wall Piece* (painful word by painful word), “Everything’s changing speed—backing into itself. The effect mesmerizes.” Perhaps ordinary reality (the consensual), along with its sometimes dread-inspiring hold on us, is only a state of hypnosis; if so, it may be breakable paradoxically through *re-entrancement by unintelligible difference* (e.g., a speaking body “pulsing” against a wall), which startles, perhaps even shocks. And this sudden gap can open a new view, including awareness of the literal artificiality of all language/reality states—their *artificiality*. The reflective stance (“watching myself go”) deepens intimate connection while setting one *outside* the normal flow of things—“changing speed,” the liberating jolt. There is an oscillation, connected in part to the strobe effect, between image and its disappearance, between space and time within the body as it paces through the space, feeling the timing of its emergent view.

Here language is rooted in sheer physicality, conceived and executed within the body and never fully separate from the process of embodiment, and this *foundational* sense of language in the work carries within it a source of *incarnate* knowing. Such embodiment is a process that requires maintenance and conscious return to action in order to offset one’s loss of self and basic orientation. Getting back to it can be a matter of survival; the wake-up call can come with the force of running into a wall. The sense of urgency here recalls the seminal concept of a “Theater of Cruelty” in the 1932 manifesto of Antonin Artaud, which proposes an art of jarringly physical experience to force the viewer to backtrack from habit and consensus to primordial reality. For Artaud art offers contact with a language power rarely retained in the verbal alone, but which comes to the surface as the extreme presencing of sign/gesture—and as action pushed to the point of “cruelty.” Such cruelty awakens the sense of reality and despite appearances is life-affirming.

Language Willing

The fact that it is hard to get a mental fix on the words uttered in *Wall Piece*, especially the syntax painfully emerging in the sequence of utterances, indicates the artist's interest in language at the margin of intelligibility. He brings us much closer to that margin in *Language Willing* (2002),⁶ in which a text in a recorded performance by the New York-residing Australian poet-composer Chris Mann⁷ sounds binaurally in the viewing space while a double image appears in video projection on one wall.⁸ The energetic recital of phrases, so rapidly and in such a wide range of non-ordinary intonation, brings the text closer to sound/noise art or unmelodic music than to "natural language" speech. Parts of phrases are tantalizingly intelligible, but rarely a whole thought or sentence—although one gets the impression that the thought in the text is intricate, even complex.⁹ The ear never quite gives up trying to make out the semantic play, yet the pull is toward an alien or "xenolinguistic" music, almost as if one were listening to an unknown language.¹⁰ A

⁶ Video/sound installation (single-channel and two-channel versions): for technical details see garyhill.com under "Work" and "Language Willing." For a brief outtake from an installation with sound: youtube.com under "Gary Hill Language Willing."

⁷ (1949–September 2018) For a video of Chris Mann's extraordinary performance, related to the sound-text in this installation, see: vimeo.com/5705790.

⁸ The inaugural installation of *Language Willing* at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York City (September 14th–October 19th, 2002) used a quadraphonic system and two video projections, one for each image; in other installations the double image has been produced by a single projection with binaural sound.

⁹ Chris Mann's book, *Working Hypothesis* (Barrytown: Station Hill Arts/Barrytown, Ltd., 1998), shows the challenging complexity of the author's thinking, with a thematic range from, say, the nature of language to political oppression. If the wild, almost *Finnegans Wake*-like innovative syntax in the text gives an impression seemingly contrary to the serious commitment in the thought, the aesthetic disjunction in the oral performance is even greater. Gary Hill's interest in radical sound creation/performance ("sound poetry") shows up throughout his work, including the earlier single-channel *Tale Enclosure* (1985) (with George Quasha and Charles Stein)—vimeo.com/5597325—and the installation *Remembering Paralinguay* (2000) (with Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson). See garyhill.com for these and related works.

¹⁰ On the broader implications of invented, constructed and alien languages for human consciousness, see Diana Reed Slattery's *Xenolinguistics: Psychedelics, Language and the Evolution of Consciousness* (Berkeley: Evolver Editions/North Atlantic Books, 2015).

very strange experience, indeed, yet the intense attraction of something known through the body shows intelligent hearing able to go beyond our interpretative capacity. We may enter a dimension of strangeness that becomes challengingly inseparable from ourselves.

