

O P E N S P A C E



P O S T

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The

OPEN SPACE

magazine

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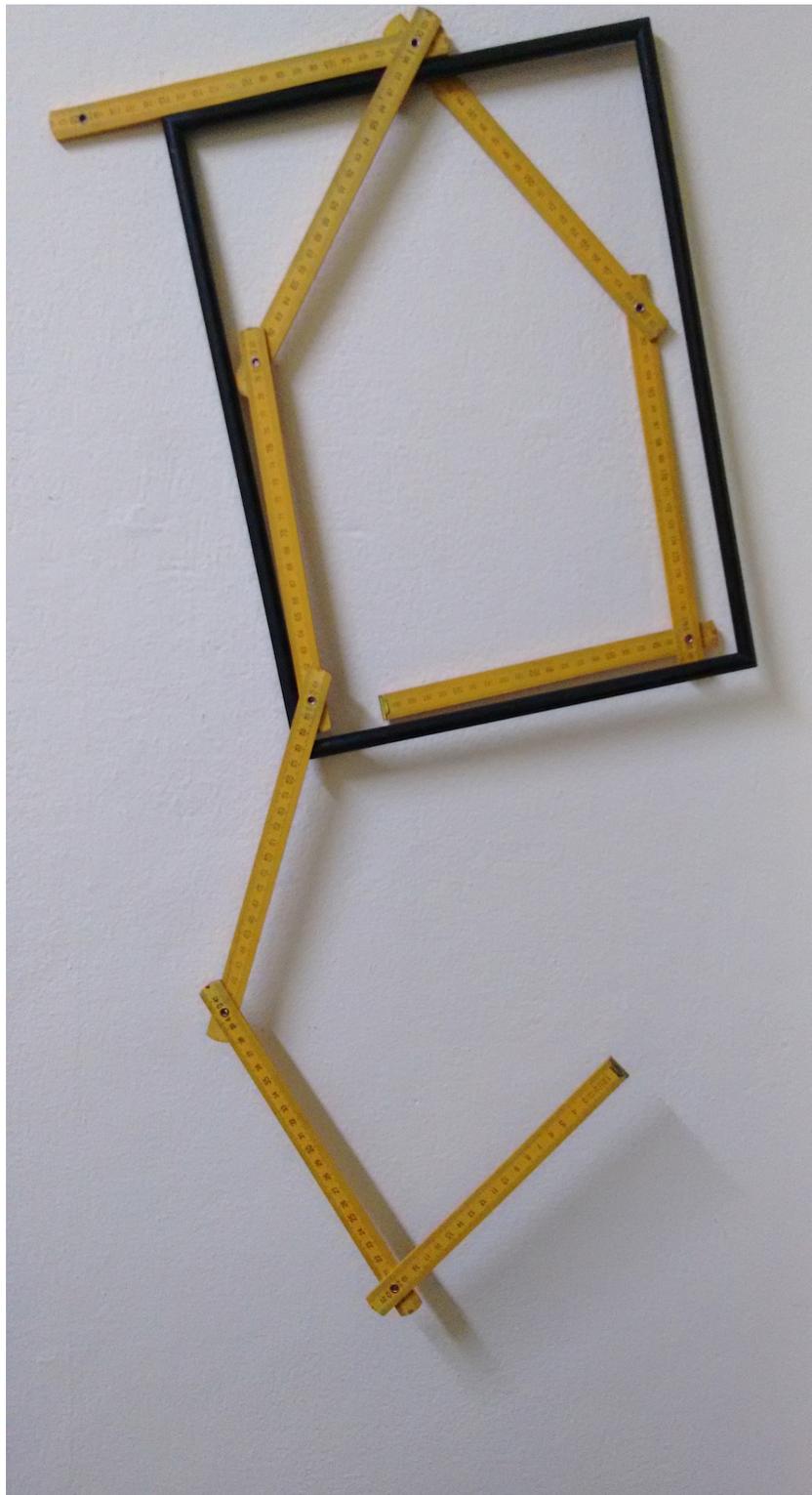
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My gaze sees a meaning in this work which is:
the house framed/attached to a frame that frees itself.
Opening the door frees itself from the space of the frame,
that is, it opens to the external spaces of life...

I think it fits with the idea of this issue of open space

João Cunha, 2024

Regrets, Regards, Return

Regrets

Where does
the past begin? . . .

.

.

Where does the future end?
Does the future end?
Here, now, and the next —

.

.

The fabric of “times”
Folding and folding bolts of light.

.

.

The house, empty
The remains
Dust

.

Bricks,
Walls,
Bend

.

.

.

.

.

.

I don't know
who I helped or hindered.
I see one become the other

The trick is to die in a
good mood —

Regards

Fearless:
Old-places
Discard in lace.

.

Thrown out
Affections:
Grace.

.

.

What adds up?
Rhymes without "time"
Many
The mountains

Regrets, Regards, Return

Return

At this writing
I'm 71.

I'm haunted —

I'm haunted
I'm a house inhabited
By ghosts:

Ghosts
of mournings and laughs
and holy hosts — — — —

Ghosts of a "past"
littered with terrors
and delights:

Who I helped or hindered
is unclear,
one starts out one
to become another.
What to do?
I guess, nothing, "now."



Of course,
the trick
is to die, in a *good mood!* —

Stuart Saunders Smith (1948 - 2024)

Benjamin Boretz



Elaine, the space she made

After 74 years, the conversation is suddenly quiet. It actually began with Billy, my summer campmate; his big sister Elaine got into it because of the sound of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata wafting from my practice space in the camp theater. And resumed a few years later in odd serendipities – having the same piano teacher in college, playing in the same concert of her students, discovering then that we were both about to go to the same graduate school – I even met George at around the same time as she did, and had a close separate friendship with him from that time forward. The conversation, continuous ever since, was my access to the person, the work, the worlds that we explored and exchanged, the family – it's how I mostly know Victor, Jesse, Gabriel, Janna, Amaya, Travis, the extended family in Las Vegas and Colorado – and how we formed a core through which we came to know and interact together with many of each others' people – the students at Michigan and UCLA, and at Princeton and Bard – and of course Perspectives and Open Space – as we pursued and created ideas and projects together. The conversation had no bounds, and was never going to stop, and its reverberations will not subside...

Elaine, the space she made

Thinking of Elaine, and being mindful of her presence in all the consequential aspects of my life, has been a constant and pervasive piece of my earthly existence. But this week, so soon after she has gone, I could only bring her presence into mindview by listening, to her voice within my memory, to the music of hers I have loved, to the music we absorbed and engaged together. Specifically, it was in listening to Claudio Abbado's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony that I was able to mentalize, within the deafening silence of the cosmos-sized space of her absence, a tiny thread of language in which an image of her could somehow begin to re-emerge to my senses.

What it was about Beethoven in particular for us—that he perceived every implication of every configuration—and he saw how to pursue and unfold it to its totality, to its exhaustion.

But whatever it was, that was the model for serious composition in our world, as much for Milton Babbitt as for Aaron Copland, the essential spirit of composition in the music-intellectual world that Elaine and I—and Jim Randall—grew up in. Arthur Berger and Harold Shapero were our teachers and we came to them as total acolytes of that Beethoven image—seekers of the serious and important in music beyond the institutionalized idioms of high-culture posture—Elaine was even finding significant expressive resonance in idiomatic musical theater, backing up from esoterics like Berg and Stravinsky all the way to the likes of Leonard Bernstein and Lin-Manuel Miranda.

For context, in Elaine's own work, I would play you "Song for Sarah", or the five dark-and-light-side collages, and also suggest you just listen to what she and I are struggling for in our duo improvisation piece called "Twine". But in those pieces you can also feel how the oppressive strain of maintaining the Olympian posture ultimately demanded liberation— we all groped for it, but Elaine's breakout was characteristically contrarian—she went to ancient and modern popular song as one of her ways out, in consequence of which we have her strange and fascinating opera *De Amore* and her puckish Dickinson songs. And also she went down the exogenous cultural escape hatches (Alice was one of her lifelong role models) through a series of aesthetic and geographical self-displacements, first through aboriginal-touching cultures in Australia and New Zealand, then eventually immersing in the strenuous practice of Balinese gamelan both as a music and as a way of life. In the soundworks that materialized out of these experiences you can share her happy declaration of independence from the German-solemnity ethos, against—really—the maleness

Benjamin Boretz

that subversively pressed down from the supposed tradition of “serious”, extorting allegiance as well as submission. And from the chiaroscuro of Elaine’s collages and the innocent counter-Germanism of her opera and the amazing *Gamélange* you can ultimately understand that that particular liberation is as much an issue of gender as of the affirmation of a shared post-positivist awareness. But there was nothing generic or simple about Elaine - she sometimes seemed to enact the simultaneity of all the contradictory and competing sides of her issues, so that the compositional residue is sometimes like a slightly off-center sidelong grin-grimace of gently nihilistic whimsy—a complex – perhaps complexly gendered – way of creating depth by cultivating its contrary — or, really, its refraction, like a counterdepth that lets you see what is absurd and self-important in the fog of conspicuous compositional hyperextension, whether in the density of Milton or the rarefaction of Morton. Fun, for Elaine, could be as sharp as some serpentess’s tooth, but she’s not going to be caught doing the biting, and it’s not you that’s going to get bit. As I wrote about the end of her String Quartet:

A second episode (epicide?) (second movement: Variations) superimposing its multiple contradictories, temporally adjacent antonyms becoming evermore starkly dialectical simultaneities, songs of ever-higher aspiration abrupted by jagged setpieces, renegade rowshards, mudvolcanic microruptions bopblopping, actually devolving itself into a final wideyed catwary equilibrium. And such an innocent little outmove to end, you’re not going to believe and aren’t supposed to.

But the reality of her presence, in music, in writing, and of course totally in person, is ineradicable and permanently incandescent.

benjamin boretz
18 april 2023



Dorota Czermer

Kingston NY, September 3rd, 2024

What follows on the next couple of pages is a diary entry of a train journey my husband Russell and I took on March 10, 2020 – out of New York city. Our previous week had gone by with visits to art galleries and museums, although the ‘vibe’ that was already in the air stopped us short of attending a concert in a notoriously crowded basement club. The morning *NYTimes* headlines I read on the phone as we rode along the Hudson were not reassuring *Economy Faces ‘Tornado-Like Headwind’ as Financial Markets Spiral – Confusion Over Coronavirus Quarantines Feeds Anxiety – Italy Announces Restrictions Over Entire Country in Attempt to Halt Coronavirus*. What followed over the next days and months was ever more distressing. But also quite confusing. For instance, we witnessed the silver lining of the lockdown implement a Clean Air Act in a way we could not imagine possible. Sitting on the upper deck of our Kingston NY home we actually saw the mountains. And I mean the mountains! Instead of a yellowish-gray-blob representing the Catskills we were able to contemplate a complex perspective; the range showing off the peaks and recesses by the play of atmospherically modulated colors. We could now see the pines, see their trunks and crowns.

What was the first element of those days? – I want to say anxiety, but upon reflection, there was Silence. And if there was one then immediately there must’ve been two; and the two was birdsong. There we were, if not alone then lonely, left to our personal breathing, a life observing life. Listening. Time, all of a sudden *more* time. Less of us. Or more of us. Us, differently moving through our time and space. For a while we became images of ourselves projected from an archival celluloid film, immaterial but real. Incessant, incessantly rhythmized by the passing frames of days.

Gone was the physical presence, like that of an audience listening to a music being played. Physically – so to speak – put together and received in the same space. My diary from that March 10th reads like a *Requiem to Touch*. And by printing it here, now, I simply mean to say, dear Open Space people, somehow we are still in touch.



Touch, strong and pervading influence of a body sitting next to you turns you into salt. Lot's wife. Her only sin must've been the crying, not doing. What was left of touch? While she holds, molds the impending catastrophe with her body she pulls short, the air hard at hand. Who was there to touch, is he still? He, she, before the cold snapped. Touched back. (Or those who self-referential end up touching themselves, the angels.) Before the fall, we cry. Like a leaf with nothing left to resist, hearing someone say something veined with red pleasure, we shake, we split. Cold from forgetting, detached, untouched. Abruptly alone. Strong and pervading influence of the self on the self. Because of Lot's wife. Her flow rooted in my body fills the cry over the last stranger who had his fingers brush against mine, to be *it* now. In the morning light. What? maybe a subway ticket, maybe a dime. And the stalactites of salt under the viaduct pointing toward the gate, the hollow cave from which the only view now is loss. There was and there will be the day your own intimacy twice-exhaled flopped, the first morning of your holding back out of fear that it will be getting through to you by this '*Headwind*', or by some other dark economic magnetism or force, in the end it will get into you too, out of the endlessness of air, each time sort of sex each breath more risky each slightly more problematic than the earlier one, *rape*, in some part of you this irrevocable sort of lover *is all that there is: death*, since you owe him one, smelling him watching him accelerate into you too? Now it is out of a thin-blue-nowhere, you an animal you a tear a torn lime leaf as the black hieroglyphs fly by so you can think of the soothing word 'birds', still not breathing while they, free, enter and exit the frame of the train window, touch you from afar, slice the picture as the carriage sets off against the poles slice-back-slice-slice-slice-back above Harlem's 125th the air the smells, everything already filtered through the skin of the morning papers "*Economy Faces 'Tornado-Like Headwind'* March 10th as *Financial Markets Spiral*" away, crying the farewells of the city you loved all too briefly remembering to splash off any stranger as soon as you get out of there but do not move the knees then so close to being carried away by those other knees, holding it all so still, every journey of steamy auras effaced with the past lime blossom excess answering the cry of the oranges in the pool at the Russian Baths, *the smell remains* relevant because so nearly shared,

why not be a Lot's wife?

in (on) touch

Another way of seeing this:

Peacocks danced on the empty streets of Mumbai.

On the horizon
rainbows out-
played the fog.

ON GOING ON

Then and now

Artistic idealism isn't like political idealism because it doesn't imagine itself as a path to a destination. It explicitly eschews knowing where it's going, but fantasizes that its engagement will lead to states of consciousness precisely unable being imagined from any point of entry into the space of the work. Because it is essential to its nature that it doesn't know where it's going.

Stalker - Tarkovsky's oddly shambolic fantasy - renders palpable some of this state of perpetual indeterminacy simultaneous with continuous revelation through evolving consciousness.

So, *Meta-Variations*:1969: Did I even realize how my heart was blazing on my sleeve...as much as I knew that every word had been emblazoned on my consciousness by the insistent assault on my inner ear by the accumulating voice of this text, beginning at the beginning of Part 1 (the introduction came at the end) and insisting through on every word of its unstoppable torrential word-inundation until, having evidently exhausted itself, it deigned to subside. But it was Jim who called me out in 1971 as a dreamer of transcendent but unpredictable consciousness-states, when I pretended to myself I was just telling it like it was.

It was *Compose Yourself* that told us not who we might want to be but who we inexorably already were by virtue of what we had chosen to do with our lives.

This was our commitment, even if we didn't know it explicitly and couldn't quite have articulated it before Jim Randall told us what we were really all about, refocused our way-of-life consciousness through the inlet of a quote from the composer Al Damiels, on the first page of *Compose Yourself: a manual for the young*:

Concerning extramusical behavior, the composer Al Damiels once asked me an interesting rhetorical question: "What code could I need, or even have any use for, that didn't arise directly from the activity of composing?"

He made it clear to me how he ontologized what I was about in his characterization of *Meta-Variations* in *Compose Yourself*:

A diminished seventh chord which can be heard as

[that's right, gramps: the one that delivered the mustache, back there when flicks really flicked, {yes. Ma'am, and successfully impersonated Death in over two hundred cantatas of J. S. Bach, right before Albert Schweitzer saved Africa [right on, brother-

On Going On - Then and Now

sister, the one that Ben Boretz generated the *Tristan Metaprelude* out of (- *generating cycles, cycles of cycles, cycles of cyclecycles, layers*

can be heard

...within metalayers; burying an Old Warhorse and resurrecting a new world,

can be heard as

a new way of constructing, of imagining – a New Slicing of Space & Time, brothersister; the Old Slicings not merely

Can Be Heard As A Just Previously

around sisterbrother, but dissolved, metavaried; and the New rig] *shuffled*

.....

]APPENDIX

-orously imagined, lovingly defined (-not postures, but reconstruction within, sitherbrosters;

-not slogans, but reconstruction without

*(-metavariations
Brithersostered,*

(sotherbristers)

}

Our way of life, resorted and reflected back to us by Jim's visionary re-visioning, his outside-insight. It was from *Compose Yourself* that I came to understand that *Meta-Variations* – supposedly the foundational studies of where our musical cognitions were located – was actually a prolegomena to a sub-study, its epistemological investigations now seeming without ontological grounding, an awareness which impelled *Of This and That* and *Mirages I, II, and III*. And then the real life-altering flash: that all of this was a description of acts of attribution, that our thinking around and about music was inexorably creative of that music, and of music generally, that its ultimate virility was ontological, that it was the ultimate creator of that which was being experienced, and that this ontological creativity was implicit in every episode of music reception (“...as music enters me...”). So it was not merely that *Compose Yourself* taught us that what we were doing was not so much a way of life as a definitive determinant of what life was experienced as – in any sense that matters, what it is. These, Jim's and mine, were epiphanies lurking within all the work we had been doing, composing and writing, why we always looked for the inmost particularity of every thought and configuration, and pursued musical thought as a means to discern and experience how each musical entity and event was unique and ultimately *sui generis* – we were, frankly, pretty uninterested in how anything instantiated what could be reified as the class of things to which in the gross public world it tended to be assigned. What *Meta-Variations* and then *Compose Yourself* did for us (that's who they were for; and it will always be so) was smash the glass floor limiting our depth consciousness and our capacity to maximize the specificities of individual experiences. What they were publicly were invitations to our community and whoever else to do likewise, find their own “deep listening” mindset, make their own music/life relevance and liberation (as I more or less wrote in the text of that name in 1987). We didn't get there by way of John Cage, but we were in that sense undoubtedly his brothersisters (how we got there by way of Milton Babbitt is a more interesting story, and has to do with something about how people learn from their parents and what happens with that eventually).

And it was only by the strength of the epistemic/ontological insights of *MV/CY*, the liberation of our convictions as to the anatomy of musical sense-making – along with a strengthening and deepening set of critical real-world social affinities and allergies – that we were able to conceive the unprogrammed conversational sound-making sessions – our “deep listening” without an attitude – as a compelling musical way of life – a way which we both lived almost exclusively for about ten years, from 1980 to 1990, and which revolutionized our modes of interaction with our student and collegial communities, our living and creative environments.

The way in which all this counts as “idealism” can be simply located in the transcendent conviction that what we could envisage we could try to effectuate; and that the inhibitions we might have used to impede ourselves were probably not that formidable (but you have to really not want what your practices will make counteravailable).

In the end, of course, what you're left with is the music, and the texts. But they are in no way what it is that you're left with.

On Open Space Culture

Tildy Bayar

I hope we have captured the essence of this spirit in these pages.

Dorota Czerner, *Editor's Note*. Open Space Magazine, issue 19-20, page 1. 2015-16.

... and we had a very wide if not dense spread of diverse preoccupations and attitudes and practices around expressive activities public and private... as well as the accumulation of composers who came on board with Craig Pepples. And we have been quite literal in our openness stylistically and ideologically as well as in terms of subjects – and of course art forms of all kinds have been addressed and manifested. Our 'culture' was not to publicize but to facilitate dialogue among our contributors and readers. Is and ongoing into areas not previously accessed – depends on who we know or know about, or who finds us.

Ben Boretz, text message, August 2024

My idea is that the culture of Open Space is unique: it appeals to two demographics located at opposite ends of a continuum: those who naturally gravitate to 'nontraditional' environments because they're not comfortable or are not gonna make it in traditional ones (I count myself among these!), and those who can make it just fine in traditional settings but find those settings more or less stifling or uninspiring, and thus are looking elsewhere for something interesting. A space within which both of these demographics can meaningfully contribute has proved mutually beneficial.

me, in reply to Ben's text

OPEN SPACE Publications, and THE OPEN SPACE Magazine, are output from a community for people who need to explore or expand the limits of their expressive worlds, to extend or dissolve the boundaries among their expressive-language practices, to experiment with the forms or subjects of thinking or making or performing in the context of creative phenomena.

Tildy Bayar

We want to create a hospitable space for texts and graphics which, in one way or another, might feel somewhat marginal — or too ‘under construction’ — for other, kindred publications. The people who populate our contributing/editing/reading/listening community are composers (in whatever medium), performers, historians, ethnologists, theorists, critics, philosophers, scholars and seekers of any kind who feel drawn to participate with us in scouting expressive frontiers. We hope you’ll want to join this exchange.

Open Space website, homepage

So the thing is, you already have. The important point is not that it already exists in the world, though it does. Anyway, you make it, you can’t experience without making it. And it is waiting for you; it is an inevitable exercise and experimentation, already here in the moment you undertake it, never here as long as you don’t. It is in your hands, and you can make it or ruin it.

Tom Baker, *How Do You Make Music Without Substance?*, A transcription of Chapter 6 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 1. 1999.

By virtue of this forbidden act – touching the untouchable – I crossed the (as it turns out) permeable membrane between public space and oneiric necessity, art and the going grammar of ontological possibilities, intimate engagement with a stone and the radical of orientation. With this four-dimensional embrace, I appear (to myself) to be *initiated into* the multiple dimensions of a sometimes self-contradictory or split personal reality woven together again, now, in the moment.

George Quasha and Chuck Stein, *Cut to the Radical of Orientation: TWIN NOTES on being in touch in Gary Hill’s [Videosomatic] Installation, Cut Pipe*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 9. 1999.

I think improvising is actually something nearly all musicians do right from the first time they pick up an instrument, but the way people who now call themselves improvisors work is obviously in the context of a history of improvised music. When you’re learning your instrument, you’re encouraged

On Open Space Culture

to view the music out there around you as real music, and you copy that music, according to your own enthusiasms.

Conversation between musicians John Butcher and Wally Shoup, with Peter Monaghan, host of Outside Jazz on KBCS FM, Seattle. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 19. 1999.

However, the person of the composer is not the only side of the “tertium quid”, the third ingredient of musical art, the aesthetic mediator between the composer and the listener which earlier was called the “friend in the music”. A composer while composing must pay attention to the sensuous effects, to the rules of the game, and also to this tertium quid. It is not necessarily the character of the composer, but it is necessarily an overall quality or character of the whole piece of music, the aesthetic or feel of the music.

John Rahn, *Composing and the Sense of Self*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 47. 1999.

Now I understand Guattari and Negri’s point that: ‘repression is first and foremost the eradication and perversion of the singular’. Ok, onward with the Unabomber and Guattari and computer composers.

Mary Lee A. Roberts, *As I Understand It: Group Psychology (Felix Guattari) and Technological Isolation (Electro-acoustic Composition and the Unabomber)*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 29. 1999.

Given any two pitches, a third pitch is almost always implied. For example, say I have a tone vibrating at 550 cycles per second (C#) and another at 660 cps (E). Both pitches are harmonics of a third pitch that vibrates at 110 cps (A). (That is, 110 is the greatest common denominator of 550 and 660.)

Kyle Gann, *Navigating the Infinite Web of Pitch Space*. Open Space Magazine, issue 2, page 67. 2000.

Tildy Bayar

Dear Ben,

I've been wanting to get back to you with a few thoughts concerning some of the issues we discussed during your last visit here in the Fall, particularly regarding the conceptual and empirical incoherence that would presumably attend any attempt to communicate non-verbal experience – such as, most pertinently, music – in language.

Arthur Margolin, *Epistemological Occasions: During and after a walk with Ben*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 53. 1999.

[And then, there was the guy who threw food at you from an upper-floor window. I never knew his name, nor saw him in the flesh, nor even knew for sure if he was a he – but, for all that, we were acquainted – (after our fashion).

Robert Paredes, *Dangling Reflections on The Bewitched*. Open Space Magazine, issue 2, page 84. 2000.

In these small, modest images, with which I have now lived for years, images that do not merely represent but which are their subjects, I have experienced an effect similar to what I have sometimes felt in small, dim Russian churches in the presence of subtly radiant icons, the uncanny experience that we are not alone, that our truth is a simplicity that we rarely encounter.

Heide Hatry, *Toward the Art Subject: An Introduction to Icons in Ash*. Open Space Magazine, issue 21 ("Things That Matter"), page 124. 2018.

Artaud de Certeau Artaud de Certeau Artaud de Certeau Sarto do erto Sartro do merteau cerceau de marteau Artaud de Certeau Artaud de Meursault Bardo d'Artaud Bardot de Sartre de Beau doir devoir de Sartre au bord de l'eau le badaud de Certeau barde au art têt how ?

Jean-Charles François, *Transition*. Open Space Magazine, issue 8-9, page 22. 2007.

In the end, it is only a co-incidence, or better, a convenience, that Gondry has found employment in the music world. His approach to film composition is a way forward from the narrative and verbal

On Open Space Culture

(or dramatic) conventions which have straitjacketed film since the emergence of sound, hence of words... He shows that the rhythmic, gestural and melodic compositional techniques traditionally associated with music (or dance ?) are more appropriate to film than the verbal meaning – heavy, literary and or static, visual, conceptual painterly frameworks used in almost all mainstream cinema.

Russell Craig Richardson, *Michael Gondry: in praise of the small form*. Open Space Magazine, issue 6, page 5. 2004.

It seems to me that the long list of platitudes engendered by the improvisation/composition debate has promoted a kind of tunnel-vision in the discourse, and the theory of improvisatory practices has become bogged-down as a result. I'm sure that these observations were once interesting and important, but by now I wonder if we should try to move on to new questions, new topics, new possibilities.

Benjamin Piekut, review, *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*. Open Space Magazine, issue 6, page 47.

No matter how much both the poet and the composer would like to believe that they are only going by ear, listening to language as music, or music as music, meaning — at least some form of meaning by field — intervenes. Once in that original field of the voice speaking the poem, the music can allow itself to be allured to, absorbed, informed by its sonorous energy.

Dorota Czerner, *three nocturnes for ben*. Open Space Magazine, issue 19/20 ('9x9'). 2015-16.

Cage's retrospective criticisms of *Music of Changes*, a seminal work completed in 1951, reflect his gathering desire to evoke through music the interdependent Zen concepts of interpenetration and non-obstruction. In the course of his studies of Zen Buddhism with Daisetz T. Suzuki in the early 1950s, Cage had adopted the Buddhist cosmological perspective from which all things in the universe are viewed as effecting a concurrent volatile interplay; he had also absorbed the corollary belief that each of Nature's ephemeral manifestations occupies a central position in this infinitely complex matrix of interconnections.

Tildy Bayar

Mark D. Nelson, *Enacting Process: Cage, Zen Buddhism, and Indeterminacy*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 64. 1999.

A thing is a technique of looking. It has rights. A cannibal grammar. Bored. A networked vending machine, ignorance remains as a form of hospitality. To (whatever).

Chris Mann, *And the question*. Open Space Magazine, issue 2, page 153. 2000.

SK: So then, what I want to ask about is fear. I mean, if you want to have collaborative work, that means that you have to take away the entire fear structure connected with doing work in the academy. I mean, the whole point of being solitary is that you build your own little realm, from which you do battle against the “judges”. Everyone’s afraid of losing. The work of the solitary scholar has to be exemplary, so everyone’s always afraid not to be exemplary. Fear, fear, fear.

BB: Yeah, right.

Bill Brooks and Steve Key: *Down....Down....Down....* Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 80. 1999.

This film takes place in 1917. The setting of the film is in the farm country of California. Within the main title music of the film, the composer approximates a farm song which would have been typical of the time. The song, which is used not only in the main title music, but also as one of the principal themes in the film, is presented at the beginning of the film in a tonal rendering, which situates the film in time and place. However, toward the end of the main title music, post-tonal sound begins to encroach upon the tonal language of the farm theme.

Michael Missiras, *The Transformative Power of Film Music: Non-Diegetic Musical Considerations in the Film East of Eden*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 100. 1999.

I myself have observed that, in this regard, the French situation in the twentieth century, with few exceptions, has been no different. And the field of philosophy seems to me to have undergone an analogous development that, while clearly inherited from the nineteenth century, was recharged with

On Open Space Culture

the importation of what Jean Grenier called "hegelianism with tartar sauce." Common sense, the dogma according to Anne Cauquelin, contributed to the ways teaching and research became focused on themes that were as venerable as possible. It all took place as if one had decided to make as large a retreat as possible — the communications revolution notwithstanding — at the moment that apprentices in philosophy and music might have begun to create for themselves either concepts or "waves of sensation" in the deleuzian sense of the term.

Daniel Charles, *Postmodernism and the History of Music*. Open Space Magazine, issue 3, page 52. 2001.

But to ever let it go?

Let it go, listen, let it go, listen,

listen into the night

Dorota Czerner, *Les Yeux sans Visage*. Open Space Magazine, issue 12/13, page 62. 2010-11.

Look through the framed area.

Any still objects or flora which you see are the stage and setting.

Any moving objects or fauna which you see are the performers.

Watch them for roughly five minutes.

Dick Higgins, *Roughly Five Minutes*. Open Space Magazine, issue 1, page 118. 1999.

Not the way Brahms often suffocates but string-sound- smothering, Bartók's gliss-pizz world magnified, blown-up, 'effects' now the substance and the manner, trilled, distuned, scraped, a few modal-melody + accompaniment passages allaying the focus on over-extended clickety-clackety spatially dispersed sputters that are, however, sparkly clear, rarely jam-packed, that seldom dip into total chaos, if chaos is at all apprehensible.

Elaine Barkin, *Recent [excellent and not-so-excellent] adventures in listening*. Open Space Magazine, issue 12-13, page 182. 2010-11.

Tildy Bayar

Legend has it that The Fervid Mystic buttonholed
The Forensic Musician.

Said TFM: The Ultimate is Unknowable.

Replied TFM: True.

Misunderstanding the grounds of this disagreement,
A Bourgeois Rationalist says: The Existence of God
has been Demonstrated.

To which TFM replies: Blasphemy.

And to which TFM replies: Bullshit.

And to which An Existentialist Philosopher adds: God is Dead.

J.K. Randall, *What Is It about About?*. Open Space Magazine, issue 5, page 273. 2003.

...

I know what matters: it is that which only I could know that it matters.

It is that from which I can't separate [detach] myself from myself.

That which I can't separate myself from.

That which clings to every neuron

Laminated within by what lodges from without.

The music inside that matters is my significant being;

Comes into being by the refraction of music without.

What is left as I dissolve, become no more;

what is left is that which matters.

Benjamin Boretz, *On One on One*. Open Space Magazine, issue 21 ("Things That Matter"),
page 25. 2018.

Because

a line is always

a beginning of something

Dorota Czerner, *Fingerprints*. Open Space Magazine, issue 21 ("Things That Matter"), page 48.
2018.

...

Thinking through Some Relations

Scott Gleason

I guess the issue is my deep-seated ambivalence about the master-student relationship. My inability to move past that. My desire for it on the one hand (for everything to be revealed), but my profound distrust of leaders and followers, myself very much included. Where, that is, is there independence in this? I want to know what I don't know, and I suppose on some level I assume that others know more or better than I do. But of course, if the whole point is for *me* to know, then why look to others? For guidance, camaraderie, mutual understanding, friendship, certainly, and certainty. I have my music and my experiences of music and my thoughts about music independent of others' thoughts, experiences, and musics. I've worked very hard to be comfortable with *that* knowledge. "Don't tell me who or what to believe." That's an anarchist position, too.

I don't need spontaneity per se, but I understand the impulse spread out as a *durée* over the span of two (or more) lifetimes. There's just no way to capture this all in writing, but I have to try. Why? Because music isn't pure to begin with, so there's no position within which to exclude writing (about, with, alongside) music. Even as performers and composers, and improvisers. I suppose this is the gamble of discourse: that it's always already being written.

On one level there's the issue of writing oneself into a particular history, whether that be as composition or improvisation, or as (meta-musical) discourse. This implies wearing a suit and tie, but I'm not sure why. I suppose because it forestalls the master-student relationship, implies and promises a more egalitarian relationship. Of course it doesn't fulfil this, necessarily. On another level, there's the issue of the writing itself enacting the quasi-mystical nature of the music. Quasi-mystical in the sense that, *if* not all is revealed there's no way to know if I'm being duped. If I'm being duped, obviously I'm being manipulated, which I can't stand or won't stand for. Better to wear a suit and tie.

But if I'm wearing a suit and tie, am I originary? Everyone and everything is originary, in itself, just because it is itself. That's a liberal-utopian truism. But, if I'm starting to experience that originary relationship to *others'* writings (I have for a long time), personas (newly), persons (truly newly), then *that* status is truly bizarre. Status via enactment. Even Babbitt grew out his hair.

One way of thinking about *MV* is as a musical(-theoretical) enactment of *CY*: precisely inverting the actual historical fact. Not as explication, but as predestination. What, that is, isn't in *MV* that is an enactment of a particular music and musical subjectivity? Nothing. *MV* is thus Ben composing himself—which I suppose it always had to be. So, what else then, is needed? *CY* brings certain concerns to the forefront, but if they're already "in" *MV*, then there's no need to appeal to *CY* as explication, as fellow sufferer who cares. It was Randall, after all, who figured the two as angels in *BaM*, which is a mystifying move.

Scott Gleason

When, in what space, does mystification move in relation to its opposite, which I suppose I've always assumed was critique? But of course, critique was its own mystification. (Is liberation under-theorized in the Boretzian text? As liberation from, but not liberation to? I'll need to reread, but it's entirely possible that I'm reading that "absence" into the text.) Liberation to a community of like-minded musicians. Why not just say we're musicians? It doesn't cover it all, I suppose, but it should.

You know we've never improvised, musically, together. Which is saddening to think about. We've also only ever listened to music together once. Which is also sad to think about.

We have, however, thought, together, through some tough issues of mutual concern, for more than twenty years now. Areas of mutual concern like the roles of ourselves as listeners, of what being a musical listener is, of what expressing concern for some music via one another is, of co-inhabiting our spaces, of struggling with the experience of experience without a name. We have ridden the subway together (more than once), and more recently, in your house, talking about all manner of the historical reality of your and our and my times, their intersection. Thematics haven't seemed as important to you as details, details of experiences and people, and music, of course. And experience.

You have given me outlets for and helped me to create my own voice, musically and musico-discursively. You have given me ideas and experiences to write with and against. You have given me time, our most precious resource, as you've said; all the time in the world, it seems, always. You have given us opportunities to grow as musicians. You have given us a constant concern for ethics, whether stated or unstated. The ethics of composition and experience as the foundational concern, also the ethics of slowing down thought to deepen thought about music, but perhaps more importantly the sense that each decision about life is a crucial, if not exactly fraught, one, and an ethical one and a musical one. So, the question of vocation and how we relate to it becomes a potentially life-altering one, but an actually fundamental one. You have therefore given me a way to think about my career and life and music as fundamentally unspoken but also therefore fundamentally true—true to me.

This isn't mystical; it is a question of authenticity. Of living life authentically, and originally, whether academia can provide (for) that.

With music as our guide.

Benjamin Boretz

THE AWARENESS OF *CHART*

personhood,
emergent
in/as
a
soundthought,
intimacy,
not real intimacy
but the
simulacrum
of its *frisson*

-

the two recorders
in the Sonatina of *Gottes Zeit*
shimmering seconds
with/against each other
as one but
necessarily in two
but still,
here,
a pianist
alone
initiates the shimmering *frisson*
the discoloring energy upward
a soundthought
rising
taking forever
but conserving
the shimmering seconds
energy
upward
through itself
again
the seim anew
reemrging below
but always

Benjamin Boretz

upward

to

itself

again

the seim anew

utterance of ascent

simulacrum of motion

not feeling

each shimmer freezing

its way to the next

frisson by *frisson*

how could personhood

emerge within

this cold space?

the energy of utterance

rising

minimal

alone

just barely

a thread

no body but a shimmer

being

the

energy of

being

but

only

the shimmer

of intimate seconds

the *frisson*

of personhood's

simulacrum

emergent

in

soundthought.

The Awareness of Chart

and then

there is a wall.

and

there is

a

crawling up

the wall

and there is a top

of the wall

a top

having been

gone over

having emerged

within that soundthought

as that personhood

discovering itself

its being

if it has being

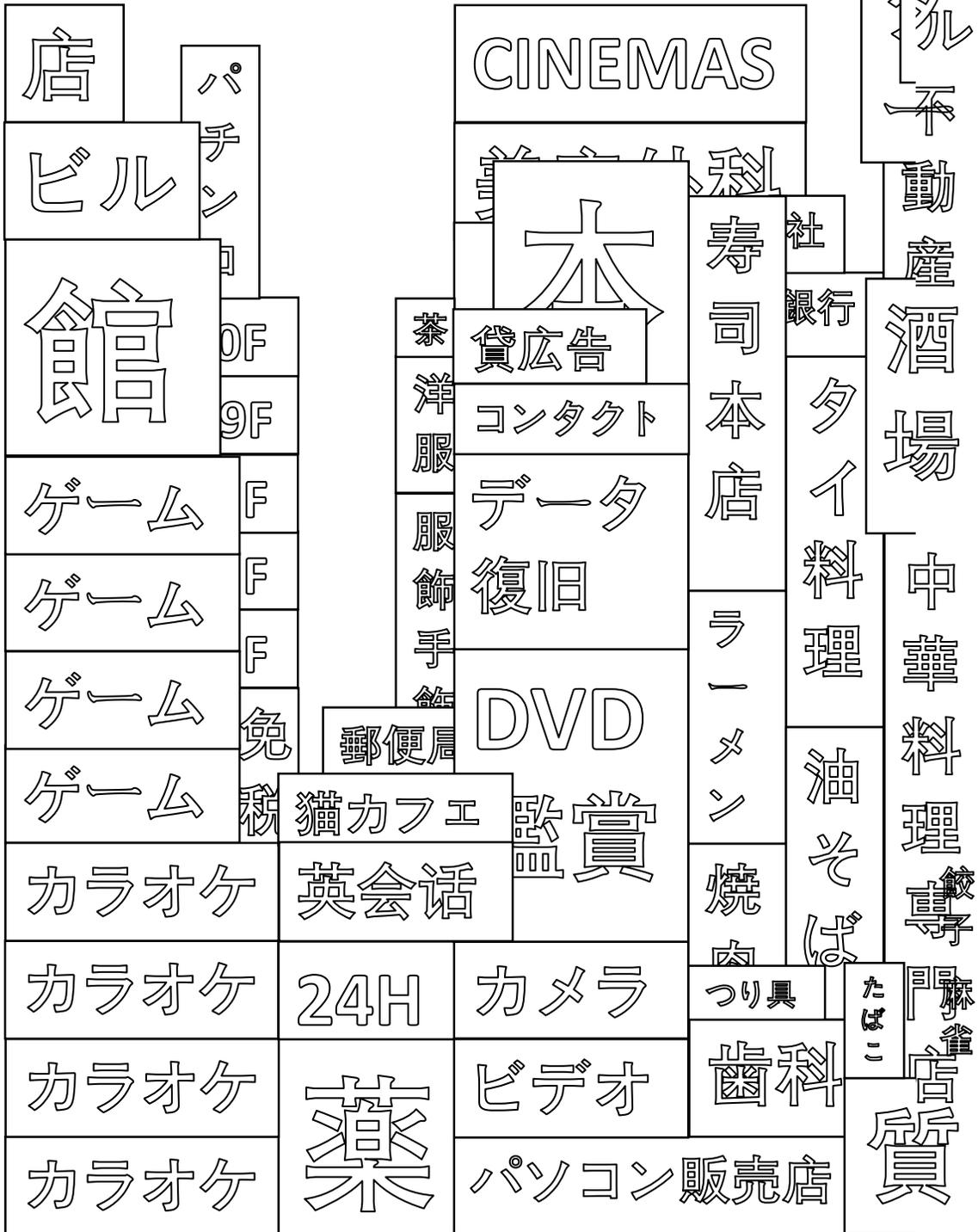
a frisson

born as a shimmer

a simulacrum

of an intimacy

a pianist alone



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諷 諧

(The artwork on the previous pages is by Xingzhou Shen. They are four poems or wordscapes in Japanese, the artist's first attempts at composing in that language, and are entitled Neon, Crow, Fallen Leaves, and Translation).

Inventing Paul Zukofsky

Andrew Zhou

0.

I have recently found refuge in bookstores, the only place in a city with strict lockdown ordinances where you can seek free asylum from the dulling comforts of home and the bone-piercing chill of the Pacific Northwest.¹ The used dealers stacking overflow from carpet to ceiling have a particular appeal. In one, I opened a copy of Simon Garfield's *Just My Type* and found on the flyleaf (also known in the industry as the "front free endpaper," or "FFE") in a plump, looped scrawl: *because you're just my type [heart] –A*. In a seemingly unread copy of Jenny Erpenbeck's *Go, Going, Gone*, a note lay cinched between the cover and the FFE; the gifter tells the giftee that the book had won a major prize, and that it was originally in German, so it seemed like a perfect match for her. In a copy of the complete poetry of Borges, which I now own for all of three dollars, the FFE contained the inscription *C.T.M.C.* ("con todo mi corazón").

1.

Since the end of 2019, I have been sorting through the legacy of the late American violinist and conductor Paul Zukofsky, who passed away in 2017, in Hong Kong, where he spent his final years. The finding aid—"the inventory," as I now call it, with the requisite article—which comprises at least one hundred and thirteen numbered boxes for his personal scores alone, is a listing of items of potential historical importance. Some gems so far harvested: a response from Charles Seeger to PZ's request for the as-of-then-undiscovered violin sonata of Ruth Crawford, Steve Reich's *Violin Phase*, which PZ recorded, as well as a previously unpublished—I almost think of it as inexistent it has been so scrubbed from the histories—pre-1965 score from Mr. Reich whose provenance I still have yet to ascertain.

This inventory is also a container of friendships with fellow musicians, friends, composers (a fortune from a Chinese dinner with Morton Feldman, anyone? That's not in the finding aid). You begin to get the sense he was friendlier with certain composers, like Jo Kondo, Toshio Ichiyangi ("*Dear Paul, Here is good looking score... Looking forward to meeting you soon. Did you hear anything from Shigi-san? She has moved to Himeji – west side of Kobe and was safe there.*") than others, measured by not only the sheer quantity of their scores in his possession, but by the letters in that suggest there had been letters out; that is, Paul had been—was—interested.

¹ I began this essay in Seattle, WA, in January 2020, at a time when the city would allow no indoor spaces (restaurants, gyms, museums) to be open to the public for prolonged stay. The essay was completed in Central New York.

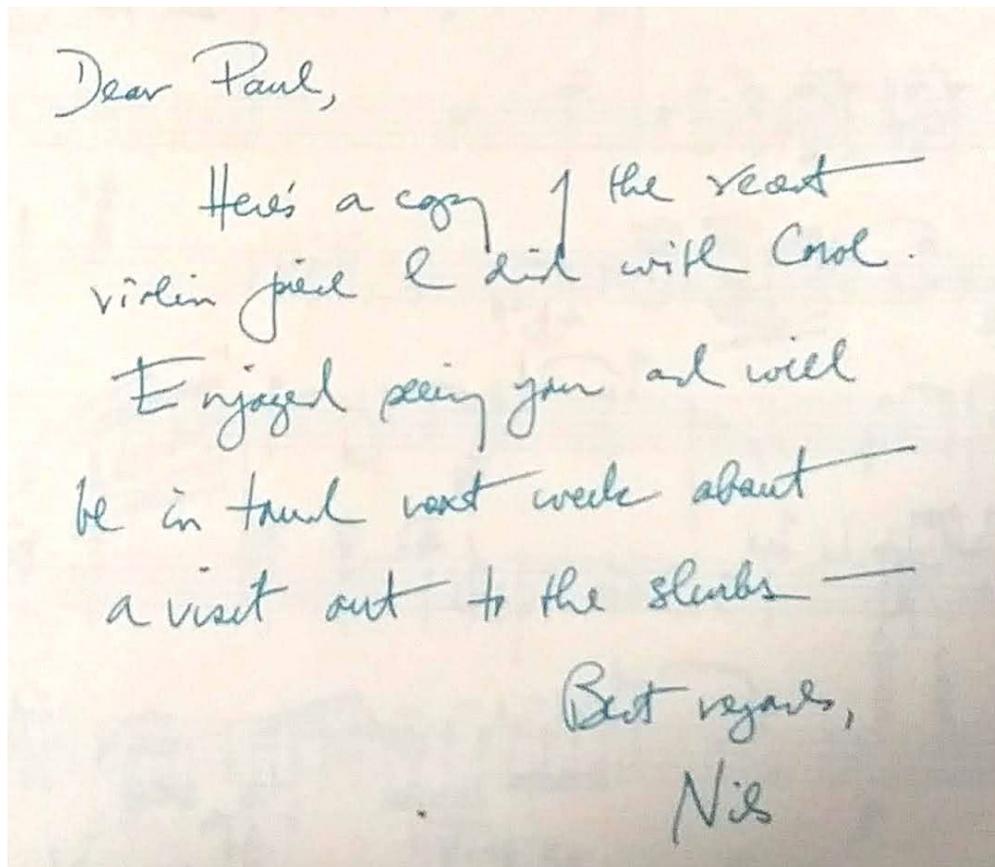
Andrew Zhou

A particularly striking class of discoveries is correspondence attached to the gifting of a score. Here's a typical example, from the composer David Soperstein, abbreviated somewhat for concision:

Dear Paul,

Here is the *Composition for Six Players* which I worked on and submitted for the Koussevitsky prize at Tanglewood. I am presently in the process of extending the work to about 10 minutes in length, and the finished piece will certainly be ready by January. I would be very interested in getting the work performed in N.Y. this coming year, which, with your help, could come about. (Does Arthur Weisberg's ensemble still exist?).

The composer John Perkins mentions that their paths crossed briefly, also at Tanglewood, and asks if PZ would be interested in conducting a work of his. Joel Chadabe reminds him of his offer to edit the string parts of one of his works, and apologizes they didn't have a chance to break bread in Albany, but that they will in the foreseeable future. Nils Vigeland, in denigration of city planning, is to the point:

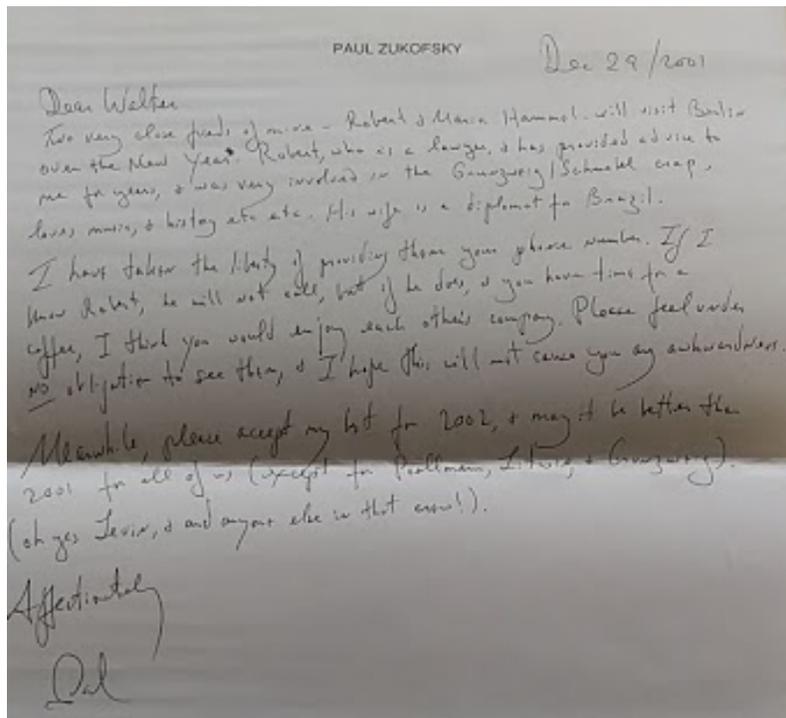


Dear Paul,
Here's a copy of the recent
violin piece I did with Carol.
Enjoyed seeing you and will
be in town next week about
a visit out to the slurbs —
Best regards,
Nils

(The last word is "slurbs.")

Inventing Paul Zukofsky

This genus has many species. More interesting are the ones that sit alongside Paul's reply. I shared this one with the composer Walter Zimmermann recently. (I am not sure what ever became of this, perhaps Paul copied his own letter, or perhaps it never got sent?) With the letter, PZ tells WZ that two of his closest friends and mentors, a lawyer who furnished him with advice over the years and was involved in "the Grunzweig/Schnabel crap" and his wife, a Brazilian diplomat, were visiting Berlin and that they ought to meet perhaps. *I hope this will not cause you any awkwardness.* Later: *Best wishes for 2001, except for some common enemies. Affectionately, Paul.* The letter was folded in a score of Zimmermann's violin piece, one he wrote for Marc Sabat, likely gifted to PZ.



PAUL ZUKOFSKY Dec 29/2001

Dear Walter

Two very close friends of mine - Robert & Maria Hammel - will visit Berlin over the New Year. Robert, who is a lawyer, & has provided advice to me for years, & was very involved in the Grunzweig/Schnabel crap, Lewis minor, & history etc etc. His wife is a diplomat for Brazil.

I have taken the liberty of providing them your phone number. If I know Robert, he will not call, but if he does, & you have time for a coffee, I think you would enjoy each other's company. Please feel under no obligation to see them, & I hope this will not cause you any awkwardness.

Meanwhile, please accept my best for 2002, & may it be better than 2001 for all of us (except for Peckham, Leving, & Grunzweig). (oh yes Lewis, & and anyone else in that crowd!).

Affectionately
Paul

2.

I never met PZ. To be precise, I never met Paul and somehow only know him as PZ, as he has appeared in correspondence and in his own writing, and as a foil to and holder of rights of the works of his father "LZ." (On this literary use of initialisms, I am still unclear.) I must admit, and I frequently do, that I am not sorry never to have met him. I suppose I might have been close to; the memorial concert I was asked to play in October 2017 was intended to be a birthday tribute. I am afraid of the impression that might have stuck. I met Pierre Boulez one time in Lucerne, two-and-a-half years before his death, and he congratulated me on a performance of Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*. That moment will never make it into an authorized biography of his, but for me, that brief interaction, capped off with a handshake, enhaloes him with an inextinguishable glow of gentleness and generosity. Such a moment with P...z never

materialized with PZ. We mount our memories with all their distortions as a defense against official accounts—I think of Mark Liberman’s apologia of PZ’s charm and friendliness, in direct response to Margalit Fox’s rather dour *New York Times* obituary of him, etched with acid and grump. I feel no need to defend a man I never met. Instead, my views on him remain poised on a shifting scale of dialectics (the Fox-Liberman pairing being the first of I am sure many to come), interpretations from “the literature,” and, of course, the inventory.

I have now been given free rein to snoop. In the course of it, I am doing the remembering (as opposed to dismembering). The project, on the suggestion of the composer Craig Pepples, a close friend of PZ, originally began as an effort to enter into his performing and conducting mind through his scores. Although Craig has never explained it in this way, the endeavor seems to take a cue from Paul himself in an essay on his father’s marginalia:

My father frequently, even inveterately, marked in his library, those lines or phrases that appealed to, or interested him. While his marginalia are in no way as extensive as, for example, those of Coleridge, nor as discursive, they nevertheless provide insight into my father’s thinking...No one can read LZ without being aware how integral to his work is a poetics of quotation, of incorporation, of reading and re-reading, of reworking, of revitalization, of insistence upon the simultaneity of all literature.

If that viewpoint is valid, one could view my father’s marginalia not only as a window into his extant work, but also as the grist, or perhaps even sketches, towards a yet to be written compendium.

This was, after all, a man of uncompromising artistic standards with heady ideas of meter, declamation, and the classical style. Perhaps we might leaven his articles on the horror of time signatures with a snapshot of his own metric re-interpretations recorded in situ. But where I had hoped to find marked up scores of Paganini caprices, of Ives and Haydn and all of the things that would reveal trade secrets, the kind for which I am sure those who attended Paganini’s own performances would have given up a good finger on their bowing arm, I instead found enough scores that qualified for the “like new” category that it began to seem that his material legacy was, in large part, a collection of unopened gifts.

3.

On the unread, meditations teem. A few: Umberto Eco cites Pierre Bayard, when he conceives of his personal library, unread or read, as a reminder of what we don’t yet know, a kind of *memento ignōrāre*. Burkhard Spinnen writes that gifting a book is the most inoffensive of charities. Accepting a book doesn’t even make the giftee beholden to opening it. Instead, it can sit ornamentally on a shelf while committing no one to anything. But that’s really all fine; the book publishing industry no doubt relies on the gifted book to survive.

Inventing Paul Zukofsky

Scores, I maintain, are yet a slightly different species, though it might have the same potential to engender awkwardness as a gifted book whose author is the gifter. A gifted score from a composer in the age of digital typesetting is rarely a beautiful—even a material—object. (Paul had it nicer in this respect: oversized cream manuscript paper with neatly colored noteheads and careful lettering redolent of mid-century geometric sans serifs.) There is an expectation I, the giftee, would play the music, for my own pleasure, the composer usually writes, in the hope that their wish would cancel out any sort of imposition.

4.

I think now of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* and its original subtitle *Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. (Later editions bear the more saleable, less theory-leaning titles *How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* and *Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*.) Hyde's main project is to investigate a so-called "economy of gifts," a concept taken from the sociologist Marcel Mauss, that exists separately from the circulation of goods in a market economy, marked by scarcity and series of quid pro quo transactions. "The spirit of a gift is kept alive by its constant donation." In fact, as Hyde insists upon again and again, the gift increases as it moves from a place of "plenty" to a place of "emptiness." He argues that "the gift, if it is a kind of life with a potential expiration date must always move," and, in doing so, creates a relationship between the parties involved; for him, it is this element that turns gift exchange into an erotic commerce that binds and attracts. It can only be fully received once it is consumed and given away. What is left in its specter is ligamental, erotic union.

I have been gifted several scores during the pandemic. Very often one arrives from a composer who (finally) gave in to the trend of writing musical diary entries, humble etudes with a small tank of fuel to run on. I have to be honest and say that I have downloaded *most* of them, and I fully intend, after this essay is complete, to organize them into properly labeled folders. I have resisted reading scores from my iPad for a while, but I will need to give in soon, and perhaps that save me the last step of having to print these out. Unfortunately, though, it is either a return to the classics (for me the French Romantics) or income (concerts for when halls reopen, recordings) that has moved me to get *Sitzfleisch* to bench during this pandemic. Even Hyde admits in the latest edition of *The Gift*, "no matter how the artist chooses, or is forced, to resolve the problem of his livelihood, he is likely to be poor."

In the anthropological structures Hyde cites, the society is a shell in which certain rules apply. The Uduk, the Kula, the Scottish fairy tale—these, in his telling, operate by established rules. The artist, and a musician like me, however, finds the constant navigation between these structures a series of virtuosic identity games à la Guess Who. A "gig"—a term I almost laughed at the first time I used it—is a contracted, transactional thing. Geoff Nurnberg writes, "for the hipsters, calling a job a gig was a way of saying it didn't define you. A gig was a commitment you felt free to walk away from as soon as you had \$50 in your pocket." But it is not often so easy to define gigs from so-called "passion projects." I can sometimes accept less money for

Andrew Zhou

something, but that can be the result of entering begrudgingly into an ill-defined hybrid of market and gift economies.

Sometimes the gifted scores are surprises, sometimes they are not. When they are surprises, when they are intended as gifts I never asked for, I wonder where they sit in Hyde's economy. Is an unread manuscript a gift received? I catalogued some current gifts still awaiting the required signature of receiver.

August 6, 2017: composer: solo-piece, dedicatee

November 4, 2017: first solo piano work of a major composer

October 24, 2017: American composer: collected oeuvre of works

August 13, 2018: composer from the Netherlands: solo 12-min. piece; May 2008

October 11, 2018, new 2-piano piece

December 27, 2018: Herbert Henck's recording of Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier, Books I and II" [I am "receiving it" as I write this.]

January 28, 2019: Two-piano work and solo work from a composer

Feb. 14, 2019: solo pieces from Japanese composer

Aug. 6, 2020: solo piece from composer in Hong Kong

October 24, 2020, solo work (musical diary)

This cannot be exhaustive, I've determined. Left out are some works already completed and a couple in the queue, for which I need to look for venues and performance opportunities, for which I think the composer has already been paid, and which I am sure has re-stimulated the economy of his citizenry. The commission grant plays in yet another arena in that the giver (composer) and recipient (player, who becomes a giver upon performance) are allowed to look at one another, to borrow Hyde's term, within a "protected gift sphere," while they look outward, and are fed and housed, by a market economy, which may be the product of tax-deductible donations of donors. It is perfectly fine to stay alee, and Hyde, even in his afterword, allows himself this evasion. I have been a bystander to cases in which the gift was thought to have been received by the giver, but not by the intended recipient (*wait, I thought you would be securing the performance venue, but who is paying for that? Is someone donating their space?*). The gift of a score asks in return for the gift of labor, of opening a door that impels us to step through the threshold into the market economy we so wish to be protected both from and by.

These are not necessarily unwanted gifts. We gladly consume things that we never demanded in the first place. (Is this not the tenet of much technological innovation and UX

Inventing Paul Zukofsky

design?) One classic example of the wanted gift is the work from the composer to the dedicatee. We grow an attachment—an erotic relationship—to the things we own. Still, the work that is dedicated can be rejected, in the way a mother might reject her offspring (take, for instance, Paul Wittgenstein with Hindemith, Artur Rubinstein with Stravinsky). Here, as in the animal kingdom, a sufficient bond—an “erotic” relationship—has not been created within a certain crucial time frame. With it, however, the work can be received. Some performers seem to “own” a work; in fact, there are performance restrictions, often a year or two, that get put on certain works, set in a commission contract. While the second performances and beyond often carry the most potential for ensuring the vitality of a work’s afterlife by giving the score a renewed importance as a site of re-interpretation, there is a slight distaste for the notion of looking after a discarded project while the composer sets her eyes on a new development.

There are a few scores in the PZ boxes that transcend banal gifting. Some, like the phantom Reich piece, have an air of purposeful forgetting. Some seem to be so well-preserved, yet undetectable through search engine queries that I am sure there is someone who would be interested in getting their hands on these materially, all the more so with their accompanying documentation. Yet the others—the ones I have alluded to—carry with them a feeling of supplication. Hyde speaks of the health of the beggar, “the vehicle of that fluidity which is abundance,” as a sign of the health of a society. In this way, is the supplication of the composer, who hopes that the performer might find a place for his latest work on a program, a metric for the vitality of our music scene?

5.

There is one thing I enjoy more than a used bookstore: the bookshelves of the houses I visit. We borrow books from our friends in part because we want to gain insight into the desires of those with whom we choose to make company, but whose status as friends, colleagues, acquaintances necessitates a corresponding distance. In my friends’ libraries, I can make guesses (I don’t really care if they are right or not) which books were purchased for a class, for a dissertation, for pleasure but never read, actually read; occasionally, when I open one, I’ll see a gift receipt, the symbol of reception-rejection liminality. If I borrow and read the book, have I not fulfilled something of the original gifter’s vision of their ideal giftee? And my friend might actually be glad someone—not they—have made use of the gift.

Consuming me has been the receipt of PZ’s inventory. In form, the list of material acquisitions, a spreadsheet of scores, letters, programs, miscellanea, is a series. A cryptic letter from Roger Sessions—not a solicitation—encapsulates perfectly the anxiety of this uncommented arrangement. Written on UC San Diego Department of Music letterhead, December 5, 1984, it reads:

5 Dec '84

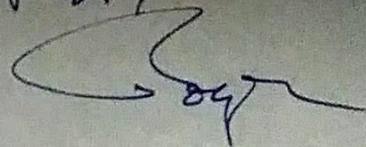
Dear Paul,

To let you know - but you do - that it was - mostly - a pleasure. In spite of your grumbling, you were magnificent. I really, do hope you will do it again, and to that end I have asked Peters to return all materials to me so that they can be fixed. The rental guy was fixed.