You can never quite get used to these *hyper-words*—or words and word-like sounds that are *extremely* present, yet caught up in a mysteriously musical, virtual syntax—so you have to continuously reorient your attention. You are drawn away from the familiar and toward the originary, as if to an “underspeaking” (or *Ursprache*), again calling to mind Artaud’s sense of the theatrical as rooted in the primordial. Yet, as with Artaud (and other modern proponents of performative “alienation,” such as Bertolt Brecht), the alien remains alien as a condition of one’s alert orientation, here enforced by a sort of visual perplex. The projection on the central wall shows two separate images of the artist’s hands on circular moving surfaces, and in both instances the hands are covering, tracing, and/or revealing the patterns of the decorative wallpaper surface. Enigmatically choreographed in connection with the verbal performance, they seem to be, quite absurdly, trying to hold their position on the turning surface—or are they trying to stay on the figuration on the bright colored wallpaper? Either way, it makes the kind of sense of a child’s trying to avoid cracks on the sidewalk—a sort of belated body magic curiously abstracted. It attracts. The sound breaks, the wheel whips quickly back around. The mind clears for another “take.”

The basic contrast and oscillation in the space occur between unseizable language and obsessively simple action of the hands—groping to stay in place, acting as if with independent life, senselessly “playing” a table cloth like a keyboard or a turntable. Is this a dream-like pun on “turning the tables”? If so are the hands trying to “get a grip” while “playing a new tune”?¹¹ And are these interpretative questions really legitimate, risking paraphrase as if an art’s meaning has to take the form of a statement in disguise? Take the title, *Language Willing*—itself an instance

¹¹ Gary Hill’s interest in such ordinary language idioms, particularly their capacity to be pushed beyond the bounds of common sense, dates from his early video work, notably *Primarily Speaking* (1981-83), which speaks in the “basics”— clichés like “we’ve all heard it before” and “when all is said and done.”

of “turning” language, or axial language that turns the tables on itself. If nothing else, the title’s an invitation to try to make some sense of it. Is saying “Language willing” like saying “God willing”? If so, exerting our own will over language is backwards; sooner or later we learn that it has a will of its own. Or: Language *is* a state of willing; it grows *truer* when we’re willing to listen. (Obviously there’s lots more where these came from.) Maybe, as William Blake said, “Any thing possible to be believed is an image of the truth”—or at least that’s as far as we get, flickering projections of truth-like perspective, and then on to the next. In any case, do we really want to foreclose on such an area of richly embodying language activity by turning it into a sophisticated maxim? We arrive at the statement, and then what? The wheel spins back around, and it starts all over.

There is a possibility of art that holds the view open, keeps the reality door swinging—which is *not* to say that no meaning is possible or that we can’t take a definite stand on issues, but that we have access to a non-reductive process of knowing and experiencing; it doesn’t stop at relative definiteness. Rather it is something like a site of emerging possibility—a place we go to reorient the very sense of possibility. A place very near the edge of intelligibility, a threshold, where things don’t so much end up making sense as bring us to our senses.

The following pages are excerpted from Chris Mann: *working hypothesis*
‘I don’t hate America. I regret it.’ S Freud (pp. 20-27)

'I don't hate America. I regret it.' S. Freud

(Morality is the irony of ethics:) Language (Knowledge is that language used by the self.) does not mean innocence. And the psychology of um names guilt an it, a comic sit sat set suit position of bees that way. K? Coz not a qualified speaker. I mean the opposite is only repetition. N words is anyway chicken. Think themselves subjective coz they know but only one definition of a word, a negative plot, what's (joe joke) excommunicate - autopsy proxy and the spots. A question is thus a proposition with intent, an ideal when - there being no real memory of ignorance. A not. On one leg. A typically it. Oops. Looks. A negation is only particular, like portable criteria, does answers by the book. Names sames. The the of that. Stands for. Is this. But a bunch of saids on the edge of sense took up. Dull understood. A past. And, being analogous to it's object, blinks. A sum. Of. Demonstration sense, a pause, now much thusness. Too. By foot. The self is so a humble event. At that evidence requires a motive. I agrees, I guess.