I will be often, almost mostly, in NYC thru mid-Jan - mid-May. ^(ISAM Fellow) Any chance of some performance collaborations, or any other respectable kind?

You probably picked the better party. Beacraft was dull.

Very best



Inventing Paul Zukofsky

The Dickinsonian fragment that opens, addressed to “you,” is enough to induce vertigo. Then the list, in the form of questions, that runs through my head: the grumbling about what? What is hoped to be done again? Who was that rental guy? Did he get fired because of Sessions...or PZ? And who (where? what?) the hell is Beacroft?

The writer Michel Butor has categorized types of books like dictionaries, catalogues, and guides as almost divine in their suggestions of limitlessness. Set within the types of horizontal writing, a list plants a “vertical structure” in the flow of text, something disruptive and potentially recursive, a *y-axis* cutting through. An inventory is an exhaustive list. As such, it always waylays. The word, going back to the late Latin *inventarium*, “list of what is found,” is a close cousin of “invention,” which originally meant “to come upon, to devise, and discover,” both deriving from *invenire*, “to find, discover, ascertain.” (The sense of “invention” to mean deception or fabrication did not emerge until the early 16th century.) This inventory is frozen, paratactic, but as yet “impartial.” As George Perec has observed, the list is always partial, but the inventory is “when we don’t write *etc.*”

Many writers on life face the hurdle of accessing an archive, something signaling records simultaneously official, public, and governmental. Others, as in the case of some famous authors (Philip Roth being a recent example), provide their biographers with all the material they need late in life, as a means of setting a cruise control to steer their posthumous reputations. I, by contrast, have a glut of material from a man who relentlessly occupied himself with misinterpretations of his father’s work and yet made no known plans to direct the future of his own. The anxiety of PZ’s inventory is not just its material abundance but its neighborliness to and muted exchanges with his father’s pseudo-diaristic poetry and prose. There remains the crucial task of interleaving and enfolding the two surpluses—the creation of origami of finite size—that needs to be orchestrated.

Julian Barnes has spoken of biography like a trawling net, full of facts and hypotheses, but also holes: “think of everything that got away, that fled with the last deathbed exhalation of the biographer.” I have no relation via blood or wine to PZ and I used to know nothing of him. I entered his life after his last exhalation. Now I can know more about him than I ever cared to. But gaps are where interpretations are born. PZ would have likely been aghast at this. I will misinterpret, misunderstand, not deliberately, but inevitably. What I truly long for, though, is how not to know again. What, after the gift has been used up, will have truly slipped through?

The Imaginary Library of Paul Zukofsky

Craig Pepples

A table where people put down books and talk – in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, or somewhere in the United States;

PZ's library – a “Bauhaus of the Psychology of Music Notation” – bridging architecture, prosody, statistics, physics of acoustics and color, and of course music scores, anything that interested him.

*

Rain, in the courtyard
where I watch it fall,
comes down at very different speeds.
At the center (...) a sheer uneven curtain (or net),
an implacable but
relatively slow descent of
fairly light drops. (...)
Not far from the walls to the right and left,
heavier (...) drops fall more noisily.
Here they seem the size of wheat
kernels, there large as peas,
elsewhere big as marbles.

– *The Voice of Things*, Francis Ponge

... Lever, Block and Tackle, Wheel and Axle, The Inclined Plane and Wedge, The Screw, Gears, Work, Power...

– US Naval Training Course contents, *Basic Machines and How They Work*

*

(Yuji Takahashi called him “mad scientist” for the range of his imagination with its bias towards the empirical, and...)

*

Clouds are not spheres. Mountains are not cones.

– *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, Benoit Mandelbrot

*

How does this relate to music? The science of violin harmonics? John Cage's indeterminacy?

*

The Imaginary Library of Paul Zukofsky

Learning from books and teachers is like traveling by carriage, so we are told in the Veda. (...) "But the carriage will serve only while one is on the highroad. He who reaches the end of the highroad will leave the carriage and walk afoot."

– Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color*

So, a collection not only for autodidacts or the home-schooled, but designed to promote individual judgment:

Once upon a time
 There was a little boy
 And he went outside.

– *Genesis of a Music*, Harry Partch,

In hopes of maintaining childlike curiosity about the world:

Why should not
 we also
 enjoy an original relation to the universe?
Why should not we
 have a poetry
 and philosophy of insight
and not of tradition?

– Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Nature*

As great mad scientists do:

How remarkable (...) that that thing (...) light enough to produce shadows of other objects, can be made to throw its own shadow on a piece of white paper or card, so that you can actually see streaming round the flame something which is not part of the flame, but is ascending and drawing the flame upwards.

– Michael Faraday, *Chemical History of a Candle*

While also questioning the nature of perception:

By the addition of such artificial instruments and methods, there may be (...) reparation made for the mischiefs, and imperfection, mankind has drawn upon itself, by negligence, and intemperance, and a willful and superstitious deserting the Prescripts and Rules of Nature, (...) and from his breeding and converse with other men (...) subject to slip into all sorts of errors.

– Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*

But some conversations cross-pollinate, as PZ must have found talking with real scientists at Bell Labs, or when he picked up a thin volume of Wittgenstein at John Cage's house:

In my room I am surrounded by objects of different colors.

Craig Pepples

It is easy to say what color they are.
But if I were asked what color I am
now seeing from here
at,
say,

this place on my table,
I couldn't answer;

the place is whitish
(because the light wall makes the brown table lighter here)

at any rate
(...)

given a number of color
samples, I wouldn't be able to pick out one
which had the same coloration
as this area of the table.

– *Remarks on Color*, III (95)

*

Still, wasn't this supposed to be a *music* library?

Time and Space are intimately linked. Their perception is of considerable importance to the formation of the human spirit.

A musician is inevitably a rhythmicist (... and) must refine his sense of rhythm by a more intimate knowledge of true time, by the study of different concepts of time and of different rhythmic styles.

Abstract time or structured time arises in the face of true duration. True duration is not measurable. True duration is changing. All perception remains, but this first duration is so far from time in its literal sense that it can not acquaint us with its true nature. True time is confused with the succession of our states of consciousness.

– Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie*

Knowing the difference between durations perceived and durations measured is worthwhile.

As a tortoise draws its limbs into its shell at need, so the artist reserves his scientific principles when working intuitively. But would it be better for the tortoise to have no legs?

– Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color*

Because music notation is full of ambiguity:

The Imaginary Library of Paul Zukofsky

History teaches, and the musician's direct experience confirms, that the essential thing is the note as it sounds and not as it is written. It follows (...) that the most important function of notation is that of an indicator.

– Erhard Karkoschka, *Notation in New Music*.

*

Repeated practice produces muscle memory:

vision in motion
is simultaneous grasp.

Simultaneous grasp is creative performance—
seeing, feeling and thinking
in relationship
and not as a series of isolated phenomena.

It instantaneously integrates and transmutes
single elements
into a coherent whole.

This is valid for physical vision as well as for the abstract.

– Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*

And graphics remain a concern:

...Technical possibilities of a notation system also influence the act of composing (...) so that the aural image of a musical work in every epoch is characteristically related to its visual configuration.

– Erhard Karkoschka, *Notation in New Music*.

*

By definition, there would be scores and editions of scores. PZ drafted notes:

Create a permanent library of pieces not available anywhere: The second copy in existence of Roger Sessions' early ballet score "Black Maskers"; marked violin versions of Babbitt "Sextets" and "Septet but Equal"; autographed complete quartets of Elliott Carter; marked copies of Feldman, Maceda, Wuorinen; the collection of Messiaen scores (keep even those not marked); Stockhausen, Berio, Cardew, the original Fluxus magazines. And also a permanent collection of books: the initial printing of Stephen Wolfram's *A New Kind of Science* (and *Mathematica*), Erhard Karkoschka's *Notation in New Music*, and books that I've learned from: Hindemith's book on ear training, and Nicholas Slonimsky, especially the *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* and the *Lexicon of Musical Invective*.

Craig Pepples

And he wanted to preserve his violin markings and fingerings in an edition “of the future, for the future” ... of: “Babbitt, Cage, Carter, Feldman, Schnabel, Sessions... [fill in later].”

Plus a crazy quilt of books cited over five years – because rhythm and phrasing is prosody; orchestration is color; musical form is architecture; melody is line:

ABC of Reading, Ezra Pound
Animals Without Backbones, Ralph Buchsbaum
The Arcades Project, Walter Benjamin
A Blake Dictionary, S Foster Damon
Bouvard and Pécuchet, Gustave Flaubert
Coming of Age with Quantum Information: Notes on a Paulian Idea, Christopher Fuchs
The Continental Harmony, William Billings, 1794
Dictionary of Received Ideas, Gustave Flaubert
Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages, Carl Darling Buck
English Synonyms, George Crabb, ed. John H Finley, Centennial Edition 1916
Experimental Researches in Electricity, Michael Faraday
Exploratory Data Analysis, John Tukey
Five Graphic Music Analyses, Heinrich Schenker, ed. Felix Salzer
Fundamentals of Music Composition, Arnold Schoenberg
Genes, Peoples and Languages, Luigi Cavali-Sforza
Gertrude Stein On Punctuation, Kenneth Goldsmith
History of Economic Analysis, Joseph Schumpeter
How to Read, Ezra Pound
Kindergarten Chats, Louis Sullivan
Language, Leonard Bloomfield
La musique et les lettres, Stéphane Mallarmé
Lectures On Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Adam Smith
Models for Beginners in Composition, Arnold Schoenberg
Mont Saint Michel and Chartres, Henry Adams
Moses and Monotheism, Sigmund Freud
New Musical Resources, Henry Cowell
A Note on Recent Developments in Auditory Theory; Wever, Lawrence and v. Bekesy, 1954
On Proportions, Stefan Wolpe, trans. Matthew Greenbaum
On the Theory of Modulation, Max Reger
Pedagogical Sketchbook, Paul Klee
Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man, Thomas Mann 1918
Shakespeare's Ovid, Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses, ed. WHD Rouse
Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music, Ferruccio Busoni
Style and Idea, Arnold Schoenberg
Theory of Color, Goethe, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake 1840
Three Essays, Basil Bunting
Traité de l'orchestration, Charles Koechlin (and Berlioz and Rimsky)

*

A library or a pile of books can be a snapshot...



**ONLY
AND ONLY JUST
I'VE WISHED
TO SEE
YOUR
CHANCES
OF BEING
ALIVE
OR
WANTING
TO SHARE
THE TIMES
YOU WERE
ALONE**

**Poem On The Street
by João Cunha**

Campinas – São Paulo - Brazil

Frank Abbinanti
Charles Ames
Christian Asplund
Richard Ayres
Tom Baker
Benjamin Boretz
Michael Byron
Philip Corner
Jody Diamond
Barbara Monk Feldman
Forrest Larson
David Fuqua
Kyle Gann
Malcolm Goldstein
Daniel Goode
Lou Harrison
John Kennedy
Drew Krause
Anne La Berge
Ron Nagorcka
Paul Nauert
Paul Paccione
Thomas Peterson
Larry Polansky
Jarrad Powell
Wendy Reid
Eric Richards
David Rosenboom
Frederic Rzewski
Carter Scholz
Kunsu Shim
Ezra Sims
Gerhard Stäbler
James Tenney
Sam Torrasi
Simon Wickham-Smith
Clive Wilkinson
Michael Winter
Gayle Young

ALONES

**compositions for one musician
from frog peak music
(a composers' collective)**

**compiled by
jody diamond
ken hullican
wendy reid**

**preface by
jody diamond**

this collection owes its inspiration to benjamin boretz
in the program notes for his piano piece
. . . my chart shines high where the blue milks upset. . .
he wrote

for a pianist alone

i had never thought of music-making as solitary
as a private conversation
between a musician and an instrument
the idea was a revelation

when the pandemic started i was playing in five different gamelan groups
music-making as a collective activity, as contribution and response
an intermingling of human breath and movement transformed into groupsound

and then suddenly
we were at all home, alone
completely, indefinitely

a whole world of musicians
home alone with their instruments
making music alone

ben's idea made me think
about music-making
as a singular personal experience
unique

to a moment
to a person
to a listening

to an intimate interaction
between an instrument's sound
and a musician alone with that instrument

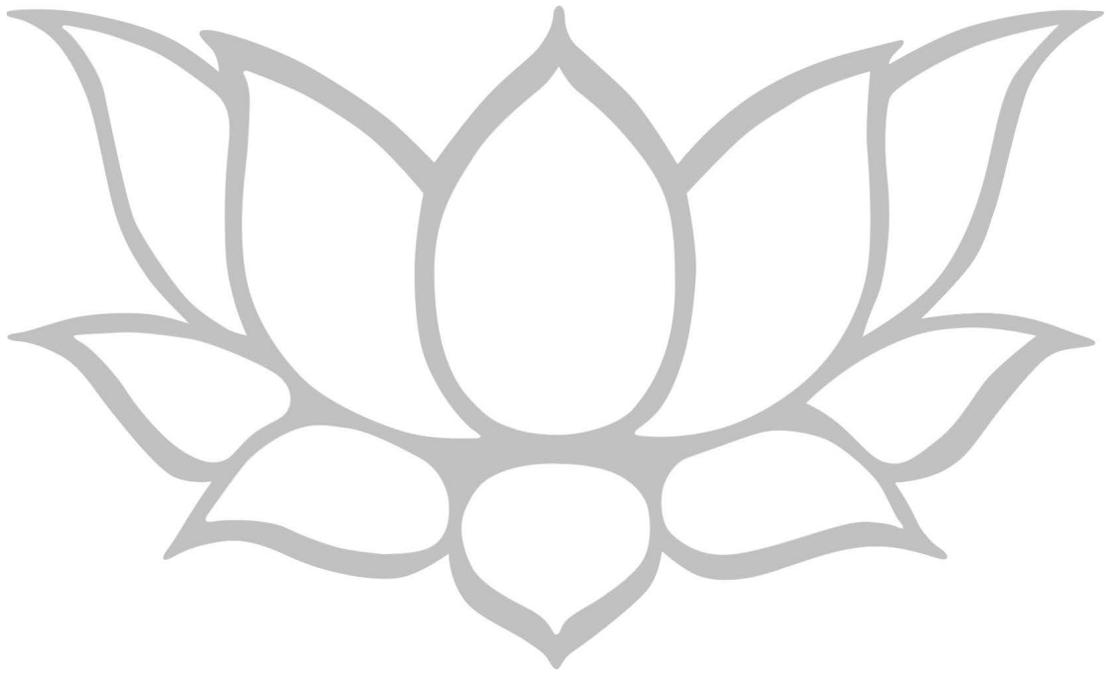
and i thought of frog peak music, a composers' collective
and all our compositions
and all the musicians home alone with their instruments
needing to have those private conversations

this is for them, for you, for us
the players, the listeners, the experiencers
of these uncertain uncountable days
of

ALONES

jody diamond
red hook, new york
21 december 2020

Richard Kostelanetz



madrigal

jukebox

intermezzo

gregorian chant

harmony

etude

diminuendo

lied

mandolin

l'istesso tempo

presto

hymn

lamentations

jazz

hemidemisemiquaver

pastorale

shape note

violone

Sprechstimme

preghiera

decrescendo

french horn

gamba

obligato

nachtmusik

mazurka

legno

instrumentation

allegro

boogie-woogie

orchestra

glissando

harmonium

demisemiquaver

lyre

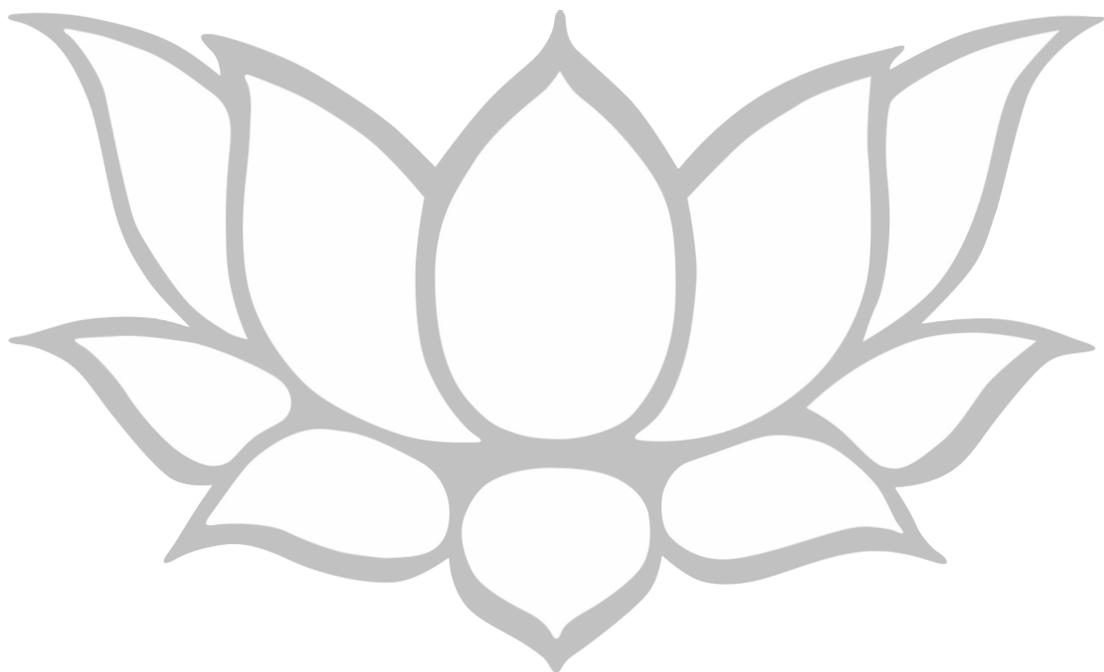
feſta teatrale

chaconne

gamelan

ondes martenot

motif



(Remembering Paul Zukofsky)

My Neo-Classicism

David Lidov

A description of some devices I've adopted in musical compositions with a reflection on Neo-classicism.

The title suggests two topics. Note a difference. The methods/systems topic is technical. My technicalities depend very little on conventional music theory. I do rely on notions from mathematics. These are explained where they arise, explained clearly, I think, but I ask readers to whom they seem disorienting to extend some patience as needed. On matters of system and technique, I feel fairly sure I know my material or at least used to know when I was younger. My writing on the other topic, Neo-classicism, is more improvisatory and less expert. I mention issues that could be researched or have been researched; I don't present research. I simply want to convey a point-of-view.

I start in that corner.

Discussions of neo-classicism in music became newly prominent with Stravinsky's turn in that direction a hundred years ago. Outside of music, in visual art and architecture, the topic had been prominent and influential since at least three hundred years earlier, a matter we need not ignore. Emerging from the Renaissance, a new appreciation of the sculpture and architecture of ancient Athens and Rome fueled the fire. Monumental Renaissance architecture, which is obviously and literally neo-classical, is not so called, because the term "neo-classical" in architecture history is reserved for later revivals and interpretations of Renaissance style, still widely imitated 100 years ago by institutions wanting authority and grandeur—banks, universities, government offices, etc. Literary history recognizes a neo-classical period in the 17th century strongly attuned to classical Greek aesthetics and leading towards romanticism. Wikipedia's illustration for "Neo-classicism" is Canova's 1787 sculpture of Cupid waking Psyche with a Kiss, also romantic or pre-romantic. You can check it out online. I mention this aspect because it does not carry over to music.

Neo-classicism in music in the 20th century was understood as contrary to romanticism, and obviously, neo-classicism in music could not imitate Greek or Roman models. Still, there is common ground for the common terminology

Neo-classicism, be it in music, visual art or literature, encompasses movements that re-affirmed historical aesthetic ideals or forms or materials. I was enchanted with Ezra Pound's definition, primarily in reference to poetry, in his *ABC of Reading*. He said some poets knew how to revive an established but well-worn figure by making a tiny

My Neo-Classicism

change in it, and that, he wrote, was neo-classicism. Christian Wolf's biography of JS Bach cites and approves another colleague's analysis of the *Art of Fugue* as progressing chronologically from historical to modern styles. The first fugues, in the oldest style, invoking but not fully duplicating Palestrina's style might well be termed neo-classical. A big 19th century symphony that ends with a passacaglia, a Baroque genre, is surely neo-classical and note that Brahms sacrificed none of his romanticism to compose it.

To my knowledge, the label "Neo-classical" did not feature in writings about those musical examples when they were new, as it did when Stravinsky invented his "Bach with wrong notes" manner, and when Hindemith made a play, less successful, for dissonances with right notes. I accept our inherited idea of Neo-classicism as a turn to the past to assert various aesthetic values, but I will propose an extension.

Stravinsky's interest in past styles was, I think, his attraction to their clarity, wit and apparent spontaneity. When the term "neo-classicism" was applied to his music, by people who liked it, those values were appreciated, and I think there was no intention to suggest that he was composing in an old-fashioned way or retreating from modernity. But not everybody who appreciated the fire and excitement of his early ballets did like his subsequent directions. All of Stravinsky's style changes encountered resistance when they were new. However, his neo-classical turn was never, to my knowledge, rejected as regressive but rather as dry and uninspired. (I encountered this reaction in an extreme version. As a teenager, I lived in California for a few years in the fifties, near Disneyland. My piano teacher informed me of a theory circulating there that Igor had died and been replaced by his brother who was cashing in on Igor's reputation. That was their explanation for why his newest music was un-humanitarian and artificial. I'm not really sure where my teacher, Frieda Belinfante, from the Netherlands, who was a heroic WWII resistance fighter, the founder and conductor of the Santa Anna Orchestra, and Hermann Scherchen's first woman student, stood on the matter.)

As a neo-classicist, Stravinsky was still heard primarily as a modernist by friends and foes alike. My impression is that today, "Neo-classical" has taken on a very different and more derogatory connotation and that it is often understood as regressive. In my musical circles, neo-classical seems often to reference a manner or attitude opposed to experiment, opposed to risk, lacking in courage and innovation. That is why I twitched on hearing someone characterize my music that way. Some years ago, a colleague had asked me if it would be correct to describe my compositional style as neo-classical. At the moment, I felt the question was a put-down, but I had never considered the notion and didn't have a better term. After all, I do, in my 2017 revision of *Elements of Semiotics*, characterize my theory as "neo-structuralist," which sounds a bit the same. If one wants a label, I now think there is no better term for much (not all) of what I

compose. BUT. What I mean by “neo-classical” may not be what first comes to mind for you. I will not offer a definition. I expect my descriptions and examples to suggest what I want the term to evoke.

A more upbeat understanding of the word ‘Neo-classical’ is available and calls for some defense. The fantasy of maintaining a dialogue with history can be as energizing as the fantasy of heralding a new future. It had meant at the start a re-evaluation, not a retreat. I would like the term to be understood (as it usually is) to refer to a retention (or recovery or re-interpretation) of stylistic traits, but also as referring to the retention, or new investigation, of *problems*. Retention of problems is what I have in mind as an *extension* of the common notion.

As a label for my music, the common notion, if incomplete, is not invalid. At least some of my music reflects an attachment to traits of style associated with music’s high classicism in the late 1800’s—moderation, clarity, a sense of order that allows something to sound “right”, and something else to sound puzzling; restricted vocabulary, drama suggested but not bombastic. These are traits which refer to general impressions and that resist pinning down with specific evidence or criteria. I still learn from old styles and the discourse they supported. Bach’s insistence, as reported by his student, that good music must alternate consonance and dissonance without impairing the harmonic flow remains a suggestive proclamation for me, particularly because of its distinction between harmony and consonance, perhaps just what Bach did not find in Rameau’s then newly popular harmonic theory, which he rejected. Haydn’s skeptical response, when he was asked to audit a new model of violin, that he would find it more useful to hear a new type of minuet, fits my sense of priorities. In my twenties, a pianist pointed out to me that Beethoven wrote many more soft passages than loud; I still regard that as one of my best composition lessons ever.

But aesthetic priorities don’t get to the core for me of what I want neo-classicism to evoke. Our heritage in western classical music includes not only sonata form but also the problems of sonata form (*e.g. how to motivate recapitulation, see below*), not only fugue but also the problem of rescuing this terrific mode of construction from tedium. “Problems”, here, must not take the sense of defects, rather the sense of problems that our teachers (or perhaps our models in the Imaginary Museum of Musical Works¹) set for homework.

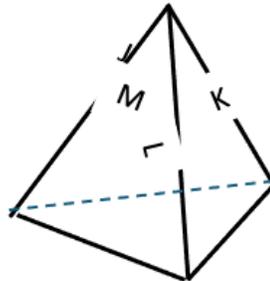
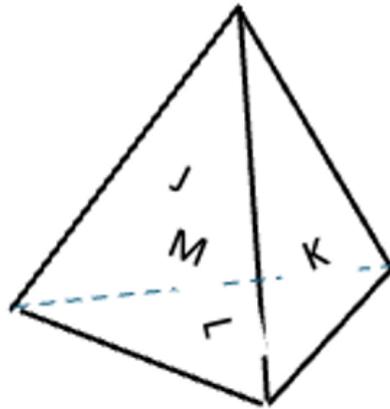
It’s from that perspective that I put on display below some constructions I’ve worked with to make musical patterns. Some of these devices might be inventions, but I hardly know. I do know they are not regressive. I believe in most cases they are not less experimental than some pieces called experimental simply because they are loyal to

My Neo-Classicism

idioms that were experimental 25 or 50 years earlier. I think it is reasonable to characterize the impulse and line of work they embody as neo-classical. They arise in reaction to historical models though their differences from them may not sound like violent ruptures.

Some of the music I take for examples was just recently recorded and will be released soon. Some of it is planned to be recorded within a year. Some of it is older.

I. TETRAHEDRAL WALKS.



Buckminster Fuller was powerful advocate of his own architectural reliance on tetrahedrons. A tetrahedron is a symmetrical construction of four equilateral triangles joined at six edges. Each group of three sides meets at one of the four vertices. In an essay explaining the valuable properties of tetrahedrons and their likelihood of drawing productive attention in a variety of fields Fuller wrote: “Artists will know what to do with them.” He said no more there on that. I took it as a personal challenge: Derive a musical form from tetrahedrons. The notion is a bit weird because music unfolds across time and tetrahedrons are supposed to stay folded. But I did it.

David Lidov

Imagine a tetrahedron suspended by a cord at one vertex and imagine a fly walking around on it. I choose a ‘fly’ because I know flies can walk upside down. Let’s call the four sides or “*faces*” J, K, L and M (in the picture, M is in back, L on the floor). Each time Fly moves to its next triangle/side/face, Fly is crossing an *edge*. We can indicate the path of Fly by a string of successive letters indicting the faces, for example:

J K L J M L K M J L M K

This notion of - and notation for - a path or a ‘walk’, is known in math and is known by some composers; no patent claim for that. Also, it is a standard convenience in academic music theory to represent a series of musical sections with letters. The string of letters could represent tonalities or tunes or meters or instruments or moods or modes of articulation (like staccato and legato) or any other features, but the notation implies that they are distinct and distinguishable.

The particular string above is not picked at random. It satisfies additional constraints (that have nothing to do with Bucky): Each face (or each side) gets three visits from Fly. Fly crosses every edge, five of them twice but never twice in the same direction. There are no two successive crossings that make an *aba* pattern (such as ‘J K J’ or ‘M L M’ would). If your first reaction to my 12-letter string was “A rondo by any other name would sound as sweet”, my first response is to point out that you can associate each letter with its own tune and play it that way, but it won’t sound quite like a rondo because the prohibition of *aba* patterns, the very soul of rondo, enforces a difference. That’s not my main point, though. Hang in another few paragraphs. This formula or an equivalent² is one I have followed often. It’s the compositional form of my first published recording. A longish *Fantasy for Bassoon and Piano* from 1972. [Melbourne Records, SMLP 4032,1980, Chris Weait, *bassoon* and Monica Gaylord, *piano*.] And often enough it is a formula I revisit when I need to make a piece and don’t have a better idea.

The “walk” in that composition has the task of tying together strict and free rhythms, passages in graphic notations and conventional notations, multiphonics, static and mobile passages, moments of tight and moments of loose ensemble. Such a project of integration is surely native to neo-classicism.

Here is another example with a link but no analysis: a tango in the form of the tetrahedral walk



Tango 1985 (Sherri Jones, piano)

My Neo-Classicism

In the case of these particular examples of an abstract form, my tetrahedral walk, I made the music without understanding the form well. I discovered slowly that I didn't fully understand my own formula and didn't catch on that it was talking back to me. I would begin a piece by assigning characteristics or features to the four types of sections. For example, the J's might be staccato and the K's could feature dotted rhythms, etc. When doing so, I was trying to distribute polar opposites symmetrically, but there was always something forced or awkward in the distribution. That doesn't mean something wrong with the pieces. I got them to cohere with good effect. It doesn't mean something wrong with the formula. If I wasn't using it to the best advantage, it still created pattern and compositional options. My initial confidence that I had found a fresh way to present sharp contrasts was erroneous, and I was slow to abandon my mistake as it focuses on a positive characteristic of late 18th century musical style that I greatly admire and wanted to emulate, its exploitation of immediate contrast. However, tetrahedral symmetries are properties of the number four, while the oppositions I wanted to distribute symmetrically are binary. Over time, I came to listen better to the "walk" and respond to *its* priorities. It's not a rondo with a different name.

If you adopt a form *a priori*, there is something like an outside agent joining your work, though not like Chat GPT. Perhaps, in working, you might negotiate. There is always room to negotiate, but how much? Some practitioners of our art will feel a quasi-spiritual attachment to their premisses. Their tone row must not alter. For me, working with a form or a pattern can include revision, elaboration and variation; the form is not a rigid and sufficient law for the composition.

Why rely on a formula in the first place? Does someone think that if well-equipped with ears and memory, it would be enough to play or write down whatever sounds in the imagination? Well, sometimes imagination is enough. Stylistic commitments predict nothing at all about the worth of the outcome. Whatever the styles, the art-maker needs to discover or invent productive relationships between evolving materials, evolving tools, evolving environments and an evolving self. That cliché "if it works for you..." doesn't tell the story. A style commitment isn't a psychological phenomenon. If it happens, it's a compositional phenomenon.