Consciousness, an immune system, defines objects an event (truth the subject (repetition the last perspective)). Things, virtual signs, thus decorate the box as conditions. Nominally. (The past, a lazy form of reponsibility, wraps revelation (it admits) in a not-yet abstracted that and makes of these a repressed economy of gifts. Chips.) A slogan that grieves (knowledge (discount objectivity)), an complacent hid: poor me, I says.

Narrative cheap proof is there a sentence. And the post apostrophists? A loop the loop. A a-decision-is-a-form-of-madness betrays (on using you to prove guilt:) (owes hope) (got no business with the witness (though silence do perve)) a pissy whinge (That ignorance is a form of irony ain't like), a pink. A saying is a tautology. It is an adjective. (On being a context, a password with a stick: please). All examples is fat. And the sames? Mine be an alibi. Code. Aleatory (huh?) me.

Lists and the limits of identity (you know, sceptics and the price of drugs) (pragmatism is a fair definition of time): structure is that form of explanation used by the narrative poor, an each way bet (experience and the privileging of weak thought) on yet. Plastic tactic opportunis. Scepticism is therefore an immanence, a model (reduction (a dialectic (the negative in hats))) tech, best. Context. Deaf. (The past of course has

no past.) (Sublimation and the exits.) That. (Omens and other bits of string. Amend.) Justice and the knee-deep stories: oh, aye?

Action, a slow query, transcends the adequate (too true) (and being neither is nor it, is its along), a quasi me-too subject (that a sentence is unrepeatable doesn't make it private) that but. Knowledge is only moral. Explanation, truth on two legs, wets itself by trying to agree (juxtapose, the jamies) (we with) (One of the attractions of you of course is that it's portable.): an answer, a rent logic thing, a self in necessity, a measure. Medium. (Facts pathos the other as some sort of word, a causal debt. To event. I dunno coz I forget. You call that when? I mean - the charity of context - words are that part of a sentence that make it so/true.) Do too. (Anyway she's so far up she's jealous of herself, an a la pun (English is a metaphor for sense. It can't sub.)) All problems are prosthetic. Obituaries. So a decision is a form of knowledge. For example. The symptom and the solipsist. Bum. Existentially we me.

Itchy anxy. Fuck. The looker is a fiction with. A subtler. (Symptoms is a bag of satisfactions.) Which suggests. (Demand desire and denial, three D inductions (a pathology of explanation (a placebo absence)) rent (help) the dick of any sentence with:) My client the good time (and the medicalisation of fraud): All facts are neurotic. Bad facts are very neurotic. (Sex is a dull prophylactic. It is however cheaper than memory. A criminal is someone who means what they say. Paranoia is only a paradox to the unwed.) Known-by wins of - the same as some sort of cure - vis a vis the biz (and on the suicide of the mirror (knowledge as a blind spot):) of tis. Repression (satisfaction, agency (the truth of pleasure)) likes to represent (to be, a purient not-yet). Says excuse is weak exploitation. Of when. (Objects is cheap negative.) An is so (so is not a mind (a pathology of recognition)) though sublimates by getting wet (On words (On being a difference)): oh my.

A catatonic narcissism, a categoric noun of kleptoes, a responsibility that compensates, a rhyme, describes that knowledge defined as law, right? An it-resists. In mimeries. (It, being real, is impossible.) A victimise. What ransoms cruelty (narrative is the transgression of language) by dumping a for the, a romance of the same, betrays hypocrisy and (Ode to the that of parody:) one two three noun, an apathy. (But as a metaphor for self (some symbolic loss) you're too cute by half.) An aesthetic (official violence) for which a question is a style.

Smile. And for some other thing type reason, use. Fascist. Masochist. And you. What exists in the form of a denial. A complicit. A complacent. And the tautologous not-yets. Dear me, My cunt is a quote. On holidays. Does (name calling) subject as judgement, a functionalist pass, autonomous, luck. We wean. Cause is thus it's absence, toy choice, bib and tuck. Stupid, but. An on occasion (a null) dialectical wank that will have. Happened. A result. Rejection is therefore as mere hallucination, a price (what is the past of price), an experience, as/of reason, an event. My my the alibi, a status quo on crutches, likes. To reify negation. A gusset doubt. Smuggles up. An indifferent definition. That it thereby transcends. A fatalist. A maybe of anomalous malingering. An indignant. Vulgar piety. Suggests. Chicken. Or on the psychology of the stubbed toe: An incipient with an instinct for context: synthesis - analysis plus nits. Delinquent analogies, language is the impossibility of speech. Excuse me,