The question, how much to rely on or to reject forms, formulas, set procedures and genres and so on is not a question about neo-classicism, though it is likely to appear high-lighted in the context of a neo-classical project. The intersection is only partial. Schoenberg's new method of composing with twelve tones synthesized a modernist imperative for chaotic equal-temperament harmony with a classical need for ordered rhetoric. That he worked out some compositions in historical forms never jeopardized his modernism, nor did his commitment to work with a formula or, to use his term, a

method. Mondrian's most abstract canvasses are brilliantly formulaic, and I think I could argue that Pollack's *method* of composing paintings by throwing and dripping paint merits that characterization.

The need for an external system that mediates between the composer and the composer's ideas is certainly not felt exclusively by those with a neo-classical leaning, and the need can be satisfied by other artifacts unknown to classical art, like computer algorithms or the i-ching. I like the historical connection and find it enriching.

2. THREE NEO-CLASSICAL STANCES

Last month we re-recorded a three-movement string quartet that I composed in 1997-8, rewritten and produced live in 2008 and then, still dissatisfied, a point not made, rewrote again over the last year. I write primarily about the second movement here with brief notes on the others to illustrate alternate interpretations of neo-classicism.

The first movement, a *Prelude*, refuses the desideratum I proposed earlier of importing a problem. It's non-problematically neo-classical in the most common sense. I mention this as a difference from the other movements, not as a fault. At the end, it quotes a Baroque figure for introductions found in recitatives introducing an aria. The figure comprises a touch of extra chaos (harpsichord flourish, but in my case entirely inert chords) leading to the next movement via a conventional Baroque harmonic formula. (C# ||→ A)

The second movement was the main cause of my rewriting and hair pulling. It is titled "Sonata" only to recall the use of that word before there were any "sonata forms" as an indication that the music is played, not sung (not a cantata). I wanted that title as a hint of vigor and rapidity; the preceding and following movements are quite moderate. The main feature of this movement is anti-classical. Maintaining its common meter throughout, it is composed almost entirely in 8-measure groups, only some 4's and a 16 for contrast. In sophisticated European classical music, such a continuously cyclic metrical structure would seem simple-minded or gross unless it were either 1) at least partially hidden or 2) restricted to rondos, and dance and variation sets or 3) turned inside out by reliance on half-phrases. I need to explain this last as I am employing idiosyncratic terminology.

The eighteenth century gave music an ingenious theory of phrase structure, further developed in the nineteenth and twentieth, which is fundamentally screwed up. The fault is that phrases are considered by the authors of those theories as elaborate metrical groups. The fact, still not generally recognized, is that phrase structure and metrical

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Structure are opposite and in competition: phrases conclude; meter—the beat—goes on. Four- and eight- measure groups have a special role in late classical music because they readily support two interpretations, as metrical units or as phrases. Which interpretation fits best is often ambiguous. This ambiguity is a great source of vivacity in fast music and supplies grandiose architecture in slow music. Groups of four- and eight-measures are heard as metrical groups when they have either strong beginnings or strong endings; they are heard as phrases, when they have both. But this is my own usage. The distinction is abandoned in classical music theory; both are called phrases. I am sometimes inclined to call a metrical group which does not have both a strong beginning and a strong ending (cadence) a “half-phrase,” and I suggest as a further and useful refinement L(left)-half phrase with a marked beginning and R-half-phrase with a marked ending. In a continuing string of L-half-phrases, the beginning of each acts like the end of the previous. If you are in a position to do so, regard the exposition of the first movement of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, the “Pastoral”; it’s made of two very long strings of four-measure L-groups. Then, when the L-group is joined to an R-group, it makes one phrase of double length. The consequence is a feeling of wide open space.

Most of the 8-measure units strung together in my second movement are complete phrases with pronounced beginnings and pronounced cadences... The bump of the ending cadence (usually measure 8) and the bump of the next beginning (usually the next measure 1) are almost adjacent. The bumps would be unremarkable and enjoyable in a rondo or dance suite or variations set—but the phrases are far too complex rhythmically for those roles.

The classical ear should hear what I did in my second movement as crude. But it is not. Making the phrase structure work is the problem solved. It has perhaps some affinity with Indian music in *adi tala* or to Asian percussion music with *colotomic* structure. Those are also classical traditions but not evoked here as far as I can judge. The connection with European classicism then is in employing the familiar eight-measure unit in contrariety to the conventional procedures associated with it that would build longer hierarchies, avoid the consecutive bumps, and offer more variety.

The third movement, “Song”, re-written only for minor adjustments, realizes a global scheme that is described below in the later section of this essay, “Fibonacci Partitions.” There, my melody is the most conservative element. Though they are not jarring, neither the form, described in that later section, nor the rhythm, nor the harmony have immediate classical ancestry. The form is the “problem” which this movement takes up for its homework. It is radical but has a capacity to imitate some standard shapes of classical phrase structure.

3. A MODAL SONATA FORM

Our formulas or systems, sonata forms, fugues, tone rows, variation sets, have properties or prejudices of their own which may offer difficulties. Solving the problem for one composition or revising the underlying recipe are different ventures. I will provide an example of the latter.

Neo-classicism need not be limited to the arts. For me, the most inspiring example of classicism is Euclid's plane geometry, a few axioms, a collection of postulates and countless propositions by deduction. None of its glory is lost for me in learning of Euclid's errors. I suggest, as a lofty, unapproachable model for neo-classicism, Bernhard Riemann's spherical geometry. It arises with merely the deletion of Euclid's postulates for parallel lines and evokes another universe. Euclid's propositions fit the flat plane. Riemann's version fits the surface of a sphere. (That is one among other spectacular applications).

Hence, an ideal for a neo-classical practice: change one premiss of a system and thereby renovate it. A musical example which had some influence was Charles Seeger's dissonant counterpoint. His method put the system of academic counterpoint on its head by mandating dissonance where the old counterpoint mandated consonance. But I found his idea and more importantly, his examples, so far as I knew them, unmotivated and unconvincing. My own counterexample is, to the contrary, highly motivated, persuasive in its results and, so far, absolutely, totally and entirely, uninfluential. What I altered is a fundamental principle of sonata form. To refer to sonata form as a system reifies what was in truth a continually evolving procedure; "system" here is an abbreviation of a rear-view mirror perspective. But, as long as we understand that, we're OK to go ahead...

Sonata form posits a two-section form(ula). The first section, the *exposition*, changes keys, presenting themes in both a first key (the *tonic*) and the second key (most often, the *dominant*). The second section has two parts, first a *development*, which prolongs the second key (via deviations) and then the *recapitulation* where (optionally, after repeating the first theme in the first key) themes initially presented in the second key recur in the first key.

A widely recognized problem in sonata form is recapitulation. Again, problem does not mean defect. It means some homework to do. The beginning, the *exposition*, offers a superb opportunity to compose exciting music; the structure of the beginning is built on a transition from the initial tonality to a more energetic one, commonly the tonality of the "five chord", the dominant. The *recapitulation* restores a balance that was perhaps

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more strongly felt and heard three hundred years ago than now. It is inherently *un-*dramatic. But genes are not destiny. Composers solve that problem. They invent wonderful dramas for their recapitulations, little ones and big ones. A review of fabulous recapitulations could make a good book, a thick book.

Sonatas with No Style is a composition for piano I wrote in 2003. I have performed it a few times and I have a tentative plan for its recording (by another pianist) and publication of that within the coming 12 months. It's in six movements, all but the last are strict sonata forms, BUT sonata forms with my simply and fundamentally altered premiss. The scheme is essentially the same in all five cases. (The sixth movement, very short, called "Coda" is a cancrizan).

My alteration of the formula postpones the second tonality (the dominant) until the start of the recapitulation. The recapitulation begins with the first theme transposed to the dominant key.

The form accomplishes this by adopting a procedure favored by Bach in some fugues. Very roughly, in the exposition, where the dominant tonality would be introduced, I have what we call in fugues a "tonal answer" instead of a "real answer". It's worth giving a hint of what that means if the reader doesn't know. If you start with a theme that rises from C to G, that is, going up five notes in bottom half of its scale, the theme's "real" answer in the dominant key would go from G to D. A "tonal" answer would instead stay in the first key and would be adapted to rise just four steps from G to C, using the upper half of the same scale.³ My altered formula assigns this "tonal" version to the exposition and a "real" version to the recapitulation, thus transferring one opportunity for building excitement from the exposition of the composition to the recapitulation. My description is a gross simplification.



Sonatas

This alteration *to the form itself* sets up an inherent *potential* drama for the recapitulation. The form, in the abstract, leaves open exactly how some of these relationships (like real vs tonal) will be interpreted, and each of the five movements presents different solutions.

4. FIBONACCI PARTITIONS.

Many composers are or have been interested in drawing forms from the Fibonacci series. What I have done with that series is different from any other applications that I can recall, but there must be hundreds I don't know. Most of my readers, I would assume, have already met the Fibonacci sequence somewhere. Each number (after the first two) is the sum of the two preceding:

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 The series of Fibonacci numbers

In math, a "partition" is a division of an integer into parts. For example (3,1) is one partition of 4; so are (1,3) and (2,2) as well as (1,2,1), (1,1,1,1) (1,1,2), etc. There's lots.

Below I write the same Fibonacci sequence as above but substitute numbers above two with their partitions. For example, instead of 5, I could write 3+2 (No rule. It could be 2+3. My choice is arbitrary.) In this example, I only use 1's and 2's.

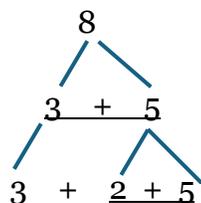
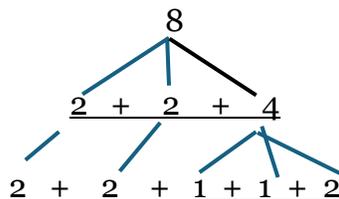
The sequence becomes:

1, 1, 2, 2+1, 2+1+2, 2+1+2+1+2, (2+1+2+1+2)+(2+1+2)

Although bits of the series repeat, it never reduces to a pattern of repetition. I arbitrarily added parenthesis in the last term to attribute a higher level structure to it, 8+5. These grouping structures can be represented by "tree graphs". There are various possibilities of hierarchical (or holarchical) grouping that can be imposed on the series I wrote out with two's and one's.

It is possible to make parallel structures at different levels of the tree.

Here are two tree graphs, both partitioning "8", the one below shows (what I call) a Fibonacci partition, the other above a partition by powers of two (1, 2, 4, 8). One of the features of these patterns I enjoy is their capacity for analogy. Perhaps you can imagine that in each tree below, the pair of underlined strings represent the durations of same tune heard first slowly and then more rapidly:



My Neo-Classicism

Following such a scheme, the last movement of my 1998-2024 string quartet discussed above presents a theme that becomes longer each time it returns. The starting point for me was just a contemplation of numbers, but you certainly hear the consequences quite plainly when you listen to the resulting music, and you can easily relate the consequences to the plan. What I believe you cannot readily hear is whether I followed the pattern strictly or took liberties in realizing it. The question of strictness can lead us into shadowy territories in many styles of composition. In this case, a liberty I did take was to separate the longest sections from each other by inserting some repetitious measures. I trusted in the paradox that by rupturing the formula I could render it more perceptible.



Fibonacci

The structure I have described here was understood to allocate durations, but it is not limited to that. Those numbers might be beats, might be measures, might be time intervals. And the commas in the earlier illustrations might be ignored or translated (for example as additional rests or a percussion punctuation). The smallest numbers might be 2's and 3's instead of 1's and 2's.

There is another possibility that I like: We can go algebraic. Here is the same sequence I wrote out above before the tree diagrams and beneath it an equivalent one, now written with letters instead of numbers -- 'a' instead of 1, and 'b' instead of 2:

1, 1, 2, 2+1, 2+1+2, 2+1+2+1+2, (2+1+2+1+2)+(2+1+2)
a, a, b, b a, b a b, b a b a b, (b a b a b) (b a b)

The letters do not need to represent duration, though they can; a and b might be two motives, two harmonies, two instruments taking turns; two tempos

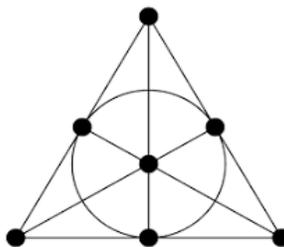
The first of the three little "Fibonacci Tunes" I wrote in memory of Jim Tenney in 2006 is based on that algebraic sequence; the "a" and "b" are melodic figures. The melody of the second Tune deploys pitch intervals which, counted in semitones, correspond with the Fibonacci series from 1 to 55 and which are subdivided (that is partitioned) to support transposition. The bass is an augmented version counting in fourths instead of semitones. The third Tune is a counterpoint opposing Fibonacci partitions of 89 and 144 as a rhythmic counterpoint.

Grouping structure, the subject of James Tenney's book, *Meta+Hodos* is thus thematic for these three pieces. [I will always remember composing them. I sketched most of it on a continuously rainy day sitting in a continuously leaking coach car on the long Amtrak trip from Toronto to Manhattan. It was a chore to keep the papers dry.]

5. FANO LATTICES

Academic music theory research in the second half of the twentieth century was extensively preoccupied with twelve-tone theory, not exclusively and not unproductively. That vein of work never attracted me; it seemed after a while a long tabulation of the properties of the number 12. Not a trivial chore, but I felt no call to participate. On the other hand, I was for a while passionately fascinated by certain properties of 7 and 13, two small Fano numbers and their associated lattices. The Fano numbers are \underline{N} (any integer) plus \underline{N} squared plus one. E.g., if \underline{N} is 3, then $3 + 9 + 1$, or 13. The first Fano numbers are 3, 7, 13, and 21. The series goes on, but my babies are 7 and 13. Seven is better for explaining things because its lattice is only three dimensional; We can smash it flat and represent it on paper. Thirteen, for me, has been more helpful in making music, but its Fano lattice is four-dimensional and perhaps un-visualizable.

My applications here, in the first instance, are to patterns of pitch classes (PC's). Here I have to rely on language I dislike aesthetically. The pitch class A is all the A's, high and low. The pitch class $B\flat$, all the B's, etc. Here is a diagram of the Fano lattice for seven (flattened. In a true three- dimensional model, all the lines are circles.)



There are 7 dots and 7 lines/circles. It's simple to assign a pitch class to each dot. They could be a diatonic scale. Each line combines three dots. Each dot appears on three lines. If I may do it my way, my preferred words for a group of three dots on one line is a "color" or "chord" or "mode"; however, the standard and most precise term is "pitch class set" or "PC set"

I have made some very limited use of the Fano lattice of seven points. But 13 !! I've been more ambitious with that one. Obviously, there is a hole if you want to assign the 12 notes of a tempered scale to a 13-point lattice. That is where the fun and art is. I use a joker or a duplication, and with that, the excessive symmetry of the equal tempered 12-tone scale finds an antidote that will penetrate all the subsequent working out.

My Neo-Classicism

My biggest project sired by my Fano methodologies is a suite for piano (I hope it will appear on the same album with the Sonatas) called *Voice Mail*. The suite is thirteen pieces. To compose it, I first made its 13 colors (or call them pc-sets, or chords or modes if you like) based on the Fano lattice for 13. That means each color combined four PCs, each pair of colors shares one PC, and every PC is associated with four colors. Now somebody who is actually paying attention will ask what I did for the 13th PC. Easy: my first cheat, I took 0, nothing, to be one of the PCs. The empty pitch class. Asymmetry guaranteed. [Its tiresome to write PC; going on, I'll just say note]. The result is 9 four-note colors and 4 three-note. That was the start. Then this first phase got loose. Simply as a matter of personal taste, I actually wanted to work with colors of five PCs, not 4. By hand, not by system, quite arbitrarily, I added one more PC to each color, avoiding duplication except in one case; and on top of that some extra A's. No, I shouldn't say arbitrary; it's by ear, hedonistic. But all of that is merely the first layer. The second layer is strict. I arranged those 13 colors as another Fano lattice to make the thirteen vocabularies of the thirteen pieces. With minimal exceptions, the colors are never transposed, never moved to higher or lower positions like you would do on a guitar with a capo.

Each piece in *Voice Mail* is made from four colors. Every pair of pieces shares one color. Every color turns up in exactly four of the thirteen pieces. One consequence of this structure is that the thirteenth piece can quote all the preceding numbers at their original pitch level. The overall result, if I say so myself, is quite pretty. *Voice Mail* is coherent, unified and very colorful. Some of them strongly suggest a tonality. Each number is composed in a different style or genre, and they progress dramatically. I don't give all the credit to the harmonic system, but it sure helped.

The historical precedent for *Voice Mail* is the 19th century suite for piano of “characteristic” pieces with emphasis on imagination. Imagination here is not “creativity”; it means evoking images, visual and social (like “Child falling asleep”). The opportunity I extracted from my technical system, was to make a suite of short pieces evoking images or genres ranging over a wilder^{4***} range of variety in feeling, structure and manner than my historical precedents. I provide as an illustration, the twelfth number from *Voice Mail*. This one, called *Cover*, is exactly that, a strict cover as you will hear right away if you listen to it, the only number in that form. Again, the pianist is Sherri Jones, who plays it far better than I ever did, and quicker than I ever could.



Cover

CODA

Music is not literally a domain of reason, but if you can hear in my neo-classicism some hint that it arises from preferring reason over unreason, I won't deny you. Style preferences have social and political affiliations. People alert to them in music may find that certain styles become more attractive, or less so, because of a philosophical orientation they perceive in it. Therefore, I feel it's appropriate to say in an essay that has spoken of my own style, that I don't deny its social associations.

The elite styles of late 18th century European instrumental music are in some respects a flowering of the Enlightenment. I accept the connection. I am not entirely ignorant and don't want to be thought entirely ignorant of the powerful criticisms Enlightenment thought has attracted, very dramatically for example in the critical theory of Horkheimer and Adorno: "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant."⁵ I reject their argument that the disasters arising with the Enlightenment are inherent in its principles. They are run-away excesses, not essences. To be sure, much of totalitarian violence in our polity, economy, and culture finds *some* roots in Enlightened rationality, but that's also where our wokeness also has *some* roots. However, this essay doesn't need to explain or defend my views of these matters. The point I felt obliged to register here is that neo-classicism in music, too often felt to be defanged, is not isolated from the fray.

¹ Lydia Goehr, 1992. "The Imaginary Museum of Music Works: an essay in the philosophy of music" New York, Oxford University Press.

² I leave it to you to find equivalent strings with the same properties.

³ In the tradition of Gregorian chant, European modal scales have two forms, "authentic" and "plagal". The scale is conceived as eight notes filling an octave with the principal tone (tonic) as the lowest and highest notes of the authentic form and as a middle note of the plagal form. I think of the "tonal answer" as analogous to a plagal version of an authentic theme. I drew on that analogy for the term, "modal sonata form".

⁴ Autocorrect thinks I mean "wider". Wilder is correct.

⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. 1944. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. 1972 in English as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York, Herder and Herder.

Flags can do nothing without trumpets

for an ambitious small ensemble

duration variable

Christopher DeLaurenti 2019/2020

Intent

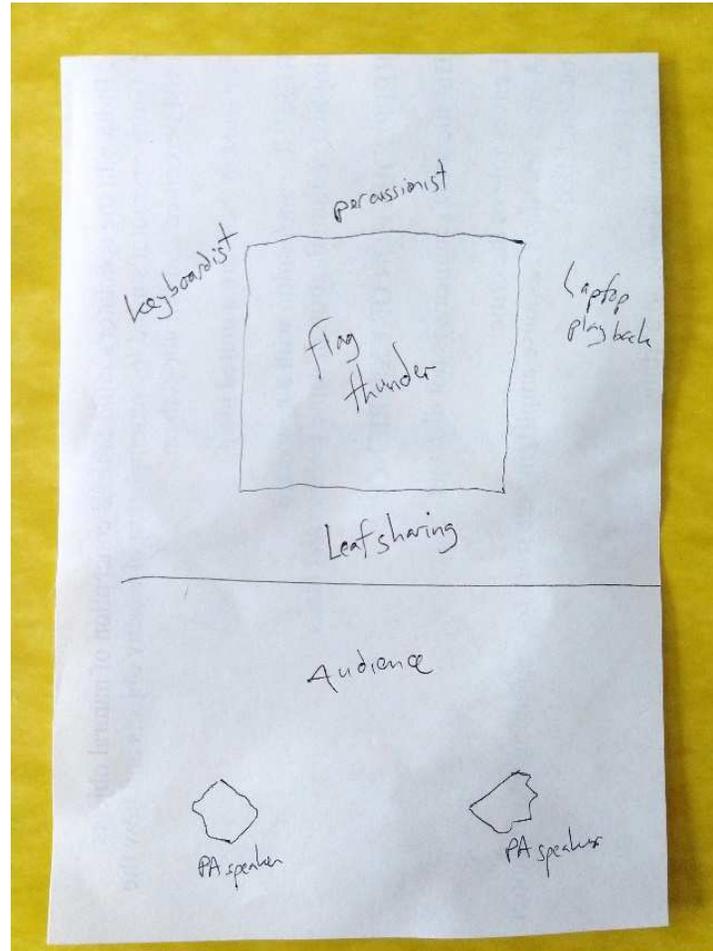
In his 1957 essay “Experimental Music,” John Cage suggested that one direction music might head towards is theatre because “that art more than music resembles nature.” Four decades later, philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari decreed “flags can do nothing without trumpets.”

Music has always included theatrical elements; the initiation music of various tribes worldwide as well as acoustical music relies on the drama of darkness. Although theatrical, *Flags...* does not ask performers to summon or exert charisma far away from their instruments, an often fatal request made by unwitting composers. Instead, the drama of the instruments moving and making sound play a crucial role. Theatrical preparations and elements gently extend the possibilities of performance, creating a framework for mutual listening, performance, and the metaphorical creation of an ad hoc community.

Setting

- Quiet indoor space capable of practical darkness; any outdoor space must have a hard floor or surface (e.g. poured concrete slab) for resonance of the various instruments. A space with hard floors and reflective walls (dance studio, rehearsal room, small theater, etc.) is ideal.
- Tailor the performance to the size of the space.
- Flat or raked stage performance area (audience can sit or stand around):
 - at least 4 feet by 6 feet clear with an open path through the audience
 - hard surface, e.g. wood, tile, concrete (no carpet, no rug, no linoleum: nothing absorptive)
 - safe for optional bare feet
- Lighting can be variable, from house lights and stage lights to desk lamps and flashlights. Ideally, all should have multicolored gels, not just bare white or yellow light unless variations of a limited color palette can be made during the performance. Outdoor performances should occur during sunset.
- Amplification should make the sound present, but never overwhelmingly loud. Some sounds, initially microscopic, will become audible. Hurt no ears.
- Locate reliable electrical power (though may be possible for everything to run on batteries).
- Performers should wear comfortable clothes; any uniformity among garments should be decided collectively by the group. If costumes and a Costumer are available, then the group should consider adding an allegorical layer of meaning through fashion.

Stage Plot



- In an intimate space, it may be possible to place the audience around, within, or under the “flag thunder” square; in this case section **B** should have the sticks rolled along the borders of the square or along an open path through the audience. This open path may be implied or demarcated, ideally with natural materials such as dried leaves.
- Movements on or around the performance area should be rehearsed several times with flashlights.
- Placement and storage of instruments before, during, and after the segments of the score should be plotted and diagrammed by the group for safety and familiarity.
- Because this performance takes place close to or on a floor with live electronics, there should be absolutely no water or flammables nearby. In case of a performance within the audience, performers should scan for beverages held by nearby audience members.

Flags Can Do Nothing Without Trumpets

Instruments

- Flag, either a “grand flag” or several smaller flags, one for each performer
 - Grand flags can be made from a thick white bed sheet or thin blanket spray-painted to resemble a United States of America flag; it can also just say “F L A G” spray painted in giant visible letters in the center. The color of the letters should not be masked by the performance lighting. The size of the grand flag should be smaller than the performance area to accommodate performers at the edges of the flag, unless the audience is seated under the flag thunder square; then the flag must be bigger.

 - Several smaller flags can be purchased or otherwise reclaimed from outdoor boxes at hardware stores, churches, etc. that recycle flags. The retrieval or making of the flag(s) should be recorded; see List of Recordings, below.

- 15 resonant bamboo sticks ranging from approximately 6 to 16 inches in length and 1 to 3 inches wide
 - Optionally, try wood dowels with irregular surfaces or scrap PVC pipe; very dry, mostly cylindrical, tree branches might also work. The sticks should be chosen for a contrasting variety of length, hollowness, and rugged surface.

- Backpack to carry 15 resonant bamboo sticks

- Keyboard or “other melody instruments (saxophone, violin, flute, clarinet, trumpet (see below) etc.)

- Playback device (laptop, phone, tape or cassette deck, etc.) capable of playing prerecord sound files

- 3 sound files; see List of Recordings, below.
 - The performers will need to make several recordings, detailed under “List of Recordings” below. The performers (or, if desired, the composer) will edit this recording into sound files A, B, C.

- Amplified playback system (PA or portable speakers such as guitar amps or small computer speakers)
 - Consider placing the PA system behind or around the audience facing the performance area.

- 2 or 3 large dried leaves (and optionally many smaller dried leaves)
 - The composer can provide these if needed. Smaller dried leaves can be handheld or singly suspended with thread.

- Small 2+ channel audio mixer with phantom power or adequate gain
 - The mixer should deliver phantom power to the condenser or offer suitable gain for the contact mic.

- Contact or condenser microphone
 - The contact microphone can be attached to one of the large dried leaves or mounted on a sensitive, freestanding surface such as wood or thin metal on which the leaf can be dragged, rubbed, folded, etc. Alternately, the dried leaf can be draped over a typical cylindrical condenser microphone resting on its side. The condenser microphone can be old, battered, and inaccurate yet otherwise reliable; preferred microphones include or resemble Audio Technica models AT2020, AT4035, and AT4040.

- Small, short table or tray large enough for the mixer as well as the microphone and dried leaves
 - This should sit a few inches off the ground but not so tall as to hide someone sitting or kneeling behind it. Place bumpers or pads under the legs so it slides quietly if moved.

- Trumpet (or synthetic, demonstrably fake trumpet sound played on the melody instrument)
 - The trumpet need not be a perfect instrument and the music may be played or at least attempted by a beginning trumpeter of any age. In any case, the musician must appear to be deadpan, casual, and poker-faced regardless of any mistakes made. The message resides within any notes delivered not the performer (at least in this instance). This part can also be played on a keyboard instrument with a magisterial piano/organ sound doubled *ad libitum* in fifths and octaves chosen by the keyboardist.

- Small, handheld flashlights
 - One for each performer, perhaps color coded with visible or dark colors contingent on performer preference.

Performance Preparation

1. Gather the Flag(s). Make a field recording of obtaining and fashioning the grand flag or several smaller flags. See “List of Recordings” for details.
2. Get sticks, collect leaves.
3. Collect and prepare sound files.
4. Test leaves and contact or condenser microphone.
5. Decide on trumpet (or keyboard) and select the Anthem, which should be well-known verses and/or choruses of a well-known patriotic song germane to the country of the performance, performers, and audience.
6. Rehearse.

List of Recordings

A – Record the retrieval or making the flag(s) with a handheld recording device (running wireless lavalier microphones attached to every participant is also welcome but complicated). The recording should include casual dialogue; site specific sounds; and spontaneous expressions of unease, doubt, planning, and excitement.

More than one person can make recordings, but keep in mind that more recordings obligate more listening, editing, and selection. The recording will not and should not sound real; it will likely sound somewhat recessed and remote. Make sure to edit out any proper names, including those of the performers. The resulting sound file should seem continuous with no obvious gaps or truncations.

The length of this recording should allow enough time for performers to take their places in section **A** and continue listening intently, most likely 4 to 6 minutes. From this recording, three moments or sections should be located and copied to sound file C.

B – Record the rolling of sticks as performed in section **B** Sticks Interstitial. Use this recording only if a live performance of section **B** is impractical.

C – Three pertinent sections of Recording **A** crossfaded elegantly and/or bracketed by silence. “Pertinent” entails telling phrases, interesting sounds, or ambiance. The sound file should loop.

Structure

A – Field Recording Overture and Leaf Sharing

B – Sticks Interstitial

C – Playback of an Anthem

D – Flag Thunder with optional trumpeter

E – Sticks with optional concluding Chorale

Flags Can Do Nothing Without Trumpets

Performance

Flags... should begin in practical darkness; the lack of (or waning) light should be dramatic or at least somewhat mysterious yet not so dark that the performers struggle to find their places in the performance area. The Flag should be spread out in the square labelled “flag thunder” in the stage plot above.

A – Field Recording Overture and Leaf Sharing

Amid the darkness what is heard first are the performers quietly taking their places while Recording A plays; the recording should not be triggered visibly or with any drama. It should fade in—perhaps slowly—as if it had always been present.

Recording A will likely be somewhat rough and noisy; this will blend with any of the usual missteps or fiddling about before the performance. Three selected moments of A will be heard during section C.

The short, small table and tray should be brought out during this time by the leaf performer and situated near the edge of the performance area as indicated in the stage plot.

Once in place, the performers should listen intently to the recording (which may need to loop) and convey to the audience that what is being heard—sounding right now—is worth listening to.

It should be much less dark, gradually; if performed outdoors, handheld or projected lights should increase subtly.

If the lighting proves problematic, one or two available performers should hunch behind or sit alongside the leaf performer and use their flashlights for illumination.

Before Recording A concludes, the leaf performer should begin quietly stroking a leaf near or against the contact or condenser microphone. This should be a seamless crossfade.

This exploration of texture and timbre should proceed slowly. During rehearsals two or three surprising, elegant, and perhaps beautiful sounds should have been discovered. Save at least two of those for the end. Following the text below, this guided improvisation should be anywhere from 2 to 5 minutes, ending with a beautiful sound familiar to you and to your fellow performers.