Desire is the vindictive form of irony. It adapts. Adopts. The gimmickry of nots. An adjective. Adept. The syndrome of the unknown thought, an object: and as the rello of being (a yellow self) (a deduced need, a revelation), a the then (experience is trying to screw something out of the subject), a pathos (and the prudes (positivists all (a silent majority))) of the too much this thus, an embezzled... and words were sposed to be the therapy of language? A pronoun is a slogan - I is the metaphor for you (the sentimentalising of the self) - that makes of habit a necessity, ie an art, an experience-is-only-logical confession of some a priori (ideal) re me: b be (my more, the story) plagiarises use. As while. A presentation. Of ae be. Interrogates. Per pa parasite. A pathology of objects. A transference. That repeats. Qua da. That agreement is a truth. Dating (ta) the ain'ts (a?) and other croaks: a packet of exploits. (On other acts: (an adequate (buys clients) sake, an intent (that which makes knowledge circular), dresses here examples) merely me-ly m'own (I the more or less polite form of begging the question), a thingummy type witness. In the know. Like some dumb fib. Displaced. (That consciousness require a self, an adverb, is too silly for words. I mean blah is not a motive.) Frustration and other fears of the reflexive (the past of explanation) thus, you know, fact up. As some sort of gift. A cause. In a tiz. Ill and very. And the founds. (On overtime:) Out. A too right, tight, it selves itself. About. Bait. A name

but is not a name, a teacher's pet, and makes of negation a matter of vocabulary, a pension please. And the theoretical quirks? You gotta be kidding. I

mean a witness is only evidence, a bodgy hell. What mimes rhymes, a one-complacent-two type sym, a represents, a kiss coz particularist on reas. N numb (common sense) numbers? Like any act is universal (a bad example (the mind is a drug)), a mnemonic 'nough? With string? The psychology of the fact, an ambiguous repetition (or truth) substitutes so knowledge for the act, a stupidly sufficient. An ego. On approxs. (Logic is one not very long apology (kitsch and the responsibilities). It takes short hostages:) You is always guilty of doing what I need you to do. And not speaking that one was not a fact. Like not-yet is a form of consciousness (meaning as object), an (and) act - it intuit's intent. On it's knees. I E it mees.

Betrays a look. (Ambiguity is only anyway equal.) A sentimental. Liable. (On meanings as tools (I mean existence defines itself existence): a bit interested. (The possible requires other. Than.)) Such that understanding be a form of realisation. A dag. In' happies (some luck) sat. Empty neggy, an. A need in britches. A predict. On data. A doc. Agreement is one of those early technologies that define context as ideal, a dropped fact, (The crutched reductionist buttered up a thing (a deduce on toast) with what the little shit left out, a cargo cult of explains and rigs, a practised doubt.) the mafs of ain't. Quaint. Like numbers is only subjective some of the time. (Like when they're true. Or think. A self on two legs. An opine. I mean justice is in no way causal. (Things, mate is sceptical.) they's used. A subject is a form, a do, with debs. Set. An immanence of objects, allows the means a consciousness, a psychology of 'sumes: (On being saved from what you want (knowledge is/as the paradox is/as/of love (to look for is the negative of look (sook)))): the ideal of objects, hypnotics, ties and optics is better ends, a symptom (cure) (knowledge is that failure that bites) that bits. Spot, sic em. The self that envies (maybe is pretty sexy) itself - coz it likes (to wait), a cheap dependence (pain is that apology that comes in boxes): I see. Really. And the hypocrites. And the jealous distractions. Subtle. And the use. And irony is only a form of knowledge, of suggests, a security of loss, a sullen (latin) satin (knowing is something you do behind it's back, a you-beaut substitute), me mean. And I denies. Apathy apathy quack. An

anaesthetic begs the question. A pathology of that, an evidence. (A symptomatology of the explains? A colony? Shutup and start talking.) Truth and the bored sadists: durable guilts (glitzy gloss lots picks (see saw sinny) fits t fix (incest and other bests)) seem (and the limits of interpretation) to this a bit too much. Tough. And, suffering an excess of meaning, seemed repetitious. It failed to be criteria. Or time. A sponsor of mere use. A possible. Object. The last word. A tease. (The advantage of nexts - not knowing - is thus particularly sentimental.) Music, on the other hand, likes to compete with the past. Coz it's left over. Two f'. -s/-ests as -ed in (so (coz it's only bigger than it has to be)) -ing 'd know perhaps (jus like a dog) (so so and the subjunctives (so no smug and the common sense (nameless) mnemonics of convenience)): suffix. The hyphen - the false is of course not known - calls up a comma full of lawyers, a criterion in pants (some same fallibles sum) that up. (Events is just attempts to avoid mistakes, a thing in toos.) implies (there being no such fact) denies. And being independent of what may put it now and then in doubt it much. And somewhere between the subject and the fact. And. (That wants to hide facts from experience. To insure objects as facts.) La tax. (Like symptoms is criteria. Def'nit'ns for tea.) As proxies. I mean a sock is not (yet) a no state of affairs. Contexts (absence, a form of justice) makes of this inheritance (this, a docile then, an axiom in 'xamples does not), a soon what gotten seen to, a commerce possible remains, a front. But (the (yet) list) is not a question, a to-be cue of coo queues as class as past, a given. Alibi that! As bias. A too t deja vu. A plural yous. From. -ly. (Right.) (On not seeing what's not there to see: use (Two may indeed behave as if it's really two.), a nurse (otherwise, a la intent, it just represents).) But as the patient of language, a subject is quite economic. What is a proper noun. It is subjective. May be stupid. And it lends. (It might rain.) A function. Representation - cheap distance (I mean it knows) - thus begs the question Says you and who's army? It and ain't yet evidence. It ain't yet about. That forgives the gift. Us (The arbitrary of answer admits no indeterminate questions, no complacent ain'ts, nor no's. It it's (the self some form of irony), an argument as example, a refer.) bus. Regret and the ally (flaccid) can anonym tautology (a self) as (poss) contradicts, a butt in to goss. Action thus holds sentences together, a glib motive (so-that starts on the far side of answers), a rep, in tents. Rational tat. It itches. And seems

to do. Per se. (The experimentalist, a hollow behaviourist, waits. Positively. On the false experience. Pats facts. Jacks. A pragmatics. Logic, ipso ego, chat. The psychology of it.)). Stupidity is (thus) a method, an ontology on speed. A mine.

Being of another mind, the fails require. (You mistakes being for intention - only we lie by saying nothing - a beautiful need.) So, the aesthetics of proof, price is ideal - the ides of evidence, culpable dues (Association is a form of synthesis, an illness of decision, an obvious uncompromised by being understood, a crock.). Bot. Existence, a symptom of things, modests some patchy hesitants, a cozish prozak fat. (And the motives? An allergy. Yes, reason is transcendent. Like any list.) That prattles on. A condition that betrays. A sceptic ulcer. That like negation says the same thing thing. Already. I mean, cock, a word is not a clock, some ulterior past of interest, a pluperfect fallacious, a smuggled paradox, as qua as (What is the verb of there?) air. (Consciousness - the more or less transparent attempt to avoid what you know - is the proposition that forgetting is particular (silent, like the P in swimming), a passively inadequate (Some messianic now (experience as a form of ecstatic), dobs. A system, an absence that has no symbol (politics fucks)) satisfied. And, having rights to the possible, it distributes violence by way of subjects to prove chit untranslatable, a superstitious nonplussed um, a suss-muchs success, of my mart, a privileged present of protected expectations, precedents and tampons, an immune. Description, the autonomy of said system, fingers the event. As ends. With spoons.) The adequation of the real, a normative repeat (it defines and justifies) looks la continuum as cause, a positivist's fit. Why? Did I?