Listen to the leaves.

Make a series of sounds that do not injure the silence.

You may need to ask the leaves to help you conjure silence, to beckon everyone to listen.

When you are uncertain what to do next, or if you feel fearful (perfectly natural, how often do you improvise with dried leaves?), then wait: Plan to make three sounds.

When you utterly believe you should make a sound wait 2, 4 or 5 seconds, then make that sound. Disrupt your own rhythm to find a new tempo. Do this at least twice.

Christopher DeLaurenti

A – Field Recording Overture and Leaf Sharing (continued)

Optional action: If you have small leaves, other available performers should go into or among the audience and hold a two or more threaded dried leaves and place the leaves in contact with each other close to the listener's ear. This should be done slowly, kindly, wordlessly. Leave the small leaf with the audience member.

Other optional action: Give one small dried leaf to an audience member, then the performer places a suspended, threaded leaf in contact with the audience member's leaf. Similarly, this should be done slowly, kindly, wordlessly. Leave the small leaf with the audience member.

n.b. These optional actions might not be practical with a large audience >20 or in a space with noisy floor or if the audience is crammed too close together.

Performers should feel free to use flashlights (possibly with custom-cut gels) for their own safety and to create atmosphere, for example, shining them on the leaf performer.

Return to your positions.

Performers will be cued by the last beautiful sound heard and agreed upon in rehearsal.

Another performer will then beat two of the bamboo rods together slowly as the leaf performer gathers up the small short table or tray and places it outside the performance area.

The percussion soloist should move into position for B Sticks Interstitial while the leaf performer moves; they will likely rotate the same direction to avoid running into each other.

If this takes a long time due to the density of the audience or other factors, say more than a minute, another performer should join the leaf performer with a timbrally contrasting pair of sticks (e.g. sounds lower or higher) and are beaten at a different, much slower tempo.

B – Sticks Interstitial

Percussion solo. Once everyone is back in place and the leaf performer's short small table or tray removed there should be an open performance area parallel to the edge of the performance area.

The percussionist should hold one stick horizontally and let it roll from the fingers so it rolls a fair distance—at least several feet—along the floor, from stage right to stage left. This should be done a few more more times for a total of 6 to 10 rolls.

Not all sticks should roll the same distance, nor should it seem like a game. The soundscape should be quiet enough—near silence, ideally—for the performers and audience to hear each plink, bounce, thud, and roll of each stick.

The rolls should be timed at irregular, dramatic intervals.

If a live performance of this section is impractical, use Recording **B**.

Make sure the backpack is close by.

Flags Can Do Nothing Without Trumpets

C - Playback of an Anthem

Performers who play the pre-selected anthem should do so in tandem with Recording C.

Others should collect the sticks into the backpack during (not before or after) this section.

D - Flag Thunder with optional trumpeter

All of the performers move deliberately (optionally in time as if bearing a casket) with the grand flag or a series of flags, taking care to be somewhat quiet.

With a grand flag – spread to corners of the performance area so flag can be stretched out. If the grand flag has F L A G spray-painted on it, tilt and/or elevate the flag so the letters are visible. Everyone should take a step towards the center.

Optionally, with individual flags, performers should spread around the stage and begin shaking their flags to make waves of booming sound.

In either case, begin shaking the flag so it makes waves of booming sound, first from:

ppp to *fff*

Then suddenly stop, pulling the flag (but not so tight that someone loses their grip).

ppp to *as quiet as possible*

The anthem playback should be timed and triggered to begin after a meaningful, perhaps overlong or awkward, moment of silence.

[In case of a live trumpeter, this performer should sound *first* then enter from offstage or from where the audience originally entered.]

Then the final flag thunder, which should begin with a loud snap and then shaking:

fff to *ppp*

The flag(s) should then be released and allowed to drift to the ground.

Note that the duration of this section is also unspecified and should be suited to performer ability, overall length of the performance, and sense of drama acquired in rehearsal.

If a substantial PA is available, the flag thunder can be accompanied by an amplification using the microphone (and another microphone, if available and desired) used in leaf sharing.

Christopher DeLaurenti

E – Sticks with optional concluding Chorale

Collective percussion section. One performer who has the backpack passes sticks out to the other performers.

Gently beating somewhat arhythmically, the performers clear a single file path through and towards behind (or if space dictates the middle of) the audience to an empty area.

With backs facing the performance area, the performers then take turns rolling one or two or three sticks, holding one horizontally and letting it roll from the fingers so it rolls to the empty area—along the floor.

As in the Sticks Interstitial, not all sticks should roll the same distance, nor should it seem like a game.

One performer rolls their sticks and then backs up a few feet. Then another performer rolls their sticks.

This process is repeated until all of the performers have backed their way (look out for each other, use flashlights if desired) to the performance area.

The rolls should be timed at irregular, dramatic intervals. There should be brief but meaningful silences between each performer and each roll of the stick.

The soundscape should be quiet enough—near silence, ideally—for the performers and audience to hear each plink, bounce, thud, and roll of each stick.

Optional concluding Chorale: The performers sing the last and first verses of “The Streets of Laredo” at a tempo that accompanies their return to the performance area:

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly,
And bitterly wept as we bore him along,
For we loved our comrade, so brave, young and handsome,
We all loved our comrade, although he'd done wrong.

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo
As I walked out in Laredo one day,
I spied a poor cowboy, all wrapped in white linen
All wrapped in white linen and cold as the clay.

Lines may be interspersed or stopped between stick rolls. Singing the last line “as cold as the clay” in a monotone is recommended.

— END —

Speaking of Meaning: Electroacoustic Music of Electrowave 2024 or Dialogue between Ibn Sina & Ibn Rusd on Musical Being

Jon Forshee

Walking at low speed down a leafy sidewalk with a white-stone building on one side and trees on the other, Ibn Sina takes a sharp right around the building, nearly colliding with Ibn Rushid:

Ibn Sina: Well, is that *you*, here again? Amazing: How does this keep happening?

Ibn Rushid: I was about to ask the same! So glad you made it, and gladder still to run into you. What has brought you to the Rocky Mountain Front Range?

Ibn Sina: When was the last time we were together...ten years? Since then it seems we have both found our way from sea-levels to mountain levels, and none the worse for it! Elevated, for sure.

(Looks around, up)

Anyway, I'm here for the electronic music festival, *Electrowave*...have you -

Ibn Rushid: Why me too! That's exactly why I'm here. *Electrowave*, the Rocky Mountain Electronic Music Festival (*chuckles*), absolutely. Forshee again, right? Hosted right here at the beautiful University of Colorado Colorado Springs...

(looks left, steps aside for passer-by)

Did you catch yesterday's opening mod synth concert? The Colorado modular synth society program? (*flicks tongue inside cheek*). I had no idea some of those sounds were possible – and controllable! – in real time no less. Impressive...

Ibn Sina: For sure. And many people don't have the opportunity to experience music made like that – each performer with their eurorack or, you know, whatever setup – each performer curates their music-making environment around their own practices and habits and workflows. And a program like yesterday's, with a lineup of eight performers, each with their tailored ecosystem of gear and controllers – it's also like a sculpture gallery of sound-producing circuits and systems...

Ibn Rushid: Some performers really highlight this with the LED lighting strips they include taped on their rigs...this brings out the sculptural side of things even more...

Ibn Sina: Oh yeah. Even the carrying cases for these synths can make a statement. I saw many that looked like a vintage suitcase, and when you opened it, voila! a synth rack with modules, even with patch cables already in place! It's as though this innocuous accoutrement of the Modern, middle-class traveler has been co-opted by an underground, clandestine class of mobile musicians and performers...with many performing under a kind of code-name, too, as you may have noticed.

Ibn Rushid: Yes. This is a musical practice of subversion and transformation, which is one of the things that invite such immediate engagement with it. For me, anyhow...did you ever work with modular synths?

Jon Forshee

Ibn Sina: Indeed I have – in fact, your favorite, Radigue’s ARP2600 was an important early synth in my world. Very cool, though I could not find it as fruitful for as long as Radigue has...

Ibn Rushid: Yeah, ha ha (*absently jingles keys in pocket*), one could easily spend a fortune on some of these synths...but you know, there might be a broader issue to consider here too. I mean, these instruments are pinnacles of human imagining, true feats of engineering. But I sensed an additional kind of excitement behind the performances today...these laptops, mod synths, and artisanal electronic instruments offer an *interface*, being a way in which, and through which, one interacts with their own, on-the-spot creative powers. Or is this saying too much?

Ibn Sina: Hey, my friend – I’ve always liked how seriously you take these matters!

Ibn Rushid: As you yourself have said, it’s only *fun* once we take it *seriously*...

Ibn Sina: True...and I’ll get you for that barb!...but for sure, in so much as anything around us might constitute an interface for, or an intermediary between an inner wish and a potential reality, then sure there is this dynamic to these instruments, to any instruments, and the potential realities they are able to engage....

Ibn Rushid: (*slightly flexes, unflexes left calf*)

Wait, what inner *wishing* is going on here? And you say *I* take these things seriously!

Ibn Sina: An inner *wish*, yes, you know, might be a desire, perhaps a desire mixed with hopefulness.

Ibn Rushid: A prayer? (*pops right index finger*)

Ibn Sina: More like, a desire for *being*, or a desire *to be*, regardless of what activities or psychic energies or what discourse constitutes that being. The potential reality here is the realization, actual or psychological, of this *wish*, of the *being* of this wish...you know, I pick up a horn, and I don’t want to just eke out a thin little sound... I want to produce that music which I know horns to play, that music which those musicians I admire play, and so on. A lot is going on here, and my wish, the energy devoted to *coming to know* music though the horn is all of a piece...I remind us again that we know a thing in terms of how we interact with it.

Ibn Rushid: We know a *person* in terms of how we interact with *them*. An interesting distinction here, then, between the many things, or *realities* as you put it, between the many realities musicians expect from their interactions with these sound-producing instruments.

Ibn Sina: For sure! the fact that Music, and our musical imaginations can accommodate so many diverse concepts and imaginings around the *being* of Music and music-making activity is precisely one of those dimensions of musical engagement we continue to find so alluring...

Ibn Rushid: Indeed! But again we are far afield...I mean, your take here seems quite innocuous, but if engagement with an interface, and on any interface, why are we not all only playing the most

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conventional of music instruments? I mean, we just walked out of the Electrowave Festival concert, featuring more than several families of electronic instruments...why aren't you at the string quartet concert across town?

Ibn Sina: But the answer is embedded within precisely what I suggest: the very existence of these sound-producing musical interfaces, in all their diversity and modes of interaction, is the realization of a wish, even of a particularly unique *wish*. A wish not only to make the music such combinations of circuits and voltage can make, and are known to make, but additionally the *wish* to enact the music capable by the interface, to *be* the progenitor of the music for which this instrument has capabilities. In a way this is a wish to identify with the instrument, with the assembly of the instrument, the history of it, with the whole thing.

Ibn Rushid: Agreed – and I'll restate for by the word *instrument* I can understand not just the physical, sound-producing guitar, violin or marimba, but the ecosystem of practices and traditions around any instrument...

Ibn Sina: ...and why not? It could be that this perspective is helpful in disclosing a measure of the meaning around electroacoustic music. Since, I take it this is what we are really after in our discussion...

Ibn Rushid: ...the *meaning* around electroacoustic music?

Ibn Sina: Sure...*meaning*. I suppose a question I would like to ask would be: is there a significance around the practices of electroacoustic music, and is this significance significantly distinct from that of any other musical practice? As in, non-electronic music, you understand...

Ibn Rushid: Well, yes, judging from the detailed languages around these practices, I should say the significance is quite distinct from other music-making activities.

Ibn Sina: How do you mean? (*shifts weight from left to right leg*)

Ibn Rushid: Just consider the modular synth setups we saw: each euro-rack-style setup, including the specific modules selected, intimately reflects the needs, desires and aesthetic imaginations of the performer. Part of this seems logistical, since one can only travel with so many modules at a time, of course. Which means the selection of each module must be strategic and intentional. But more than this, these oscillators, VCOs, filters, granulators, reverbs chaos generators, sequencers, delays and so many more, each enable some aspect of the performance *wish*, as you have put it. Some of these, like your standard-issue oscillator, show up frequently, as you might expect; but most of the rack setups we saw today housed artisanal, boutique-level modules, highly specific to the performance needs of that musician...

And you know my friend, I've observed that the descriptive languages around these physical rack setups convey a deep intimacy with the gear and the signal flow through it all...the language of love, as you've put it before, wherein one can describe the subtlest details with care and precision...

Ibn Sina: I remember, like a new baby: she has her auntie's cheeks, her mother's nose...I love it!

Ibn Rushid: Yeah! The compositional process itself embraces and reinforces these languages, too. Except for a very few compositions this weekend, most works seemed to unfold in an architectonic way, as a complicated layering and melding of textures, rhythmic gestures, and pulses. This is not to say these works are always built from the ground up, you know, from 'bottom to top', though the dance-oriented works can certainly work in this way. But what I heard was an overall practice of accretion, of gathering and dispersal, and even of destruction and transformation... were you there for the piece by the performer MPW that started with a sample of a man cursing on the street, just seething with anger? Then the composer uses this sample as source material which he disassembles and then reconstitutes as a wall of mind-bending noise...

Ibn Sina: Of course – that was striking and, in the context of some of the other works, was quite unexpected...

Ibn Rushid: Indeed! The process of accretion and gathering was taken to an extreme in that composition...in fact, not only were sonic elements gathered from the source material, but the very palpable anger of the man on the recording is transferred into the final wall of noise which assaults the audience in a more subtle way than the original recording could. That this transformation was executed in real-time suggests a deep engagement with this rack-based, modular process...

Ibn Sina: The performance practice itself engages a significance for the performer that, by necessity *must* be unique...unique in that the performer themselves had to create it for themselves. The very low degree of *object agency* in these mod synths does not create an accommodating music-making environment for many beginners. One is presented with a metal box with patch points for inputs and outputs, and a bunch of knobs...I remember feeling wonderfully baffled the first time I worked with one of these...and this means that there is no template or recipe for making music with these instruments, and everyone has to figure it out for themselves. In the engagement of experiment and discovery which is a part of this process, a part of figuring out this instrument for oneself, decisions come to be made about what sounds are wanted, what sounds are allowed, and what sounds do not work...and of course these decisions become reflected in the modules we see in any given rack. But in that process of selection and discovery, it would seem one is doing nothing less than defining Music for themselves. At least, what Music can be with this instrument, for themselves.

Ibn Rushid: A highly personal process, and a highly personal statement of what Music *can be* for us...

Ibn Sina: And, pertinent to the practices around electroacoustic music and all these modsynths, a highly personal statement of what Music is or can be with the tools at hand. With *those* instruments at hand. For someone who wishes to make Music - genuine, honest Music - this observation around electroacoustic music would surely be very significant.

Ibn Rushid: There's some good evidence for this, perhaps... for example, putting myself in another's shoes...when I'm at home playing a keyboard, I am necessarily guided by the environment and the physical properties of the keyboard. If I were playing my mobile eurorack setup, however, I would feel like I'm not only playing an instrument, but an instrument I have designed to create specific musical

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opportunities and enablements which I have come to associate with my definition, verbally articulated or not, of Music.

Ibn Sina: Since the nature of this engagement is so particular to the instruments themselves, this would seem to be a distinguishing significance of electroacoustic music practices...different from, say, the practices around the trumpet, or violin. Would you agree?

Ibn Rushid: OK, well, that still seems equivalent to saying that each music instrument, or music-making situation has its own performance practice and accompanying conventions, traditions, and so on...

Ibn Sina: Yet that's just what I'm saying: any of these modsynth racks are so specific as to have no tradition, in the traditional sense. Perhaps the most we can assert is that modsynths in general engender a modular approach to composing, and so it is no surprise that no two modsynths are the same. This modularity alone distinguishes it from other instruments...

Ibn Rushid: I can agree with that.

So the significance of these practices is that musicians can create their own, highly responsive music-making environments in a way which other instruments do not accommodate. Is that the gist of it?

Ibn Sina: Are you content with that?

Ibn Rushid: It seems reasonable enough...I mean, we are each drawn to the specific potentialities of the instruments we play; I might add, instruments we play to the exclusion of other instruments, too. And if the ad hoc *reconfigurability* of the instrument is a potentiality which we find inspiring, then this is surely important, as this potentiality enables the *wish* for freedom...freedom to engineer the environment, freedom from gate-keeping traditions, as some people perceive *Classical* music to be, and so on...

Ibn Sina: I should say so.

Ibn Rushid: ...but perhaps there is something more?

Ibn Sina: So glad you asked! I think there is in fact something more here beyond the physical attributes and accompanying potentialities.

But, importantly we might agree that these physical properties...we might call these collectively the *facticity* of this particular practice, are the outstandingly singular features of electroacoustic live practices. And here is where we might swing back to something you mentioned earlier, about your definition of Music being evident whether it was verbally articulated or not...my ears pricked up at this, since there is much that is not *verbally* articulated in life, and in Art, and especially in Music...

Ibn Rushid: How do you mean? There is much that is unsaid about Music?

Ibn Sina: No. What I am saying is there is much, very much, that is not sayable at all about Music. In fact, it is possible that the *most* interesting things we experience while listening to and performing Music are experiences that can not be captured by any linguistic or verbal formulation...

Ibn Rushid: Ah ha! Because they are *musical* experiences. Again I recall Benjamin Boretz – *If I am a Musical Thinker* –

Ibn Sina: Exactly. And this is the crux of our matter, perhaps,

Ibn Rushid: That...?

Ibn Sina: That, for all the significance of the facticity of electroacoustic music practice, and the deep significance for each musician of the singular configurations of their instruments and of their music-making environments... *for all that*, the true meaning of electroacoustic music performance is a meaning that is utterly musical. A musical meaning, and perhaps a meaning that is never at a standstill. A musical meaning increases with each musical utterance, with each performance. Every time a musical composition is performed, whether it's a through-composed work or an improvisation, musical meaning increases in both the world and for the individual musician. It's an increase of musical meaning all around!

We agreed that our musical instruments and environments can be carefully tailored to address and accommodate what we also called our *wish*, our inner desire for *being*, our desire *to be*. The *being* we are speaking about is musical being, or even better, music-being. We are not discussing *being* which is somehow *musical*, as though *musical* were one of many categories of significance by which *being* may be described, or something. Music-being is *being* disclosed by the collective behaviors of Music. Music as a verb, see? Or Music as Musicking. Music as pre-verbal, ultra-verbal, sub-verbal and non-verbal thought. Music-being as Being-musical. Can this possibly make sense?

Ibn Rushid: I hear the Music of your insight here, and hum along with this fanciful logic.

Ibn Sina: Music-logic, then – and we might distinguish this *being*, this *meaning* and this *logic* from the being, meaning and logic of other disciplines, of other *verbal* disciplines, don't you think?

Ibn Rushid: Nothing would gratify me more than to exult electroacoustic music, and the music of festivals like *Electrowave* to such new musical heights! Do you have time for a quick repast before the next concert? We can continue our discussion, er, our verbal music together before our next listen!

Ibn Sina: Splendid – let's see what they have nearby...

Ibn Rushid: All this musicking talk arouses an appetite! Glad you're up for it... Oh, how about music and Music-meaning of interactive installations? Did you see the virtual drum machine by Yvonne Wu...? What can we make of such immersive experiences, and the accompanying sonic meanings created by them...? I was just thinking... (*walks ahead of Ibn Sina, gesturing to the air with his right hand...*)



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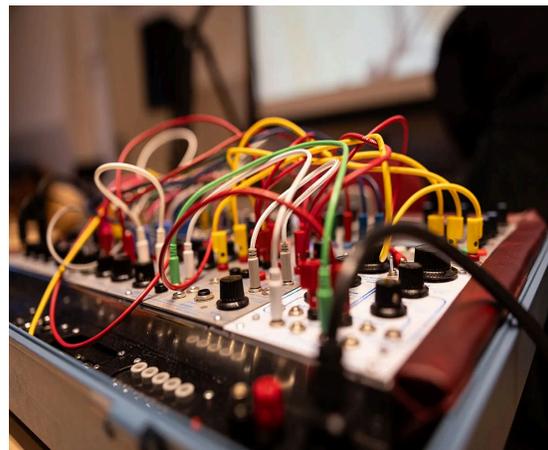
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Remembering Jacques-Louis Monod (1927-2020)

Fred Lerdahl

The recent death of Jacques-Louis Monod marks the passing of the generation of great modernist musicians who emerged after World War II. I knew and admired Jacques for almost half a century (though I was never his student or collaborator).

Jacques grew up near Paris in a distinguished family that included his cousin, the biologist and Nobel laureate Jacques Lucien Monod. A musical prodigy, he studied briefly with Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire. He told me he did not care for Messiaen's aesthetic but was awed by the older composer's musicianship. After the war, he found his true mentor in the composer and conductor René Leibowitz, who spearheaded the new avant-garde's interest in 12-tone music. Leibowitz's influence in France was sabotaged by Pierre Boulez, Jacques' fellow student, in a struggle over control of the postwar avant-garde. Jacques never forgave Boulez for this, and in 1951, at the age of 24, he followed Leibowitz to America to pursue there his career as composer, performer, and new-music advocate. Soon he met Milton Babbitt and encountered America's very different version of serialism. Setting aside his aspirations as a composer, he focused on performing music of the Schoenberg school and its American advocates. Through Babbitt he met the soprano Bethany Beardslee, with whom he toured as a soprano-piano duo, giving American and world premieres of music by Webern and Babbitt. His growing reputation as a conductor brought him to London in the 1960s to conduct at the BBC Third Programme, where his brilliant performances of contemporary music became legendary. In the 1970s he returned to the United States to devote himself to composition. He now avoided performing except on rare occasions. He taught theory and composition at Queens College, and then at Columbia University, and he also served as editor for the publisher Boelke-Bomart, where he promoted music not only of his contemporaries but also of the younger generation. It was in this capacity that I first knew him. In 1975 he left Boelke-Bomart to establish both his own publishing entity, the Association for the Promotion of New Music (APNM), and the associated Guild of Composers, a new-music performing organization that gave many superb concerts. In his last years he returned to France.

Remembering Jacques-Louis Monod

The artistic center of Jacques' life was the Schoenberg school and, through it, the polyphonic tradition of Western music. He saw music history as a linear trajectory. Once he said to me that *Le sacre du printemps* is a bad piece of music: its reliance on overlaid ostinati and sequential ballet numbers is too primitive to take seriously; *Pierrot Lunaire*, by contrast, is a consummate work of art, a polyphonic treasure that brought music to its next historical stage.

I crossed paths with Jacques too late to witness his conducting except for two fantastic performances: one of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, and the other of his *Septet-Suite*, op. 29. I have never heard a better *Pierrot*, and the performance of the *Septet-Suite* — a piece I had previously found rather unappealing — was a revelation. Every detail was balanced and transparent. Most remarkable were the beautiful phrasing and the clear projection, through subtle tempo variations, of the musical discourse from one phrase to the next. Like Boulez, his conducting motions were crisp and efficient; but unlike Boulez's hatchet gestures, his were rounded, graceful, and expressive, as if in an intimate dance with the performers. It is a cultural tragedy that, with few exceptions, the only remaining traces of his conducting are internet links to inadequately recorded live performances from concerts in London and New York.

His departure from the podium was a huge loss to contemporary music. I asked him why he chose this path, and he gave two answers. First, he was now focused on composition, and conducting was a distraction. Second and perhaps more tellingly, he found conducting too frustrating because performing conditions were far from ideal, in particular because there could never be enough rehearsals. Indeed, he was famous for demanding an impractical amount of rehearsal time. All his life he was a perfectionist. Producers and performers put up with his demands out of respect for his great musicianship and high standards. But in the end there were always imperfections, and for him the effort was no longer worth it.

The pursuit of perfection also shaped his composing. He felt that to write anything less than a masterpiece was pointless. If Schoenberg was his compositional lodestar, it was the spare and crystalline perfections of Webern's late music that most influenced him. He sought to compose music shorn of ornament, and in which each note had a clear and necessary function. After years of neglecting composition, in the 1970s he created his signature pieces, the series of chamber

Fred Lerdahl

works entitled *Cantus contra Cantum*. The title is revealing, for his overriding commitment was to pure counterpoint. These pieces range from the austere *Cantus contra Cantum II* for violin and cello, to the textless *Cantus contra Cantum III* for a cappella chorus, to the more elaborate vocal-ensemble works *Cantus contra Cantum I* and *IV*. The overall tone of the series is severe yet expressive, and it evokes the timeless quality of sacred motets from the early Renaissance.

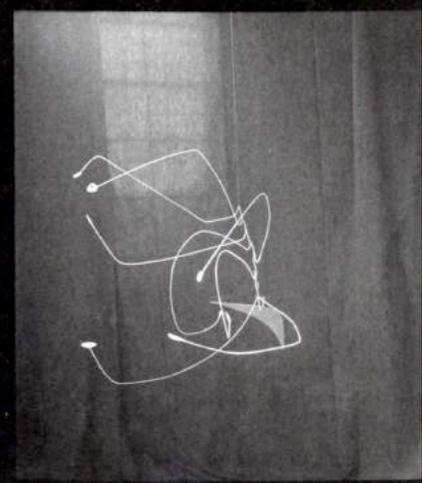
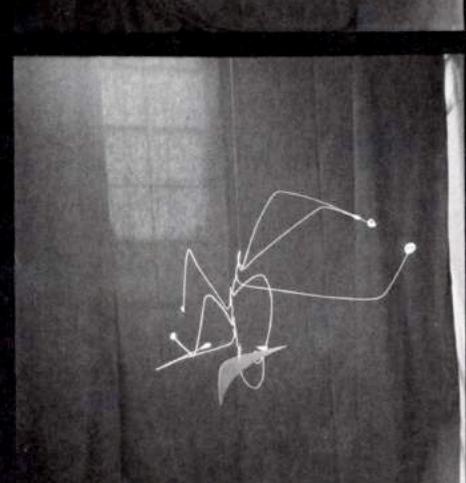
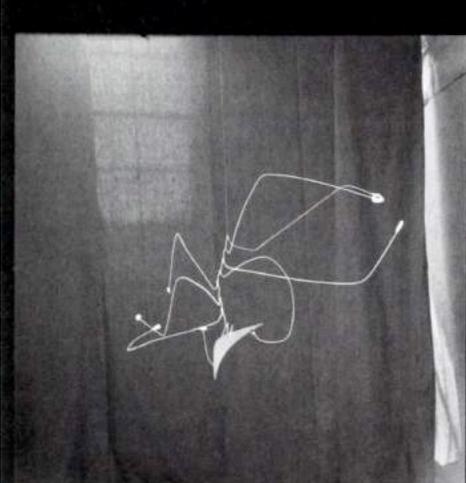
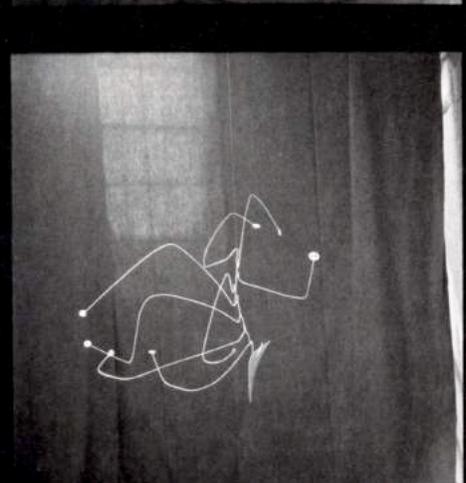
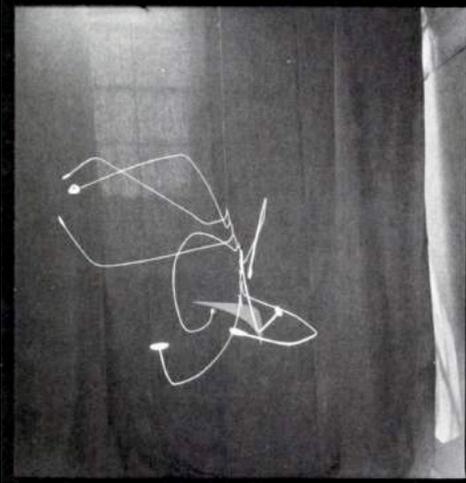
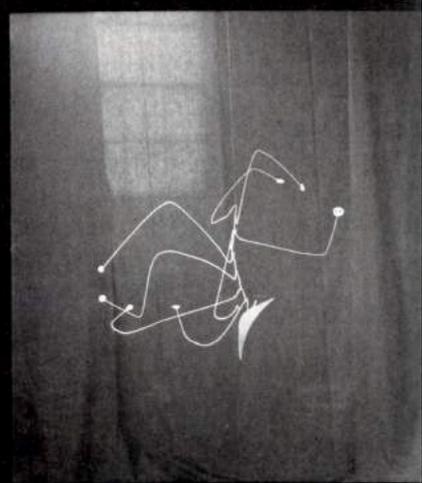
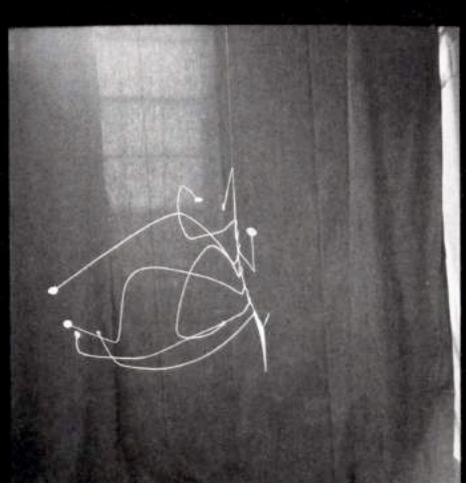
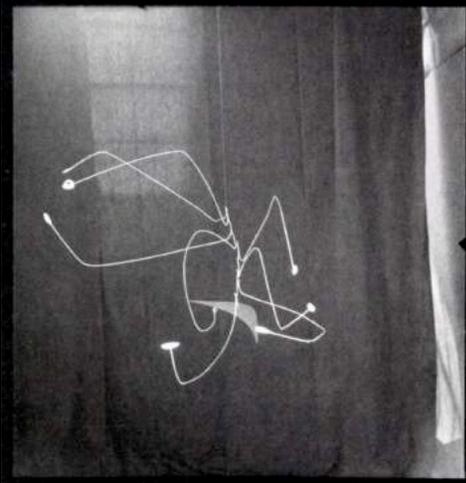
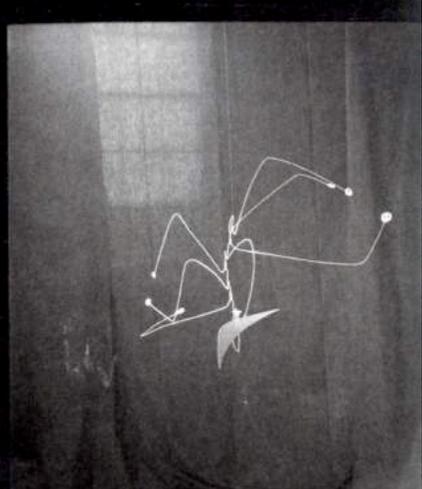
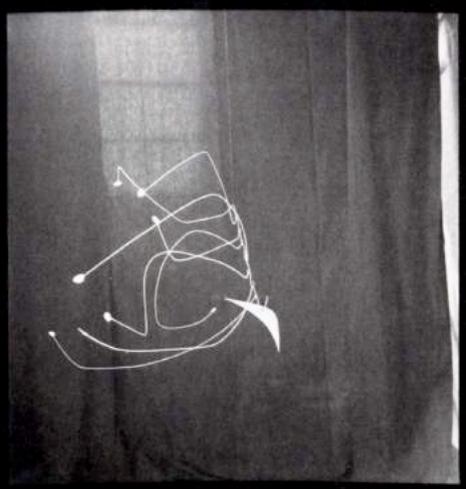
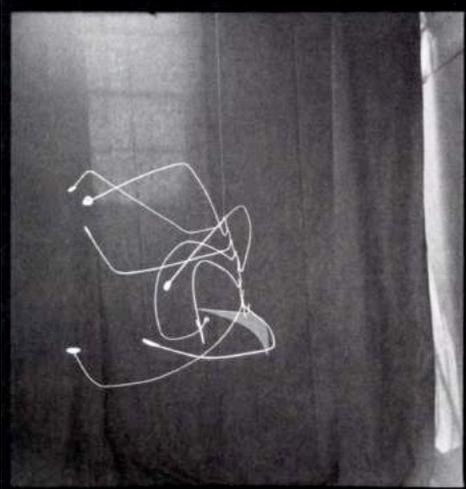
Jacques' interest in music theory extended beyond pedagogical and analytical purposes to the search for a foundation for composition. Once he spoke to me of his wish to develop a theory of counterpoint for contemporary compositional practice along the lines of what Zarlino did for Renaissance polyphony. Undoubtedly he felt pressure from the examples of the compositional systems of Babbitt and George Perle, but their formal preoccupations were foreign to him. Perhaps his unachieved goal of a comprehensive compositional method contributed to his small output. After 1980 he effectively stopped composing. We must be grateful for what there is.