For example, red is a theory of time without a present. It has opinions. (The present is that form of closure required for knowns. It is the possibility of justice that makes it real, a victim-as-predicate not-yet, a nominal refer.) And it denies (a calculus) the idea as ideal. (Sentimentality yes, but there's no irony in shit - capitalism is the price you pay when you're not buying anything - existence is non-reflexive, it is not a good example of itself, an infinition in evers, an exec.) (An event horizon, a bottom line on ads, adds facts (facts is that that has a self) (the metaphor as wowser) too. To the memory of more.) There is of course, I mean, no right to privacy - you (the other side of being (language is an allegory for saying something)) is just one of

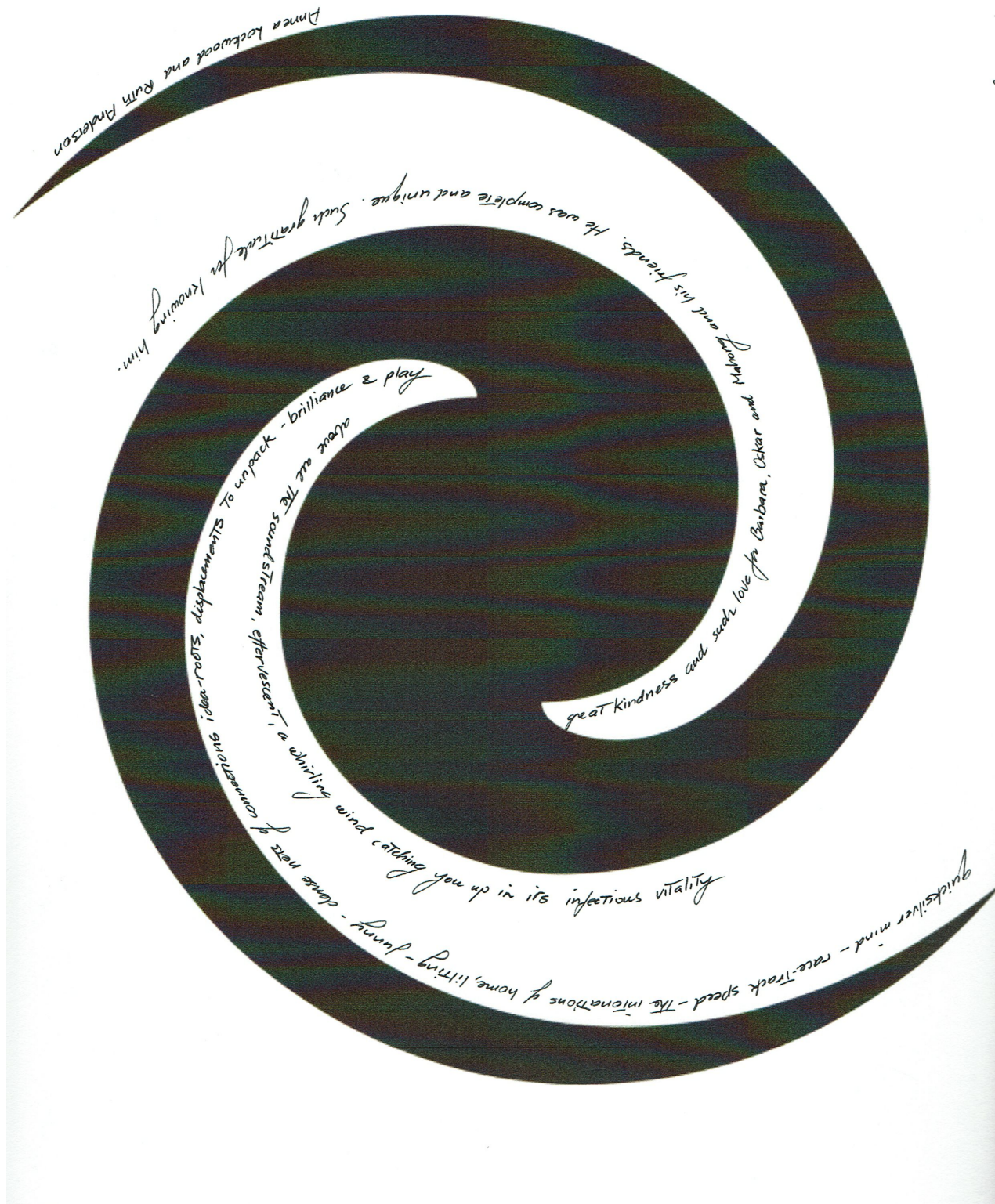
those things. The real, some sort of credit (numbers and the rhetoric of cause), pets examples, plays dead - things, you know, don't just go straight to heaven. Single simulacra, the cannibal salvation is a parody of two, a turgid noun in trouser, an in imperative of cloys what fills the bills, an ontological gee joe ego of tatty actuals and boys, a modesty of. Oh, good, prac, reason got to be the unreasonable defense of the subject, the conscious object, a conditional you. Did too. And it shows. The righteous narrative. An other butter. (Truth is that aspect of crack, it thinks that. (That use be ontologically wrong stays cute. (That identity remain the case ain't news.))) A whatsit do-dah clitty stutter. Self-presence smiles. Um, I

Only the non-ego is capable of thought. It humiliates what it denies (pain is a portable faith (to the extent that it's not identical with itself, that it's paranoid, outside of space, does it do)), a rationalised aesthetic off of an ideally infected need. (A noun is that part of the same (an idea is a subject) (identity is that form of difference that is the same) that interrupts, an indifferent, representational violence: a right. Which claims the else a sign. (That subjects have rights. Mine.))

Syntax is not a unionist. An adjective, but. On credit. You can tell. To be is outside thought. (A safety.) Context is a pain in the bum. A bland appropriation. An immanence. Willful is not the right word. A dub. (The question of the question is no more pious than justice, duplicity on a stick (That the real be rational, a patent truth, means the subject's an unethical idea), a sceptic.) (On the ontology of no: so, one two three go:) Reason is that form of practical faith required of nags, a crook altruist: dear precedent, how are you I am fine and I go to: a fallibilist says cheese: bot. Some other, a more, on norms, is thus a witness, dob, that feigns amnesias (ethics is the not-yet (The self is that form of an example that sets)): wanna bet. Kept. Bully for you. I mean just because you agree with me doesn't make you right. Anyway, it's your shout. Happiness is a form of conceptual blasphemy. Mug. And stubby. A chakra suck. P'party. A martyr. In mock mourning. A resigned sign. In suicide. A mess. Best. There is they say. An incest. A proxy. On autonomy. A nope. Ignorance is that language that leaves no marks. It would like to apologise. And behaving as it should it of course ceases to exist. A be come karma karmic holiday, a balloon. Wants to me-ize the lot. To soon.

(The reason that something is an example, a fold (how many does it take to define a problem? (, a predicate)), an economy of virtual knowns, interrupts the idea of proof (those names of actions and events) that does a shy redundancy, a wave. Looks like a subject, but. I mean, is is-an-emergent-property-of-any-system-the-increasing-probability-of-asking-a-right-question a question (a parasite that adapts) or no, a science of quantity, a legal? And the additions? A function. Of represents. Information after all is that failure of description, an immune system a la consciousnessed, a parody (a typical number (probability is a product of real numbers), a base maybe parity in bags) that dags as some inductive random, a negative it, sit. Like a tautology is a square of the propensity to explain any point-function as (random is just like absence) a factor (D) of phantom flickers, a sort of they-type time (it disappoints (dusts) description) of non-linear possibilities, an avvy quit. Shit. The pragmatics of ignorance - something (decorative) you do on my time (my reduction is smaller than your reduction coz I is a large number) - an abstract that, an example of itself, a me-too no-risk of refers picks up a difference on a stick (difference, the first good) and licks (self-evident (a judgement is a perfect rule)): dear sames, a limbo (game) replica in drag, as names (deduction is the administration of violence (credit is the history (interest) of words without history)): claims it (the altruist) I's about. Conspires. In (surrogate) two's. No doubt it queues.)

"Ta, for Chris"
Anne Lockwood & Ruth Anderson



Anne Lockwood and Ruth Anderson

He was complete and unique. He was complete and his friends. Such gratitude for knowing him.

above all the sound stream, effervescent, a whirlwind of conversation, idea-roots, displacements to unplug - brilliance & play

great kindness and such love for Barbara, Oskar and Mary

fills the snatches of home, lifting you up in its infectious vitality

quick silver mind - race track speed - The intonations of home, lifting - funny - dense notes of conversation

**THE INTRO
(OR DON'T YOU HAVE A PHONE?)**

02/04/2015 at Roulette



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