In late 2010 or early 2011, Jacques attended a reception in honor of his (and my) Columbia colleague Jack Beeson, who had died not long before. Erik Lundborg, the current president of APNM, took a photo of Jacques and me. It is the only one I have of the two of us. I wish the frontal view were of him instead of me, but the photo does capture something of our relationship. He is telling a story with gusto, no doubt punctuated by his acerbic wit, and I am listening with pleasure and affection.

December 1, 2020



Jacques-Louis Monod (1927 - 2020)



Gryphon Rue

Calder and Sound



"Noise is another whole dimension."

Alexander Calder¹

A mobile carves its habitat. Alternately seductive, stealthy, ostentatious, it dilates and retracts, eternally redefining space. A *noise*-mobile produces harmonic wakes – metallic collisions punctuating visual rhythms.² For Alexander Calder, silence is not merely the absence of sound – silence generates anticipation, a bedrock feature of musical experience. The cessation of sound suggests the outline of a melody.³

A new narrative of Calder's relationship to sound is essential to a rigorous portrayal and a greater comprehension of his genius. In the scope of Calder's immense oeuvre (thousands of sculptures, more than 22,000 documented works in all media), I have identified nearly four dozen intentionally sound-producing mobiles.⁴ Calder's first employment of sound can be traced to the late 1920s with *Cirque Calder* (1926–31), an event rife with extemporised noises, bells, harmonicas and cymbals.⁵ His incorporation of gongs into his sculpture followed, beginning in the early 1930s and continuing through the mid-1970s. Nowadays preservation and monetary value mandate that exhibitions of Calder's work be in static, controlled environments. Without a historical imagination, it is easy to disregard the sound component as a mere appendage to the striking visual mien of mobiles. As an additional obstacle, our contemporary consciousness is clogged with bric-a-brac associations, such as wind chimes and baby crib bibelots.

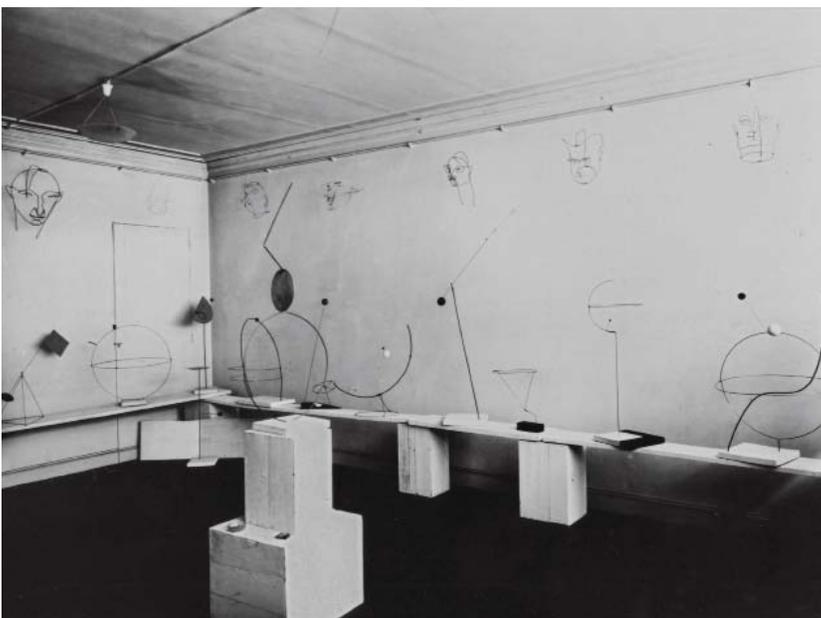
As if sequestered from this trail of mainstream bastardisations, the element of sound in certain works remains ulterior. At first glance, the musical dimension of *Untitled* (ca. 1934, cf. Works section, fig. 14) is uncertain. The mobile, repurposed pieces of pipe and a wooden ball, is too big to fit inside its iron hoop. Set in motion, it strikes the hoop – *Dwong!* – and stolidly adjusts itself with knocks and pings.

¹ Eric Schaal, Calder in his Roxbury studio with *The Gong* (ca. 1933) and *Untitled* (ca. 1940, cf. Works section, fig. 41), 1944

The fickleness of the collisions is frustrating – they come when one least expects them to, or not at all, generating another kind of noise: the internal babble of our (re)adjustments. *Untitled* (1936, cf. Works section, fig. 30) contains a vertical wire threaded through its squashed coronet, trailing down to a white wooden ball that dangles suspiciously in the immediate neighbourhood of the black base, ready to bump against, kiss or whack it. *13 Spines* (1940, cf. Works section, fig. 37) also produces noise *en passant*. One can picture Calder in his studio gathering the rods of this mobile together in his hand and then releasing his grip, provoking the chine-like cascade to collide jangling.

He worked without assistants and in complete silence, apart from the frequent sounds of clanging metal brought about by gusts of air; the many sculptures adrift in the rafters of his studio created an anarchic foliage. Like a clock wiped clean of its face, *The Gong* (ca. 1933) loomed overhead from Calder's procurement of his Roxbury studio in 1938 until his death in 1976 (fig. 1). Jean-Paul Sartre describes his encounter with the anthropomorphic work: "I once saw a beater and gong hanging very high up in his studio. At the slightest draught of air, the beater went after the rotating gong. It would draw back to strike, lash out at the gong and then, like a clumsy hand, miss. And just when you were least expecting it, it would come straight at it and strike it in the middle with a terrible noise."⁶ André Masson depicts *The Gong's* totemic quality in his poem "The Studio of Alexander Calder":

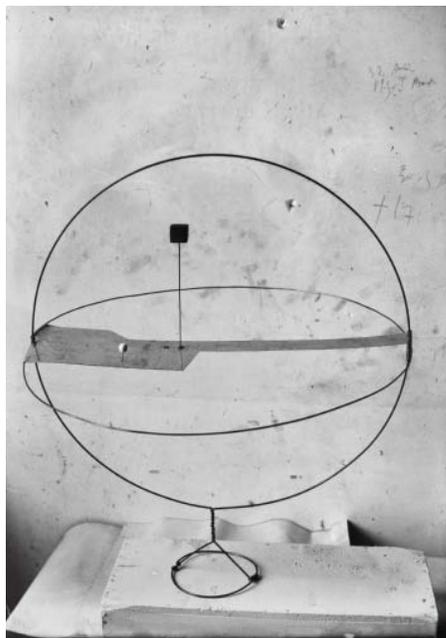
Hung from the studio's rafters,
 in the streaks of light a gong sensitive to the caprices
 of air is struck only with the greatest caution
 With the step of a dove it rings: what hour does it sound?
 This is the hour of bustling centipedes
 It is also the hour of the child with cherries.
 Here the seconds lack the weight of the clock
 they do not rest in the grass
 they cannot conceive of immobility
 they love the rustling of reeds
 and the cry of the tree frog who breathes music
 they play between your fingers, Calder, my friend.⁷



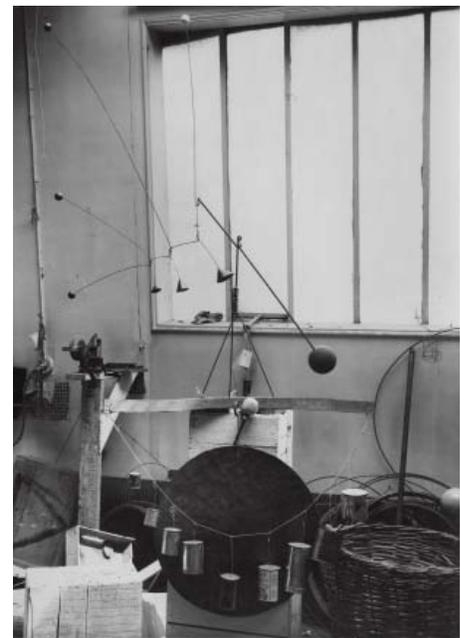
Masson's poem reveals the dimension of time peculiar to noise-mobile compositions, integrative constructions made possible by the spectator's projection of linear time; patterns of sound/silence create compositions cobbled from memory snapshots, with beginnings and endings given arbitrary placements.⁸

Calder's incorporation of sound indicates his receptivity to accidental phenomena in his working environment. More specifically, his employment of percussion is an extension of a desire to increase levels of variation and synergise disparate ingredients. Indeed, the mercurial constitution of sound itself presents a boundless range of variance. "To me the most important thing in a composition is *disparity*," Calder wrote in 1943. "Anything suggestive of symmetry is decidedly undesirable, except possibly where an approximation of symmetry is used in a detail to enhance the inequality with the general scheme."⁹ Calder favoured the term "disparity" to describe his practice: "The idea of one body moving about another body which is doing something else, all by itself, is very exciting to me. And I think I have remained faithful to this original conception – that disparity is the spice of life, i.e. disparity of form, size, density, color and motion and perhaps a few other things."¹⁰

Among these "other things" was noise: Question: "How did you begin to use sound in your work?" Calder: "It was accidental at first. Then I made a sculpture called *Dogwood* with three heavy plates that gave off quite a clangor. Here was just another variation. You see, you have weight, form, size, color, motion and then you have noise."¹¹



3



4

Calder and Varèse

In 1926, Calder wrote to his parents, “I have been going to see some concerts. . . . I heard some Berlioz, + some Wagner, which are the principal [*sic*] things that rest in my mind.”¹² Mentioning two Romantic revolutionaries together – composers who moved beyond fixed classical forms and into a music of moods and atmospheres – shows Calder’s predilection for a modernist aesthetic.¹³ It also forecasts his epochal visit to Piet Mondrian’s Paris studio in October of 1930. Already familiar with Mondrian’s geometric abstractions, it was the studio environment that shocked Calder fully into making abstract art. As he explained in his autobiography: “It was a very exciting room. Light came in from the left and from the right, and on the solid wall between the windows there were experimental stunts with colored rectangles tacked on. . . . I suggested to Mondrian that perhaps it would be fun to make these rectangles oscillate.”¹⁴

For several weeks following the visit, Calder created a small series of non-objective oil paintings before ultimately settling on sculpture as his preferred medium. Since the mid-1920s, the artist had defined mass with shapes cut from air, “drawing” with wire to capture energy and motion. He retained this innovative approach in his new methodology: “When I use two circles of wire intersecting at right angles, this to me is a sphere [cf. *Works* section, fig. 7] – and when I use two or more sheets of metal cut into shapes and mounted at angles to each other, I feel that there is a solid form, perhaps concave, perhaps convex, filling in the dihedral angles between them. I do not have a definite idea of what this would be like, I merely sense it and occupy myself with the shapes one actually sees.”¹⁵

During the same period of the visit to Mondrian’s studio, Calder was introduced to the *plus ultra-modern* composer Edgard Varèse. Fourteen years Calder’s senior, Varèse crafted visceral sound-structures with unorthodox compositional material. When the pair first met, Varèse was in the thick of composing *Ionisation* (1929–31), the first standalone concert hall piece for percussion with no folkloric basis, the score of which demands an exotic array of noisemakers even by today’s standards. Varèse visited Calder in his studio in the months preceding *Volumes – Vecteurs – Densités*;

Dessins – Portraits, his exhibition at Galerie Percier in April of 1931. In March of that year, Calder’s wife Louisa wrote to her mother-in-law, “Sandy is working downstairs, and talking to Varèse, the composer, whose music corresponds to Sandy’s wire abstractions, so he likes to watch him work.”¹⁶ Testament to a burgeoning friendship, Calder executed a commanding wire portrait of the composer and a stabile, *Musique de Varèse* (ca. 1931), an implied wire sphere containing an ebony cube and a minute, nether wooden sphere poised above a jagged airstrip of tin plated steel (figs. 2, 3). “Crystallization” was among Varèse’s favourite words to describe the unfolding of his music; *Musique de Varèse*, perhaps Calder’s first light-reflecting sculpture, suggests penetration through a globe of pellucid substance, with droll objects disparately accenting the potentially blinding effect.¹⁷

Around 1932, Calder made an abstract ballet that consisted of “a frame with rings in the 2 top corners through which strings passed from the hands to the objects—springs, discs, a weight with a little pennant”¹⁸ A photograph from his studio during this period displays the musical component of the ballet, a collection of tin cans festooned from a string, organised roughly by size (fig. 4): “This was the ‘music’ – Varèse liked ballet (but not ‘music’). I called it ‘A Merry Can Ballet.’”¹⁹ Like Varèse (to say nothing of their mutual friend Marcel Duchamp), Calder was an insatiable punster. *A Merry Can Ballet* (phonetically, the French pronunciation of “American ballet”) may have been a sly nod to Varèse’s *Amériques* (1918–21, revised 1927), and conceivably a self-deprecating innuendo in response to Varèse’s candid dislike of jazz. Presumably improvisational in character, the music of the ballet starkly contrasts with Varèse’s credo of “organized sound” and anticipates the influence of the mobile on postwar music.

The vernacular of one artist resonates with that of the other to a remarkable degree. In his own practice, Calder employed “volumes, motion, spaces bounded by the great space, the universe.”²⁰ For Varèse, a kind of sculptural parlance mingles with his musical language. The composer was not being metaphorical when he said in 1936, “Taking the place of the old fixed linear counterpoint, you will find

in my works the movement of masses, varying in radiance, and of different densities and volumes.”²¹ In Varèse’s description of his composition *Intégrales* (1924–25), he might have been describing a Calder abstraction, perhaps most aptly a painting-in-motion such as *Snake and the Cross* (1936, fig. 5), which spotlights liquid evolutions of negative space circumscribed by its frame: “The changing projection of a geometrical figure onto a plane surface, with both geometrical figure and plane surface moving in space . . . each at its own changing and varying speeds of lateral movement and rotation.”²²

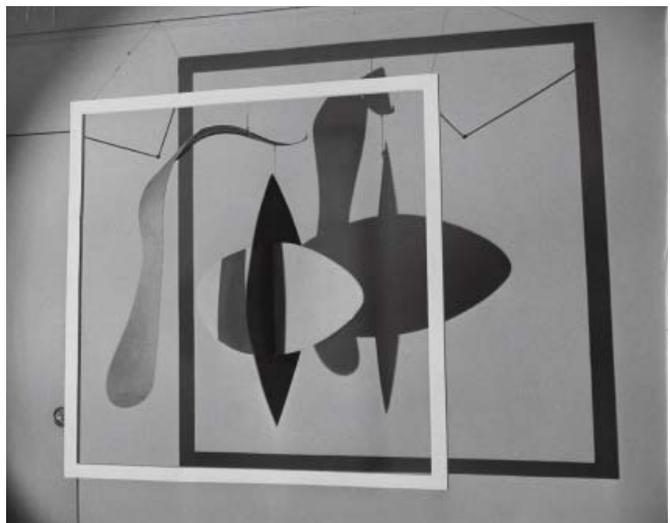
“Why not plastic forms in motion?” Calder wrote in 1933. “Not a simple translatory or rotary motion but several motions of different types, speeds and amplitudes composing to make a resultant whole. Just as one can compose colors, or forms, so one can compose motions.”²³ That Calder could realise his sculpture all the way to its completion must have invigorated Varèse, who suffered much of his life from concepts too advanced for the existing technology, confining the composer to unconventional means with traditional orchestral instruments in order to approximate the desired effects.²⁴ Rather than blend tones into a harmonic fusion – a backward-looking practice of neo-Romanticists – Varèse extracted and combined pitch characteristics of timbre and overtones in an effort to make “discernible the different planes and various sound-masses, and so [create] the sensation of non-blending.”²⁵

“When I was about twenty,” Varèse once reflected, “I came across a definition of music . . . as ‘the corporealization of the intelligence that is in sounds.’ It was a new and exciting conception and to me the first that started me thinking of music as spatial – as moving bodies of sound in space.”²⁶ Thus, sound is a type of raw material that must be organised and animated by an artist, in order to release its spirit. It was not until 1957 that Varèse entertained the idea of introducing improvisation into his music, when he took part in a series of “jams” with an all-star combo of jazz musicians organized by the composer Earle Brown in New York City. Still, imagining a sound-producing machine, Varèse remarked in 1962, “Whatever I write . . . it will reach the listener unadulterated by ‘interpretation.’”²⁷

3
Marc Vaux, Alexander Calder,
Musique de Varèse (ca. 1931), 1931

4
Marc Vaux, Calder’s studio at 14 rue de la Colonie, Paris, 1933.
From top: *Untitled* (1932), *A Merry Can Ballet* (1932/33), and
The Gong (ca. 1933)

5
Herbert Matter, Installation photograph showing
Snake and the Cross (1936), *Calder: Stables & Mobiles*
Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, 1937



Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere

Calder's application of sound in his invention of the first hanging mobile, *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* (1932/33, fig. 6, cf. Works section fig. 11), exposes his avant-garde roots.²⁸ Calder wrote to the curator James Johnson Sweeney in 1943: "One swings the red (iron) ball in a small circle – this movement + the inertia of the rod and the length of thread develop a very complicated pattern of movement. The impedimenta – boxes, cymbal, bottles, cans, etc. add to the complication, and also add sounds of thuds, crashes, etc."²⁹ The spectator intervenes by (re)organising the configuration of impedimenta, made of recycled and repurposed quotidian objects, and nudging the red ball to initiate the mobile's capricious course of collision. A real-time orchestration is generated, anticipating aleatoric and open form music of the post-World War II avant-garde.³⁰

Calder determined impedimenta differentiated by pitch, timbre, and duration to produce a diversity of experiences. The ultimate visual and aural composition becomes a collusion of intervening forces – a collaboration between artist, spectator and climate. Parisian artists had employed laws of chance in Dadaist compositions before (for example, the collages of Jean Arp from 1916–17), but *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* is one of the first modern artworks featuring the radical intervention of the spectator. Preceding it was Calder's creation of *Object with Red Ball* (1931, fig. 7), whose spheres and post can be recomposed, allowing the spectator's subjective taste to determine a final aesthetic scheme.

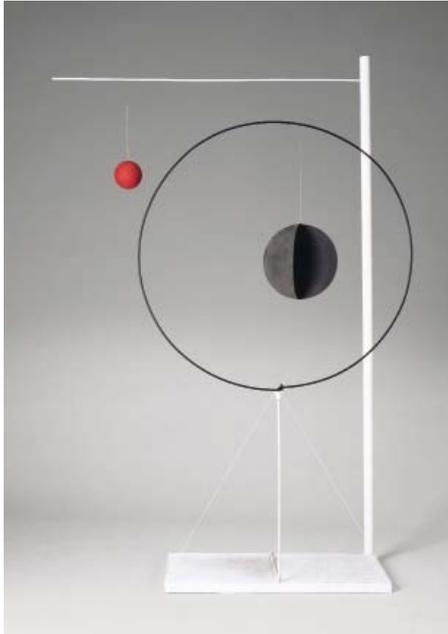
Noise-mobiles are intended to make sound, and a spectator's experience might feel incomplete when the work remains silent. In a drawing of *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*, Calder indicates that the bottles are empty; once struck they provide fuller, longer resonances. The sound of collisions between the elements lends a sense of palpability to the transfer of kinetic and potential energy.³¹ Low volume resonances, sharp clinks, and hard bops serve as gratifying rewards and keep us hanging on. The work acts as a psychological experiment – our inner monologues flicker with anticipation: Will the ball connect? What sound will it make? When is the right moment to walk away?



6

6
Alexander Calder, *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*, 1932/33
Iron, wood, cord, thread, rod, paint, and impedimenta,
Dimensions variable, Calder Foundation, New York;
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

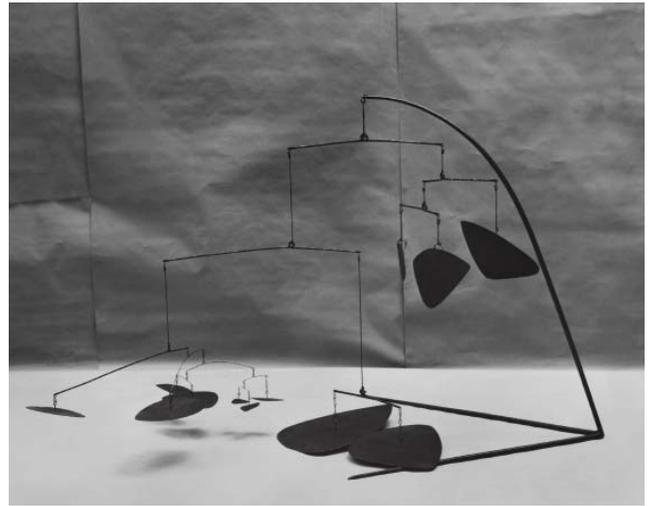
7
Alexander Calder, *Object with Red Ball*, 1931
Wood, sheet metal, rod, wire, paint,
155.6 × 97.8 × 31.1 cm
Calder Foundation, New York



7

Chance music is not for everyone. The lack of a trace of human intention risks leaving an audience cold, mystified, not “in” on the event. On the contrary, *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* elicits overt reactions. People laugh, gasp and discuss. The tangible suspense in the room recalls Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia’s description of a work at Calder’s 1932 Galerie Vignon exhibition: “A moving arabesque in wire balances itself and seems destined to interrupt the agitated path of a pendulum. Will they meet? No. They avoid one another with an infinitesimal precision.”³²

For his retrospective in 1969 at the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, Calder overhauled and transfigured *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* under a new title, *Une Boule Noire, Une Boule Blanche* (1969) – one of the few instances in which he revisited past works. In the experimental stage of the sculpture’s revitalisation, Calder auditioned a similar set of objects, including wooden boxes, metal discs, and bowls from his Roxbury kitchen. Ultimately, he did away with the bricolage and instead ordered nine steel gong-like bowls that varied greatly in size, although uniformly in Calder red, to be fabricated and “tuned” with the assistance of an ironworks in Tours, France. For “Calder’s Universe” in 1976 at the Whitney Museum in New York, throngs of people crowded the edges of the sculpture, attracted as they were in 1969 to “sounds of solemn bells.”³³



8

Noise-Mobile Evolution

From the late 1930s through the mid-1940s, Calder suspended sonorous elements in shared proximity, granting them freedom to pivot and resonate. The sundry clangours of *Black Foliage, Red Branch* (1945, fig. 8) represents this style, in contrast to Calder's gongs with protruding strikers (cf. Works section, figs. 41, 57). *Boomerangs* (1941), the airborne cousin of *The Clangor (Dogwood, 1941, fig. 9)*, is one of two sculptures for which he fashioned chain-linked wire attachments.³⁴ A critic reviewing Calder's 1941 Pierre Matisse Gallery show singled out the sonic feature of *The Clangor*: "There is one mobile in particular . . . 'weighted' by metal disks of such tonnage that, colliding, they are metamorphosed into deep-throated bongs."³⁵

Calder was also interested in the visual effect of gongs. *Two Silent Gongs* (1974), the title of which speaks for itself, may have been repurposed from an earlier noise-mobile. *Black Tulip* (ca. 1942), a spray of arching florets, features a gong that silently revolves, while small rings drooping from horizontal bars smack the black forms of its base. There are noise-mobiles of furtive, quieter stock, for example the tinkling pitchfork shards of *Tines* (1943), or the black moon on the verge of being tapped by the miniscule sphere at the heart of *Tentacles* (1947, cf. Works section, fig. 50, cf. page 96).

By the late 1940s, Calder had synthesised mobiles and gongs and showcased his formalisation in "Alexander Calder: Gongs and Towers" at the Curt Valentin Gallery in 1952.³⁶ Prototypical of this refined style is *Triple Gong* (ca. 1948, cf. Works section, fig. 57), with its red tendril-like wires plunging down through space and perking up to terminate in metal cylinders (beaters) in plane with three brass gongs hung in a sequence of pitches. Calder applied this technique, where mobiles breathe independently and yet in agreement with their gong supplements, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s with *Big Gong* (1951); *Red Gong* (1951); *Red, Yellow and Blue Gong* (1951); *Sumac with Gong* (1951); two works known as *Triple Gong* (1951); *Red Gongs* (1951); *Double Gong* (1953); *Horizontal Red Moon Gong* (1957); and *Blue Moon* (1962).

Tracing Calder's Musical Legacy

A study of Calder's musical influence is waiting to be written. One point of orientation begins in the late 1940s when artists in America and Europe began to re-engage with Dadaist ideas; when John Cage secured a foothold and drew alliance with the re-emerging Duchamp. Seeking references to authorize and elucidate their strange musical articulations, and non-cloistered expression homologous to their new compositions, Pierre Boulez, Earle Brown, Aldo Clementi, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Mauricio Kagel, György Ligeti, Witold Lutosławski, Henri Pousseur and others compared their work to mobiles. "Mobile," "stabile," and "mobility" were terms soon absorbed into musical vocabulary, having become familiar to composers through lectures and performances at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music in Germany beginning in the 1950s. These Calder-derived concepts grew into flexible descriptors for dynamic innovations to the musical score. "Mobiles," as Polish composer Lutosławski described sections of his *String Quartet* (1964), are "passages of collective ad libitum in which the parts contain discrete repeated fragments. . . . The aural result is analogous to the visual effect when a mobile of Alexander Calder is viewed from different angles. The relation of part to part and part to whole is constantly changing, familiar fragments of sound returning in ever-new contexts."³⁷

Taking cues from Calder and literary modernists such as James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé and Gertrude Stein, composers radically re-evaluated not only the musical score but also its performative implications. Proponents of the new avant-garde identified the traditionalist presumption that musicians were empty vessels to be filled, mechanisms for realising "closed," fixed scores. Traditional goals of a musical performance (for example, the precise interpretation of a composer's intent, interspersed with displays of technical virtuosity) were set in contrast to "open" scores, which require active participation and decision-making by the performer. The degrees between these two performer roles (one leaving no room for interpretation, the other offering choice and collaboration) became a field of dispute and experimentation.³⁸



8

Alexander Calder, *Black Foliage, Red Branch*, 1945
Sheet metal, wire, and paint, 129.5 × 200 cm
Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan

9

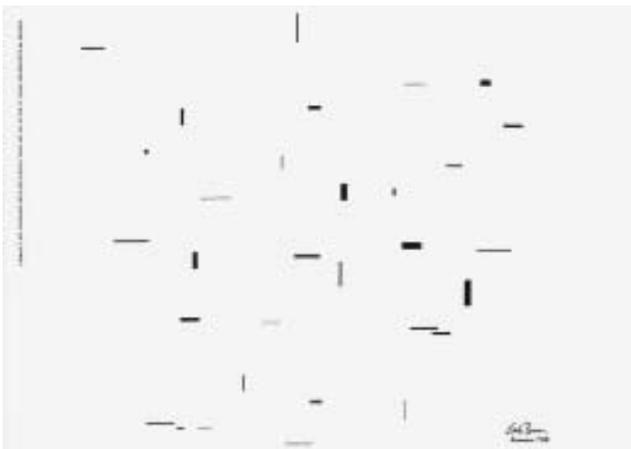
Alexander Calder, *The Clangor (Dogwood)*, 1941
Sheet metal, wire, and paint, 270.2 × 243.8 cm, Private collection

Points of Infinite Direction

"Time is the actual dimension in which music exists when performed and is by nature an infinitely divisible continuum. No metric system or notation based on metrics is able to indicate all of the possible points in the continuum, yet sound may begin or end anywhere along this dimension."³⁹

Composer Earle Brown's first encounter with a mobile in the late 1940s prompted his invention of "mobile composition," a type of music later popularised in Europe as open form. A member of the New York School (along with Cage and Morton Feldman), Brown became obsessed with the mobile's musical parallels and his landmark *December 1952* (1952–54) suggests punctuated constellations of quick-witted improvisation. Resembling a visual artwork, the score is a grid of thirty-one randomly placed shapes, which Brown conceived as a freeze-frame of constantly evolving points of infinite direction (fig. 10). Performable "in any direction from any point in the defined space for any length of time" (and for any number of performers and types of instruments with no specification of rhythm), musicians must enter the score's imaginary landscape and personally navigate its depths with musical decisions.⁴⁰

In 1963, Brown received a commission from Diego Masson, the son of André Masson, to write a piece for his First Percussion Quartet of Paris. In a gesture of homage to his hero, Brown began work on a composition to be conducted by a mobile. He visited Calder in his studio in Saché, France, to propose the idea, and Calder was, by Brown's account, immediately intrigued. To radicalise the concept further, the mobile also would be played as an instrument. Three years later, Calder's monumental standing mobile *Chef d'orchestre* (1966) arrived in Paris (fig. 11). Brown had assigned cues for the percussionists corresponding to the mobile's presumed colors. As it arrived painted entirely red, he hastily adapted his composition to the monochromatic scheme.



10

10
Earle Brown, *December 1952*, excerpt from *FOLIO* (1952/53)
and *4 SYSTEMS* (1954), 30.2 × 42.6 cm

11
Dennis Gilbert, Contemporary Music Festival, 1980
Earle Brown's *Calder Piece*



11

Chef d'orchestre has been described as a "bony, angular, multilimbed conductor."⁴¹ Its fourteen circular and ovoid elements, which hover within a drummer's reach, provide different pitches, apart from two of the same. When struck with mallets the mobile produces round, short-decay gongs. Brown's *Calder Piece* (1963–66) places four percussionists at corners equidistant to *Chef d'orchestre* and equipped with a battery of more than 100 percussion instruments. At several points, the percussionists advance upon the mobile, strike its bobbing forms, and leaving it swinging, sprint back to "read" its varying configurations.⁴² In order to interpret its gestures, the percussionists imagine the mobile's "petals" on the page, and play the phrases traced by the shape. The music develops from inarticulate noises of friction to solos and duos ranging from hesitant to obstreperous, with an earsplitting explosion toward the end. A feedback circuit develops as the perspectives of the musicians change in relation to the spinning conductor. The spectacle bespeaks the synaesthetic effect of Calder's work: music through exquisite movement. The première performance at the Théâtre de l'Atelier in 1967 was met with much acclaim, with one critic remarking, "Such a phenomenon of resonant exchange between the musical and the plastic-visual elements will remain one of the most enriching conquests of our time."⁴³

Beyond his stature as a composer of motion, Calder expanded the vocabulary of sculpture by permitting his mysterious objects noise-making capabilities. An artist who addressed issues fundamental to composers of music, Calder was a visionary of the increasingly blurred, intermingling categories of art. At a time when contemporary sound art is receiving ever-increasing attention in galleries and museums, Calder stands as a foundational figure and a primary twentieth-century source for compositional experimentation.

Gryphon Rue

- 1** Alexander Calder quoted in: Jane Howard, "Close Up—Mobile Maker's Giddy Whirl," in: *Life*, 5 March 1965, p. 48.
- 2** Calder used the term "noise-mobile" [emphasis mine] in a 9 June 1973 interview with Joan Marter, quoted in: Marter, *Alexander Calder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129. Decades earlier Calder also referenced his "noisy mobiles"; examples can be found in the Malcolm Cowley correspondence file and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibition binders, Calder Foundation archives.
- 3** Here I allude to a principle that Olivier Messiaen used to describe certain passages of his *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* (1964): *A melody by default: the cessation of sounds gives its outline* (trans. Felix Aprahamian, CBS Records, SBR 2353 64 [1966]). Thanks to Robert Pienckowski for this reference.
- 4** In addition to these works, many of which are discussed throughout this text, Calder was involved in a number of projects in which sound played an essential role, including two early collaborations with Martha Graham and one with Virgil Thompson, who commissioned Calder to create a mobile setting for Erik Satie's *Socrate* (1936). Among later sound-related projects was his commission for the University of Venezuela: Initially told by architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva that a mobile could not be hung in the auditorium because the ceiling was occupied with ribbons of acoustical reflectors, Calder gave a response characteristic of his resolute curiosity: "Let us play with these acoustical reflectors." The result was his *Acoustic Ceiling* (1954), made from large, colorful panels of plywood tilted in horizontal orientations to reflect sound. See *Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), p. 240.
- 5** For an investigation of Calder's theatricality, and a different reading of his "aural experiments," see Arnauld Pierre's "Staging Movement," in: *Alexander Calder: 1898–1976* (Washington, D. C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998), pp. 329–47. Pierre's characterization of noise-mobiles recalls the Wagnerian concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk, a synthesised, total work of art: "Calder's aural experiments . . . indicate the artist's wish to enlarge the theatrical possibilities of his devices by working out through them the bases of a total production" (p. 333). Also notable for its theatrical portrayal of Calder's engagement with sound is Hans Richter's film *From The Circus To The Moon* (1963), which features the artist filling cans with stones to create homemade shakers. Holding one to his ear, listening attentively – *Eureka!* – his expression bursts into jubilation – *he has found the right sound*. He flourishes the shakers in jazzy patterns like a *percussionista*. It is equally thrilling to watch Calder deftly rap elements of *Le Gong c'est une lune* (1954) with his knuckles and fingertips.
- 6** Jean-Paul Sartre, "Les Mobiles de Calder," in: *Alexander Calder: Mobiles, Stables, Constellations*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Louis Carré, 1946), pp. 9–19. English translation by Chris Turner, from *The Aftermath of War: Jean-Paul Sartre* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2008).
- 7** André Masson, "L'Atelier d'Alexander Calder," handwritten poem, 1942. "Arrivé d'Europe, comme ils disent / Il est vrai que là-bas fer et cuivre ne sont qu'œuvre noir / la mort ajoutée à la mort et la vie calomniée. / Moi je fûs, heureux fugitif / Couché à l'œuvre d'un vivant / Le jour et la nuit s'ouvraient devant / des ailes - algues - feuilles mobiles. / Bonjour forgeron de géantes libellules / Sourcier du mercure ta fontaine montrait / Une eau lourde comme les pleurs. / Mais un carrousel de petites lunes écarlates me réjouit / Je pense à un cirque transparent / C'est une feuille traversée par le soleil. / Tu as vu un jour vert un oiseau rouge / à la poursuite d'un oiseau jaune; / tu sais que nous sommes liés à la nature / que nous appartenons à la terre. / Très haut suspendu à la charpente de l'atelier / dans le jour strié un gong sensible aux caprices de l'air / n'est frappé qu'avec une extrême circonspection / A pas de colombe il sonne: quelle heure sonne-t-il? / C'est l'heure du mille-pattes très affairé / C'est aussi l'heure de l'enfant aux cerises / Ici les secondes n'ont pas le poids de l'horloge / elles ne sont pas non plus couchées dans un herbier / elles ne conçoivent pas l'immobilité / elles aiment le bruissement des roseaux / et le cri du crapaud d'arbre qui sait si bien respirer en musique / elles jouent entre tes doigts Calder, mon ami." Originally reproduced in English in: *Calder*, exh. cat. (New York: Buchholz Gallery/Curt Valentin, 1949); revised translation in: *Calder in Connecticut*, ed. Eric M. Zafran, exh. cat. (New York: Rizzoli, 2000), p. 16.
- 8** See also the description of Earle Brown's *December 1952* in "Points of Infinite Direction."
- 9** Calder, "A Propos of Measuring a Mobile" (manuscript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1943).
- 10** Calder (manuscript, Calder Foundation archives, 1956), p. 14.
- 11** Calder and Katherine Kuh, "Alexander Calder," in: *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York and Evanston, Illinois: Harper & Row, 1962), 44.
- 12** Letter from Calder to Alexander Stirling Calder and Nanette Lederer Calder, 1 December 1926, Calder Foundation archives.
- 13** Thanks to Jed Perl for this description.
- 14** Calder 1966 (see note 4), p. 113; see also Calder, "The Evolution" (manuscript, Calder Foundation archives, 1955–56), p. 78.
- 15** Calder, "What Abstract Art Means to Me," in: *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1951), pp. 8–9. Calder is probably reading from texts he wrote in the early 1930s.
- 16** Louisa Calder to Nanette Lederer Calder, 15 March 1931, Calder Foundation archives.
- 17** The Calder and Varèse families enjoyed a multigenerational friendship – Calder's daughter Mary lived in New York in the MacDougal–Sullivan Gardens across from Varèse and his wife Louise. In the early 1930s, Calder presented Varèse with two sculptures, *Jeune boeuf* (ca. 1928) and *L'Oiseau* (ca. 1930). Before leaving for New York in 1933, Varèse included the animals in a collection of objects he gave to his student André Jolivet, who drew on these "fetish objects" as inspiration for *Mana* (1933), an incantatory piano piece about primeval worship. Among other gifts, Calder gave Varèse a gouache, *Tourbillons* (1962), an apposite symbol given their shared fascination with spirals, which the composer placed prominently in his work-place. Calder also made him a music stand around 1931 to accommodate the composer's sometimes extremely large scores, with the wire inscription, "Homages a Varese." Louise Varèse ("Pony," as Calder nicknamed her, a translator of French avant-garde writings) received a ring, necklace, belt buckle, and bracelet, all with the spiral motif, as well as a 1949 drawing commemorating a shared love of the circus.
- 18** Calder, "The Evolution" (manuscript, Calder Foundation archives, 1955–56), p. 106.
- 19** *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- 20** Calder, "Comment réaliser l'art?" in *Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif*, no. 1 (1932), 6. Translated at Calder Foundation, New York.
- 21** From "Edgar Varèse, 'Great Sound Builder' is Here," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 15 June 1936; quoted in: Fernand Ouellette, *Edgard Varèse*, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Orion Press, 1968), p. 84.
- 22** Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 83. In his introductory text for the exhibition catalogue *Calder: Sculptor of Air* (Milan: 24 ORE Motta Cultura, 2009), Alexander S. C. Rower elaborates, "Later in the 1930s, Calder addressed the frontal formality of painting, yet rendered in three dimensions, and with the introduction of motion. . . . [Calder used] the variable composition of a changing foreground against a static background to create a performance, as these paintings in motion act out a spatial drama with a cast of abstract objects."
- 23** Calder in *Modern Painting and Sculpture*, exh. cat. (Pittsfield, Mass.: Berkshire Museum, 1933), pp. 2–3.

Calder and Sound

24

Varèse intended for *Intégrales* "to employ certain acoustical means which did not yet exist, but which I knew could be realized and would be used sooner or later." Quoted in Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 83. As early as 1930, Varèse had conceived of a path of loudspeakers located in various spots to move sound through space (Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 105), however it was not until his *Poème électronique* (1958) that he was able to determine spatial projection radically. *Poème électronique* was the result of a collaboration extended to Varèse by the architect Le Corbusier for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, for which approximately 350 speakers were installed in the Philips Pavilion along sonic pathways, in the concavities and ribs of the roof, and other strategic locations to broadcast Varèse's electronic composition.

25

According to Varèse, "Timbres and their combination – or better, quality of tones and tone-compounds of different pitch, instead of being incidental, become part of the form, coloring and making discernible the different planes and various sound-masses, and so creating the sensation of non-blending." Quoted in Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 60.

26

Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 17.

27

Ouellette 1968, 147. Varèse had declared in 1930, "The performer, the virtuoso, ought no longer to exist: he would be better replaced by a machine, and he will be." Quoted in: *J. Vidal, "Le Film sonore engendrera-t-il de nouvelles tendances musicales,"* in: *Pour vous*, 30 January 1930; quoted in Ouellette 1968 (see note 21), p. 106.

28

Calder considered *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* an important work in his oeuvre, suggesting it to James Johnson Sweeney for inclusion in his 1943 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, to no avail. The current exhibition marks the fifth time the work has been shown in public; it was first exhibited in 1933 at Galerie Pierre Colle in Paris, followed by the Whitney Museum in New York in 2008 (travelling to the Centre Pompidou, Paris), and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, in 2009.

29

Calder to James Johnson Sweeney, 28 August 1943, Calder Foundation archives.

30

"Aleatoric," from the Latin word "alea," connotes a die, a risk, or games involving chance. An early example of music determined by chance is Marcel Duchamp's *Erratum Musical* (1913), a score for three voices, based on note values shuffled and randomly drawn from a hat, which was coincidentally composed the year of John Cage's birth (who is commonly credited with formalising chance-operated music in 1951 with his *Music of Changes* by a method of throwing dice and systematizing the outcome in accordance with the *I Ching*). Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music* (1968–73), a process-based composition, involves a number of microphones suspended the same

distance from the floor above speakers turned up to produce feedback. Performers each take a microphone, pull it back like a swing, and release in unison. The speakers emit soughs, chirping pulses that change in phase relation as the pendular movements taper off. Shortly after all the microphones have come to rest in a continuous drone, the power is cut. *Pendulum Music* bears a perceptible relationship to *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*. Although both works trespass across the line separating sculpture and music, they are fundamentally different in locomotion and personality. *Pendulum Music* showcases the stark musical result of strict physicality, whereas *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* is a matrix of movements and sounds.

31

Here I paraphrase the Calder Foundation's Curator of Special Projects Katherine Cohn from her unpublished exhibition proposal, "*Positive Sound*."

32

Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Alexander Calder, ou le roi du fil de fer," in: *Vertigral* 1, no. 1, 1932.

33

"For a Big Show in France, Calder 'Oughs' His Works," *New York Times*, 3 April 1969.

34

The other is *Lobster Trap and Fish Tail* (1939), commissioned for the principal stairwell of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

35

Edward Alden Jewell, "Artists Depict a War-Torn World," *New York Times*, 1 June 1941.

36

Not long after this exhibition, "sound sculptor" Harry Bertoia followed in Calder's footsteps by formalizing the use of metal for its sound properties. Bertoia began in 1960 to stretch and bend metal rods into drifting formations resembling desert grasses. Sensitive to wind and touch, these tonal pieces approximate meteorological phenomena with thick beds of hissing tintinnabulation.

37

Quoted in Steven Stucky, *Lutostawski and His Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 110.

38

A quotation from Pierre Boulez reveals the broad analytical space between "open" and "closed" compositions: "I was talking about open form last year concerning [the composer] Webern when form could possibly close itself but remain suspended . . . this closing, haphazard and open, is the worst enemy of a form. . . . What I am looking for in an unclosed trajectory is rather a state of suspension in time. As one speaks of a body or an object suspended in a liquid, for example." Letter from Pierre Boulez to Henri Pousseur, end of July 1957, Paul Sacher Foundation.

39

Earle Brown, from a programme note to *Music for Cello and Piano* (1955).

40

Brown, from a prefatory note to *December 1952*, excerpt from *FOLIO* (1952/53) and *4 SYSTEMS* (1954).

41

Edward Rothstein, "Music Noted in Brief; Calder Mobile Conducts a Work by Earle Brown," in: *New York Times*, 16 November 1981.

42

According to Brown, Calder commented after the premiere: "I thought that you were going to hit it [the mobile] much harder – with hammers." Perhaps Calder was joking, but he apparently considered making a replacement conductor from brass instead of steel, although Brown later expressed that the mobile had a unique timbre that he preferred to keep because the sound of the sculpture when struck by the percussionists' mallets was distinct and different from the other percussion instruments in *Calder Piece*. Brown on *Calder Piece*, recorded ca. 1967, Tape MD49, The Earle Brown Music Foundation, Rye, NY.

43

Claude Rostand, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 21–27 August 1967.

Michael Handler Ruby

POEMS BASED ON SOUNDS

I first became interested in composing poems based on the sounds around me in the late 1980s. I remember listening to a long bird soliloquy while visiting Owen Andrews in Alberene, Va., among the abandoned bluestone quarries, in April 1988. I recorded part of that soliloquy. I immediately saw that birdcalls, with their strings of syllables and pauses, could easily be “translated” into the syllables, words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs of language. The lines and stanzas of poetry. On the spot, I conceived a birdcall-based drama, named after Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowles*, of course. At a later point, probably after reading Gertrude Stein and listening to more birdcalls, I realized that this would be a repetitive Steinian work, like *Four Saints in Three Acts*, unlike *The Mother of Us All*. Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* comes to mind, too.

During that same visit to Virginia, we discussed a highly repetitive work based on the spring peepers in the swale of the field that ran along the road. Shortly afterward, I think Owen wrote such a poem. That September, I wrote a poem that was a transcription of the late summer night heatbugs that I call “hecklers.” More important, that same summer at the Woods’ house in Manchester by the Sea, Mass., I was listening to waves at Singing Beach and noticed that the sounds could displace apparently unrelated words within me, usually conversational fragments, as opposed to poetic phrases. During the next few years at my mother’s house near Three Mile Harbor in East Hampton, N.Y., I wrote the long poem “Wave Talk,” following the roughly 12-hour cycle from one high tide to the next. I wrote the poem along Gardiner’s Bay near Cedar Point, where the waves aren’t very large. Here’s one short section:

Yes I will

Uh huh Uh huh

I think it’s best

Poems Based on Sounds

You were going to say
You think so
I think it's best

Afterward Then
I think it's best
You will
Only if you foresee
Get going on it
I think it's best

Definitely
I think it's best
You have to
You really have to
Go
Watch out on the left
Outside Outside
I think it's best
It will

By the early 1990s, my poems based on sounds took a very different direction, one I certainly didn't connect at the time with waves and birdcalls. I carried out a homophonic translation of a section of the Aeneid, "translating" the Latin sounds into an English text. Virgil's "*Sic fatur lacrimans*" becomes

Sick fatter lack remains, classic admit it happiness
a tan deem you both is come are you mad bitter roar is.
A verdant peel a cup or us; tomb dented tenaciously

Michael Handler Ruby

anchor a fund a bat navy set litter a curve I
pray taxing puppies. You mean him man us me catarrh dense
lettuce in his spear; cry it parsimony flame
abstruse in wane is seal kiss, party sapphires
check the rabbit selvage invent a quaff luminous monster....

Interestingly, the polysemous and homonymic aspects of many sounds—the fact that one sound could mean such different things, or be spelled different ways and mean different things—are what possessed me at that time.

In the late summer of 1995, I used the word “to,” the sound “to,” to displace unrelated words within me. I would continuously drop “to” into my mind and see what words were displaced from my total vocabulary. Or maybe I had dropped a word in a pond and was watching the circles expanding from it. In subsequent poems, I applied this to sights, such as the city in the distance, or to feelings, such as “I’m not going to think about you anymore.” Eventually, this would become my most common compositional technique, what I would call “displacing words from my total vocabulary that are apparently unrelated to their stimulus.” At the time, I didn’t see this as connected with the sound-based works I’m discussing.

In 1997, I left sound works—and poetry altogether—for several years—while taking care of identical-twin babies. When I returned to poetry in 1999, one of the first things I did was to start my book *American Songbook*, where I used recorded song lyrics to displace words within me. At the time, I certainly connected these poems with other poems of displacement, but not with “Wave Talk” or the poems based on Virgil. I wouldn’t have felt any connection between them.

In 1999, I also began my book *Inner Voices Heard Before Sleep*, in which I was transcribing voices I heard as I was falling asleep. At the time, I didn’t see any connection between that and anything else, though, in retrospect, “Wave Talk” sometimes sounds suspiciously similar to inner voices, as do some of my later “Sounds of Summer in the Country” poems and “Catbird Soliloquies.”

Poems Based on Sounds

Also in 1999, I began my book *Compulsive Words*, working with a group of words that appeared repeatedly in surrealist composition. In addition to the fact that a single word is a sound, it appears that the compulsive words point to a truly radioactive group of compulsive sounds that dominate in this unconscious region—the region tapped by surrealist composition, as opposed to the region tapped by sleep (dreams), or the regions tapped by falling asleep (inner voices and visions). But I wasn't aware of any of those connections.

In the early 2000s, in Maine, I wrote a second long poem called “Wave Talk,” this time listening to the small waves on the rocks near the mouth of Frenchman Bay. I also began a series of poems called “Foghorn” or “Distant Foghorn,” where the sounds of a two-tone foghorn displace words within me. Here's a short “Foghorn” poem:

FOGHORN

Together into the distance

Open the yum-yum

Imagine the article

Final toady

Together the imperceptible

Mortuary petunias

Throngs of swords

Inside the coverage

Earnest social

Orotund Peabody

Michael Handler Ruby

Widebody imagination

Peanut brethren

Don't boast of tokens

Don't telescope the port

Don't Beresford

Don't pay the sense

During those same years, I started to spend a lot of time in the country in upstate New York—please excuse my privileged lifestyle, if possible. By 2005, I was studying bird songs with the intention of finally writing my Steinian drama, almost 20 years after I conceived it. Unfortunately, I have always been hampered by a poor long-term memory for birdcalls, and for classical music themes, too. I was only able to write one scene of “Parliament of Fowles,” which was still something. I needed someone who would score the birds in several recordings for me. I know people who are able to do that, but they wouldn't do it for me. Maybe I'll find someone someday. Here's what “Parliament of Fowles” looks like:

ROBIN: It is my opinion, my considered opinion.

CATBIRD: And? And? And?

ROBIN: Go, on the double, they'll never see.

SPARROW: Go, go.

CATBIRD: And?

REDWINGED BLACKBIRD: Don't even think about.

ROBIN: Go, you coward, the water's warm.

UNKNOWN BIRD: You better not go. You better not go. You better not. You better not go home.

CATBIRD: And? And?

Poems Based on Sounds

More important, listening to birdcalls attuned me to other sounds in the country—insects, the wind in the trees, frogs, airplanes, cars passing, dogs barking. This led to a series of “Sounds of Summer in the Country” poems, where I wasn’t as focused on syllables—what are the syllables of the wind?—and more on words displaced within me by the sounds. Bernadette Mayer thinks that I should provide an explanation with some of these poems. In other poems, I continued to work with the precise syllables and caesuras of birdcalls, and later expanded that to frogs and crickets. That led to probably the most significant poems in the book—“Catbird Soliloquies” and such multivocal works as “A Cricket and Frogs” and “A Frog Pond at Night on the 4th of July.” I am still trying to work with spring peepers, cicadas recorded in Rome, nighttime heatbugs and June tree frogs.

Soon, the country-sounds book started influencing my Maine book, *The Mouth of the Bay*. In the country, I had realized that I could write poems loosely from all the sounds around me. I saw I didn’t have to listen just to a foghorn, or just to the waves. I could listen loosely to all the sounds around me. This led to “Sounds of High Tide in the Fog,” which I’m very proud of stylistically. Here are a few lines from that poem:

You won’t believe the effect of the meat grinder on the hootin’ owl
The foghorn randomizes this thrashing of arguments in the sun of penitence
This argument, lazy but incontestable, billowing, in Bilbao
One-note, for once, ground to pieces, maintained
The foghorn blocks our positive cries for attention (our inspissation and purpureal larvae
and hijinks talkshow)
See, thrill pieces separate statements
The foghorn fading to this thudding crowd near the grinder

The foghorn returns the call, the cutters rise, silly putty and all
Inside this belief system, this iron piss, this inside-out race
The foghorn in an impure environment (bearing the stigmata of piney dollops)
Gone, gone, going gone
This restaurant will not publicize Chamber slime

Michael Handler Ruby

The foghorn speaks sense, to these disunited, almond joy

Flowing in the opposite direction, my poem “Clouds Over Frenchman Bay” in Maine immediately gave rise to a whole series of poems written in the Hudson Valley, “Clouds Over the Appalachian Foothills,” a subject that constantly tempts me. Once again, the approach is the same: “Which words does that cloud displace [bring to consciousness] in the neurons of my brain that are not apparently related to the cloud?”

In the early 2010s, when I started a *Subway Poems* notebook and had largely finished writing my book *Visions*, I started writing in this notebook about the short naps I take before leaving home for work every day at 12:30 p.m. At first, I wrote about little visions and different counting techniques for falling asleep, but eventually, I began carefully listening to the sounds inside my mind, and also comparing them with the sounds outside my mind. This is more a journal of sounds I hear than poems based on sounds, but it might wind up there someday.

All through these years, in my *American Songbook* and *Compulsive Words* poems, I’m repeating sounds to displace words, or even whole poems. Pronouncing “Old Ruby” the way my father would over and over. This is sound displacing words. Janis Joplin’s “count your finguh” repeated.

The way I see it all now, with 20/20 hindsight of course, is that I had some ideas about writing to animal sounds back in the 1980s, and I finally carried them out 20 to 30 years later. Just like with inner voices, which I carried out 15-20 years later. And *Close Your Eyes*, which I wrote 20 years later. In this way of seeing things, some of my main works were conceived when I was in my 20s and then carried out 15-30 years later. As for all of my sound-based poems, I never considered them connected to each other.

THE CICADA

The cicada reasons eggs and follows the graveyard to its open in the ivy underwater

The cicada cites the eleven houseguests' perfume and all without

The cicada in the yawning timepiece
(The riled and resisted
pillbox of our orangeade
because, you see, in the angelic couplings)

The cicada colors toward a permanent session

The cicada breaks the sack in the Susan theater and stands a ceremony until dawn
The cicada ranges across a very tempestuous and enervating filibuster and time machine
performance acre

The cicada welts pleasant silverware from our pottery barn
(Holiday sausage or soft drink and elephant begetting more silverware)
The cicada risks circus on its way to
The cicada randazzle
The cicada soft shoe
The cicada alligator shoes
The cicada breaks the pace without signing on to any of this fucking bildung
The cicada takes the purple from its teeth and grows a holiday sausage bond and two kinds of
polished Silverado barking—yes, that can happen, but we shall

The cicada powders four mugging peace proposals
The cicada teeth through a parlor howl pulling china, I've seen it, seeing is believing

The cicada presents a polished exterior to the sign language and fulfills at least some of
our hopes
The cicada bothers to solve the problem for the good of no one

The cicada burrows and barts
The cicada ices our content
The cicada ices our content a second time
The cicada ices

THE CRICKETS

The crickets
campaign
love this shit

The crickets
owe nothing
to Hilgenberg

The crickets
perfect
the regent

The crickets
telemark
through their suit

Oh oats
and filberts
for Hollywood

and Panamanian
ice cream
gillum [chillum?]

The crickets
spell
pool cues

The crickets
paralyze
sockets

The crickets
REM sleep
seven dragons

The crickets
pawn
Silverado

The crickets
touch
the rocket

The crickets
polish
the crisis

The crickets
sink
in Silverton

The crickets
solidify
the check [cheek?]

Yes, silver
preferisce
questa realtà
sai, bella
Allora

The crickets
stress
the soluble

The crickets
polish
the promise

The crickets
polish
the polish
(holidays and
whenever applicable)

The crickets
phone
the shaker

The crickets
shake
and bake
That's how they do it
That's how they live

The crickets
shake
and bake—
Is that sick?

The crickets
perforate
the ease

The crickets
sylvan
the square

The crickets
declaim
and distribute

The crickets
hang
in closets

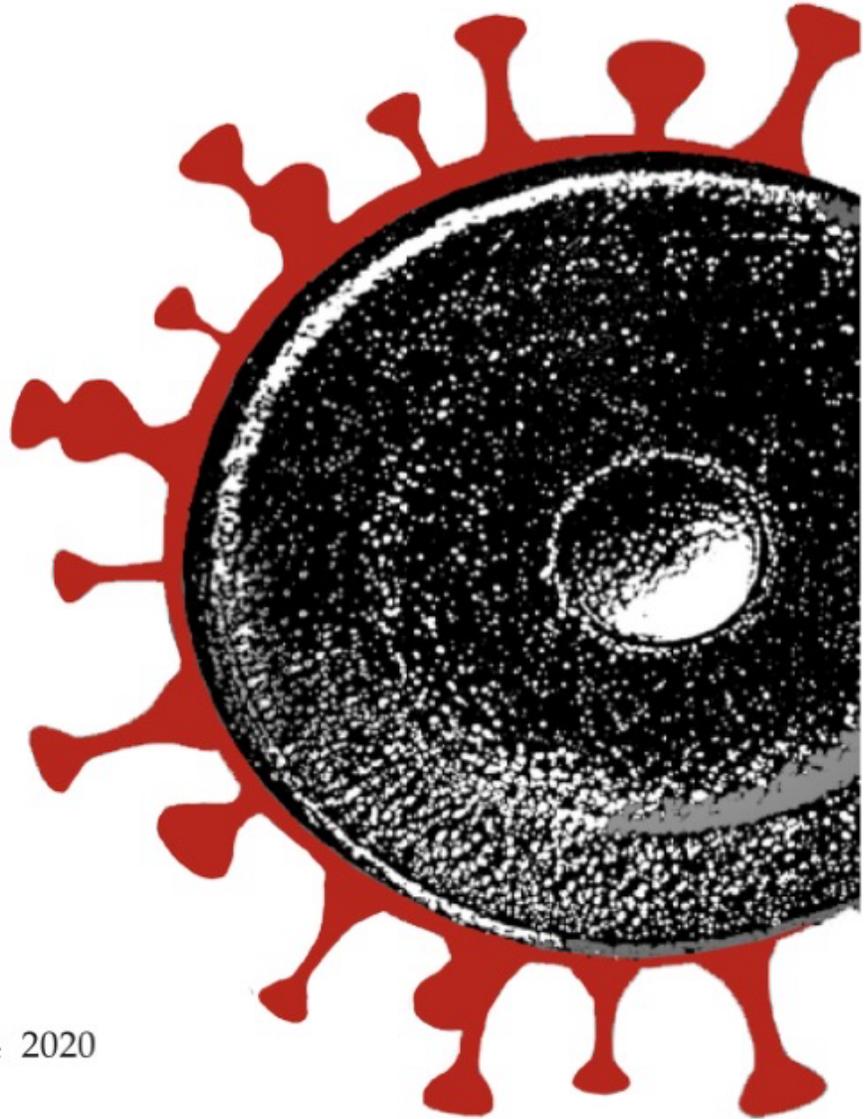
The crickets
perfect
the pesto
It's all there
hollow
and informative

The crickets
temper
the hotdogs
It's so
unknowable
you know?

The Gifts of the Pandemic

BALUNGAN

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*The cover of the issue of the international journal BALUNGAN, edited by Jody Diamond, focusing on gamelan during the Covid era, with over 50 articles and reports from gamelan groups around the world.
Cover design: Linda Hibbs*

Jody Diamond

The Gifts of the Pandemic

When the pandemic hit, I was playing in a different gamelan group five days a week. Monday was Balinese gamelan at Bard with Nyoman Suadin and Sue Pilla. On Tuesday I took the train to New York City to play with the composers' collective Gamelan Son of Lion. Wednesday, I taught at SUNY New Paltz with the instruments of Lou Harrison's Gamelan Si Betty. Thursday was gamelan degung across the river in Kingston with Dorcinda Knauth and the Catskill Mountain Gamelan. On Friday, I went back to the city, joining Kusuma Laras at the Indonesian Consulate to play the classical music of Central Java. All of these came to a complete stop.

—Jody Diamond

For people who love playing gamelan, the pandemic was a disaster. Canceled concerts, inaccessible instruments, no social gatherings. How would we survive? A gamelan group rehearsal might be defined as “people sitting near each other playing instruments in a closed room.” When those activities were prohibited, how would our shared music-making be transformed?

Life Online

Getting together online for lectures was a significant start to a new sense of membership in a global community. Participating in these online events expanded our identity beyond geography and created an international gathering of “gamelan lovers” unified by a musical passion, although residing in disparate locations.

Desperate to continue sharing, gamelan teachers and groups invented new formats for the online world. The Balinese composer Ketut Gede Asnawa taught from his living room in Illinois. Gamelan Sekar Jaya in Berkeley hosted bilingual presentations. The Javanese composer and composition teacher Wahyu Thooyib Pambayun made online teaching videos for the entire faculty of ISI Surakarta (University of the Arts) Music Department in Central Java.

Collaboration Redefined

As people adjusted to interacting virtually, new ways of collaborating emerged. Gamelan Naga Mas of Scotland devised a way to compose together by simultaneous coding online. Five Javanese friends, separated from each other, entered a singing contest by each recording single line of a poem that was later compiled into a whole verse.

For the online *Pekan Komponis* (new music festival) in Jakarta on November 6–7, 2021, I was honored to be invited to make a presentation. There were two requirements: it had to

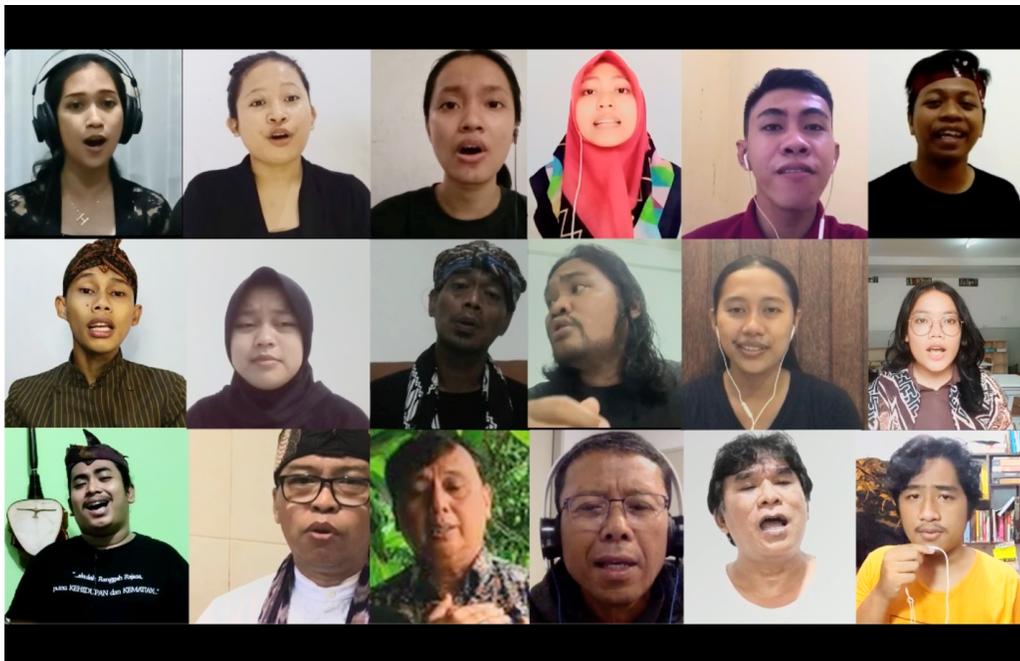
The Gifts of the Pandemic

be all new compositions, and the sound files were due in four weeks. Wait—what? We had been in pandemic lockdown for over a year. I had no access to musicians, and no work in progress. As a composer steeped in the collective compositional processes of gamelan music, I would need a group to stimulate my creativity. Fortunately, the pandemic had shown me that there was another way to compose—collaboration via online interaction.

Indonesia has 17,000 islands and over 700 living languages. Having a national language as well means that everyone is bi-lingual. To explore and honor these regional languages, I invited several Indonesians to send me a one-minute recording of a song in their “home” language. Eighteen singers responded, some of whom I had never met. My arrangement of these vocal gems became the video BAHASAS, done in close collaboration with video editor Robin Richardson.

For the second work, Wahyu Thooyib Pambayun and I collaborated on a new composition that combined parts of a piece by each of us, performed by his own group of musicians. I attended rehearsals on Zoom (at 5 a.m. in my time zone), and the final performance of “Asmarantaka” was recorded in their studio. By integrating elements we admired in each other’s work with new material from each of us, we created something that certainly qualified as new.

Neither of these pieces could have been conceived or created without the pandemic having normalized interaction on Zoom, making the online domain an arena for artistic communication. Both continue to live on my YouTube channel, as an eternally available experience.



The eighteen singers who participated in BAHASAS, a work created by Jody Diamond with video editor Robin Richardson.

Jody Diamond

Mixing Modalities

Eventually some groups were allowed to resume in-person rehearsals, with strict social distancing protocols; but no observers were allowed. The artists could be together, but the audience remained cyber-phantoms. From this phase emerged conjunctions of art performed by the artists in a shared location, while the witnesses continued to be location-less.

Performances were re-imagined for an entirely virtual audience. Online presentations meant that I and many others experienced the gift of performances we would not have been able to attend in person. These video experiences were live-streamed, so we could be there in the moment, and also remained online to be enjoyed again, unrestricted by the zones of time.

The Central Javanese dancer and choreographer Galuh Dewi Sinta Sari reconstructed older and seldom-performed classical dances (often in the original length deemed too long for modern audiences) and interviewed the eldest of the senior dance masters. The gamelan at Wesleyan University, guided by Javanese master musicians Sumarsam and I.M. Harjito, presented weekly concerts with a smaller ensemble, their instruments placed far apart and all players masked.

New formats for online festivals exploded the options of possible participants. The 25th Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival 2020 in Central Java interspersed five live performances with fifteen videos from groups in New Zealand, the USA, France, and other parts of Indonesia.

I published a special Covid issue of *Balungan*, the journal of gamelan and its international counterparts, with my co-editor Linda Hibbs zooming in from Melbourne. We gathered articles and reports from scholars, artists and musicians in more than 40 countries around the world.

Daring vs. Luring

Increasing familiarity with Zoom laid the foundation for conversations between people previously living separate lives. I enjoyed sitting in on meetings with Gamelan Dadali in Moscow, the only gamelan group in Russia. Without the pandemic, and without the widespread practice of gathering online, this pleasure would have been unthinkable. But the day arrived when my newly discovered Moscow cohort told me I would not be able to attend any more sessions because they were returning to “offline” rehearsals. I was sad to see the end of our cross-continental camaraderie, and sadder yet to see more groups stop sharing their activities online upon being allowed to perform for a local audience.

Our experience of pandemic restrictions changed how we conceptualize and locate our activities. The vocabulary for the return to in-person performing strikes me as significant.

The Gifts of the Pandemic

Instead of referring to public performances as “live,” this activity garnered the new nomenclature “offline,” revealing the duality of our Internet-centric lives and the pervasiveness of online activity during the pandemic. In Indonesian, the term for online is *daring* (from *dalam jaringan*, inside the net), was later juxtaposed with *luring* (from *luar jaringan*, outside the net). Even when a return to previous formats became possible, the pandemic affected our conception of public performances. We defined new activities by what they were not, instead of what they had been before.

The Gifts of the Pandemic

Although the pandemic wreaked havoc on two performance seasons, it has left us several precious gifts. A local *and* an international audience. Online access to performances not bounded by time or space. An expanded community to admire and advance the arts that all of us—in every country, every style, and every configuration of listeners and performers—care about so deeply.

Now that we have the technology and knowledge to make cyberspace a familiar neighborhood, I hope our newly forged global connections will be maintained. To the new friends I discovered in this strange timeworld: I know you only because we co-inhabited cyberspace.

The most valuable legacy of the pandemic is this: the gift of ourselves to each other. Let’s hold on to these precious strands of otherknowing, now that we have created these connections. What was gained need not be lost. Together, we can ensure that everyone in our new global family can always have a seat at the table.



A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

by Ruth Anderson, Sam Auinger, David Behrman, katrinem, Annea Lockwood,
Bruce Odland and Liz Phillips

Listening with...

listening with the neighborhood
at midnight, or at dawn, indoors or outside.

Listening with an awareness that all around you are other life-forms simultaneously listening and sensing with you – plant roots, owls, centipedes, cicadas – mutually intertwined within the web of vibrations which animate and surround our planet.

Listening to feel that ‘I am one with all these phenomena. Can I know it?’ I listen to know it.
What we are at one with, we cannot harm.

Annea Lockwood 2018

What did I hear?

- Sit in a favorite place, on a porch, inside with a window open, in a garden, in a parked car with the windows open.....
- Close your eyes and witness the world around you, your whole sphere of hearing and being.....
- 10 minutes or more, sink into it, relish it, reward the part of your brain that really listens in detail.....
- Remember what you heard.....
- Try to remember how the same place sounded last month, last year.....
- Do the same thing tomorrow, next week, next month.....
- Remember them all, compare them all, notice the changes, treasure them all.....
- Flex your listening brain and make it resilient and strong.

Bruce Odland 2020

A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

Awakening in the country

At night before you go to sleep, leave the window open

When you awaken at dawn, be alert to sounds from outside

If it's spring or summer, with a little luck you may hear

the crowing of a rooster. A bit of a cliché, but yes, he will announce the break of day

(that may remind you of a rooster announcing dawn once on a fragrant summer morning in Umbria

many years ago)

or you may hear the soft cries of a mourning dove

A brief introductory pitch, sometimes with an upward glissando at its start, a pause,

then a second pitch near a minor or major third below

another pause, the lower pitch repeated. And again – twice or three times

Bob Watts once said he got good art ideas only in the country
in “Tree Painting” he left color markers dangling from branches of a tree
and just grazing a large sheet of white paper on the grass below

at his farm in Pennsylvania

He would set this up one day, then drive off in his Citroën Mehari
and return the next morning to harvest the art

David Behrman 2020

Ruth Anderson

Sound Portrait: Hearing a Person

In a darkened room, find a comfortable, totally relaxed position.

Listen to a piece of music.

Think of someone you love.

Do not think of the music.

When you find your thought of the person is gone, bring it back gently.

Let other thoughts come, and then let them go.

As the music progresses, let the thought image of the person be central.

Be unaware of the music.

Let anything which happens happen, except keep easily bringing back, letting, the person's image occupy you.

You will find explanations of the person—the music will explain the person.

The music ideas, counterpoint, extensions, contrasts, repetitions, variants, Rhythms, textures, qualities of sound, all music elements are of the person,

sometimes very literally, sometimes suggesting, sometimes exact, sometimes understood, sometimes leading to understanding, sometimes verging on language, always primarily nonverbal, always a known sense, a coming of a known sense.

You will find after, an understanding of the person you did not have, and a personal relationship to the music.

The music, too, will be known.

Ruth Anderson 1973

A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

my "personal" sound space - an exploration by ears

a set of little exercises with an experimental character by sam auinger / berlin in early may 2020

This little piece is for anyone who wants to communicate with and to expand the world (indoors) - she or he is living in - just by listening.

To start this exploration, we will need one object, and we will have to give time and personal attention.

the object

I would suggest you go and find a little stone something like a river pebble, a little pebble you can easily hold in your hand like a small piece of chalk for writing on a blackboard.

The pebble should be small because we don't want it to be too heavy; otherwise, it would limit our range of experiments.



What we will do and what we will listen for is based on material laws and the laws of acoustics and can be described scientifically. But this is not important for us in the first run. In a kind of a little appendix, I will introduce a book on these topics, but this knowledge will not increase our Experience, this will only come from attentive listening. To do these experiments more often, and be engaged and listen carefully, creates a sonic memory and, finally, a personal way of thinking with our ears.

Each space carries an atmosphere which conducts in significant parts our way of feeling and how we operate. A significant factor in this is playing the auditory domain; it shapes our likes and dislikes. Each has its unique sound, which varies. These exercises bring us closer to an idea of why we hear what we hear and how it makes us feel.

Sam Auinger

we will experiment in 3 different ways:

stone/pebble meets objects

a stone/pebble falls on surfaces

stone/pebble meets an arranged situation (to investigate an aspect in more specific ways)

stone/pebble meets objects

We treat our little pebble as an old friend who comes by the first time, and we show him around. His materiality and his hardness produce a perfect small impulse hitting different materials. These little, very light hits make the materials and objects speak. Let's say we start with our doors and windows. Soon we will realize that it makes a big difference where we perform the little click/hit on the glass surface or the door blade. We will recognize that different window sizes of the same design speak differently. From the glass panels, we move on to explore the frames....., and from there, we continue to cabinets and other objects. And again, we perceive the sound change in where and what type of material our pebble hits. After a while, we start to imagine how it will sound before making an item speak with the help of our little pebble. We will realize that the same materials (for example, wood) have a lot in common in the way they are sounding, but still, it can sound very different according to their size and form.

a stone/ pebble falls on a surface

Here we explore the different acoustics of a room besides other materials. When we let our pebble fall more or less from the same height in separate rooms with the same or different surfaces, we start to hear how space speaks based on its shape and materiality. Are the reflections amplifying or dampening it? Is the room coloring the sound? And again, many things are there to experience and to play with, to be perceived, and to recognize.

stone/pebble encounters an arranged situation (to investigate a sounding aspect more specifically)

By letting the pebble fall or gently hitting different objects, ideas and questions came up, so we will be eager to investigate some ideas more thoroughly, combining our previous methods into little experiments. For example, we realized that the surface beneath an object plays an essential role in how the item sounds when it gets hit. To investigate this further, we think up a specific experiment, like comparing the sound produced when the stone gently hits an object laying on the hard surface of a kitchen table and secondly when a towel is dampening it in between the object and the table surface, etc., etc..

A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

These little exercises act as an entrance into the endless variety of experiments you can do. You must not take it as a strict manual. It should just make you start to investigate your personal sound space with your ears and have a good and inspired time by doing it.

It is essential that our imagination leads us and that the game forecasting the change in the sound is part of this exercise. By doing this, we will develop a kind of an inner ear and the ability to hear the sounding properties of objects and spaces and to feel their inherent atmospheres in advance - which allows us to act more according to our needs.

For sure, I would love it if it became a more regular practice for you to listen consciously to the sounds around you caused by your action or by someone else's.

Sound is energy in the form of vibration, and all vibrations are a movement of matter, and this is why listening is direct communication with the concrete aspects of space and life. And maybe one of the most important lessons - which comes with each listening practice - is that listening tells a very different story from looking, which we are so used to and dominated by.

appendix

Here I would like to introduce you to a book which will give you all the insight one would need to become an expert in auditory experiences and how they have specific effects on our wellbeing and our minds:

Sonic Experience - A Guide to Everyday Sounds by Jean Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue /McGill-Queen's University Press ISBN-10:0-7735-2942-x

In a multidisciplinary work spanning musicology, electro-acoustic composition, architecture, urban studies, communication, phenomenology, social theory, physics, and psychology, Jean-François Augoyard, Henry Torgue, and their associates at the Centre for Research on Sonic Space and the Urban Environment (CRESSON) in Grenoble, France, provide an alphabetical sourcebook of eighty sonic/auditory effects. Their accounts of sonic effects such as echo, anticipation, vibrato, and wha-wha integrate information about the objective physical spaces in which sounds occur with cultural contexts and individual auditory experience. Sonic Experience attempts to rehabilitate general acoustic awareness, combining accessible definitions and literary examples with more in-depth technical information for specialists.

Jean-François Augoyard, a philosopher, urban planner, and musicologist, is the founder of CRESSON-CNRS (National Scientific Research Centre) at the School of Architecture in Grenoble.

Henry Torgue, a sociologist and urban planner, is a researcher at CRESSON and an author, pianist, and composer.

katrinem

100 STEPS IN STEPS along the edges of your home

by katrinem, May 2020

For 1 Person, preferably barefoot

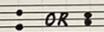
A series of ten musical staves. The first staff begins with a square box containing a right-pointing arrow, followed by a double bar line. The notation consists of a sequence of notes and symbols: a triangle, a dot, a vertical line, a double bar line, a colon, and a series of small circles. This sequence is repeated on each of the ten staves. At the end of the tenth staff, there is a double bar line, the letters 'D.C.' written vertically, a horizontal line, the word 'ad' written vertically, and a square box containing a right-pointing arrow.

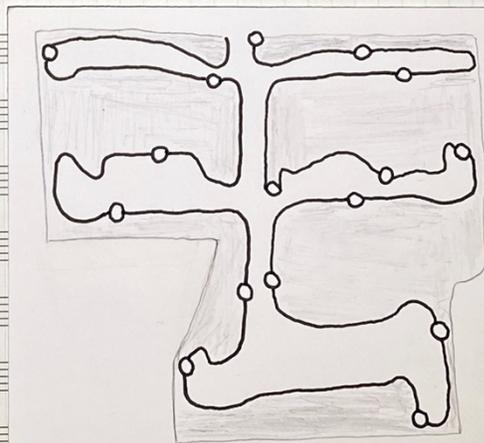
 ENTRANCE DOOR

 . . . NORMAL SIZE STEP

 . . . SMALL SIZE STEP

 PAUSE + LISTEN

 OR  STAND ON BOTH FEET



my space

A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

This score is an invitation to rediscover the personal living space (your home). We have long since developed our habits of where and how we move in our rooms, where we prefer to stand, sit, lie. *100 steps in steps* wants to bring new perspectives into your habitual behavior.

The score starts at the entrance door. Its design is to repeat at least once, or as often as necessary until the starting point (entrance door) is passed once.

Follow the course of the wall on your right side, whether it leads you into a new room, upstairs or downstairs. Windows and doors to the outside are breathing holes for light and air and do not change the path. Stay inside!

The score is played barefoot or - if necessary - with socks to feel the ground in its materiality, temperature, and flatness.

Choose a tempo so that the rhythm remains the same, even with different step lengths.

Each walking phase of 10 steps follows an equally long phase of standing with both feet firmly on the ground. The gaze remains just as still as the body; only the ears open wide.

Then draw the shape of the path you have walked and emphasize the spots where you have stopped.

katrinem May 2020

Liz Phillips

Listening at home

I grew up in a house near a pond and brook, immersed in the life of this water. I sat still and listened for a frog croaking or slipping into the water, or a fish jumping, a turtle slipping into the pond from a rock. These were some of my favorite sounds. Then, in winter there was ice breaking across the pond if you stepped on it a little too early to skate, a fantastic sound. My first recordings were of the mesmerizing talks of our brook. I fell in to the water listening too often as a child. A friend fluent in Japanese once told me of the many Japanese words for water falling down a stream, onomatopoeic words like *shishi odashi*, a bamboo and rock balancing act in a stream which I first heard in a Kyoto rock garden. It was a wonderful aperiodic knock when the bamboo pipe filled with water and hit the rock, in contrast to the sound of the brook it was placed in.

The most musical memory of my childhood sounds was when my father picked up discarded wooden organ pipes and threw them in the fireplace. What beautiful voices came out of the fire! Growing up on the Hudson River palisades in the late afternoon I listened to birds calling from crevices in a rock quarry. That became the site of my first film.

After college I became a New York City apartment dweller. Late at night, that first hot summer in Manhattan, from the roof I would hear the buildings refract with sounds from m80 fireworks or better, distant playground swings sing at 3 am. When parades gathered under our windows all the bands rehearsing mixed as they practiced. There were clock towers that rang each hour and you learned to hear the weather in their voices.

Now in a little house in Sunnyside, listening at home became material in a long wall mural and sound installation "Relative Fields in a Garden" at the Queens Museum, created with my daughter, Heidi Howard. Much of my sound was recorded from my garden over a year. At the museum four seasons play back as you walk along a hundred foot long curved mural of seasons in an open atrium, the voices shifting, some with sunlight (via sensors processing recordings) modulating, filtering and mixing the sounds. Here near space and far space come into focus as in our courtyard garden, and sometimes more like the palisades with this forty foot high wall.

What I love hearing is often as simple as rain playing like percussion on the different leaves of trees when soft in spring or later, noisy in fall. When the wind comes from a distance you can hear it play each type of tree. Often I just sit and try to hear the resonance of a bush full of flowers.

We had the constant sound of trains near our home. At night you heard them from far away. Now, with so many fewer cars, planes and trains, I hear less of the many hums and more distance and clarity. Each little bird is once again clear in the garden. These days it is the baby mockingbirds learning their songs which have my attention as they learn to voice and articulate. I could speak of sounds and how they layer and mingle in the air, in our ears, as these spring flies and bees surround me here in the sun. As I wake I often listen to how a sound travels and shifts

A little guidebook for home listening (2020)

with temperature, wind, and humidity, and I guess the weather in the dark by these observations. Our senses tell us so much if we are present and still and open.

My husband and I took a walk in our masks and realized how difficult it is to hear with the shape of your face changed and your cheeks so softly covered. We are learning to hear in these new faces. During Covid-19 I lost my sense of smell but not taste. Memories of smells filled me and they were far deeper than I had realized. Loss of smell brought me fear of fire.

I think so much about the many ways we value breathing and being.



Heidi Howard drawing in the garden in Sunnyside

Liz Phillips 2020

Ruth Anderson and Annea Lockwood

Softest Sound:

Search out the softest sound you can hear. Rest in it.

Find the softest sound you can produce with the materials in a favorite room. Explore it, taking an ear-journey inside it.

Ruth Anderson and Annea Lockwood 1975-76

A Little Guidebook for Home Listening was first published online in 2020 by the eavesdropping festival, London: a symposium exploring “creative activism: radical responses within new music,” presented by the Eavesdropping Consortium, under the direction of Juliet Fraser, soprano, and held over the internet due to Covid.

A participant in one of the discussions asked if I “might have suggestions of material that could prompt some attentive listening at home during lockdown.” Accordingly, I invited special contributions from Sam Auinger, David Behrman, Katrinem, Bruce Odland, and Liz Phillips; and included bearing studies, co-authored with Ruth Anderson.

Annea Lockwood, 2024

Listening to the Goddess

by Heide Hatry

When I met Carolee Schneemann, at 3pm on July 9, 2006, following her lecture during the *Into Me/Out of Me* exhibition at PS1, I experienced an epiphany. It was as if she were the artwork that was changing my life before my eyes; her focus, her attentiveness even in a loud, crowded room, her ascent above the fray, her grace, her way of being, and of course the amazing things she was saying were utterly mesmerizing. Although I had been living as an artist for only three years Carolee embraced me as a colleague, my vast ignorance notwithstanding.

She could talk about my work as if she had done it herself, rapidly detecting the possibilities it held even when they were still vague or inchoate to me, and always encouraging me to go farther, to push my limits, even while, especially while, others were telling me it wasn't art or that they found it too disturbing. We had a similar understanding of the relationship between our own bodies and our art, and she told me about all the struggles to which her approach had subjected her—that it was too sexual for feminists of the time and not submissive enough for the male (art) world—and as furious as the failure to understand it, or the bullet-headed impulse to reject it (even as it was being appropriated right and left, and diminished in the appropriation) could make her, it only confirmed that she was doing what she had to do. She taught me that all art is political and that the task of the artist is to be aware and to create awareness, that even while fighting for a better world, the artist must also fight on behalf of her own vision, because no one will surrender power, not even to art, without a struggle, and if art is lost, the struggle for change is also lost.

For me, Carolee's single-mindedness and expansive generosity were always most pointedly embodied in her rapt attention to nature, the way she listened to her beloved cats and marked the plethora of little, usually unnoticed things that in aggregate make up the world. When her cat Minos, would worry the stunned bodies of birds or chipmunks until they were dead, Carolee felt right at home in a nature that was built upon predation (even as I found myself squirming), and she kvelled like a mother when La Nina, started making assemblages out of her own kills.

At the time I met her, Carolee was pretty depressed and maybe even somewhat bitter, for reasons that were easy enough to understand, and I felt such profound gratitude and anger over what she'd had to suffer to create her art that I could imagine myself as if a primitive Christian contemplating her humiliated and savaged god. To then see her getting the recognition she'd earned so many times over has been a source of amazing joy and satisfaction, and I am inexpressibly thankful that she lived to see the work of whose fate she often despaired embraced and widely acclaimed.

Heide Hatry



Listening to the Goddess

Ach, I miss her and will miss her so much. What I especially miss already are our phone calls. She was the person (other than my daughter and my partner) who most often called me, always just asking: How are you doing? or What are you working on? And then we'd be on the phone for 30 minutes, or often an hour, talking about everything from politics, health— how we were managing our (physical) pain—books, signs of the changing seasons, but mainly our art, and she'd always ask what I was thinking about it, or about this or that work or exhibition she'd seen, what I was struggling with... We also talked a lot about sex and how important it was to her, and how much she suffered when she didn't have it. For my *At Her Age* "documentary," in which I asked women what experience, at any period in their lives, came to mind when they thought about what had made them feel old, she recalled a sentence that somebody had said to her: "I can't help feeling an immeasurable taint of past fuckings, which have marked your vagina. The invisible imprints are repellent." Imagine!

I'm sad that I was never able to persuade her to continue making the body-work that would express the mystery, glory, depth, elegance, and strength of the aging female body as she'd already done for the eye-mind-body in her youth. After all I've been through, she said, I won't give them the satisfaction of seeing my body in decay.

For a number of years, a triptych of her series, *Hand/Heart for Ana Mendieta*, made in 1986 at the time of her friend's death, has been hanging over my bed. I never met Ana Mendieta, but Carolee made me feel as enraged as she herself felt about Ana's death; its inherent horror and injustice aside, I think it typified for her the long and brutal (and casual) suppression of women in art, and the work depicts the dirty, bloodied hands of the woman artist clinging to such modest gains as she's struggled, or been suffered, to win. Since Carolee's death these pictures have changed: I feel that they now include traces of our conversations, of everything she was to me, infused in a physical thing, and that is not only deeply comforting, it's like I feel her presence in them. I have other physical things from her, for example, syringes, bandages, and stuff covered with her blood. She gave them to me when I visited her in the hospital, saying, I know you're the only person who will treasure something like that. I do. I do.

(Carolee Schneemann 1939 – 2019)



POST, POSTS, GAMES & RESISTANCE

Fernando Garcín Romeu

My grandpa Fernando was born in 1908, and in 1936 he fought against Fascism.

He had three daughters: Sol, Fernanda and Sylvia.

My father, when I was born, named me Fernando after my grandfather, who left no sons.

My grandparents, Fernando and Sol, and my parents, Vicente and Sol, had an air of humility, generosity, naivety and firmness that I have not seen in anyone else in later generations.



POST, POSTES, JUEGO Y RESISTENCIA.

Mi yayo Fernando nació en 1908 y en el 1936 luchó contra el fascismo.

Tuvo tres hijas, Sol, Fernanda y Sylvia.

Mi padre, cuando nací, me puso Fernando por mi abuelo, que no había tenido hijos.

Mis yayos Fernando y Sol, y mis padres Vicente y Sol, tenían un poso de humildad, generosidad, ingenuidad y firmeza que no he visto en nadie más en generaciones posteriores.

If during an attack the forward hits the post, play continues after the rebound; whereas if you score a goal, play has to stop. Hitting the post, then continuing to play on, can lead you to a different experience, then go on to live other new experiences. It opens a range of new possibilities. The game doesn't end. The game opens up. Life comes to life.

‘Yayo’ Fernando - my grandfather Romeu Peris - was born on June 24, on calle Pelayo¹ in Valencia, near the Trinquete de Pelayo², although he soon moved to another house in the working-class neighborhood near the houses of Ramón de Castro, where the railroads that went to Utiel ran past.

My mother - his daughter Sol Romeu Alfaro - gave me a notebook in which my grandfather kept track of his health, but on the other side of the notepaper, he wrote his memoirs.

I can decipher his handwriting because, in 1982, my first job was to accompany him through the neighboring villages identifying the boundaries of rural properties. He talks about all the many houses he lived in, including the Martí

¹ Streets in Valencia are often named after local or national notable people or ‘heroes’. In the 20th Century, when a régime changed, so would many street names. New heroes; old names not to be mentioned. Thus, naming streets has a strong political, emotional and affective meaning, not always apparent to ‘outsiders’.

² Famous sports venue for the game of handball (‘Trinquet’) in its Valenciano version, which has opposing players face each other, rather than play off a wall, as in the better known Basque style.

Si durante una jugada el delantero le pega al poste, el juego sigue tras el rebote, mientras que si entra en la portería ya no hay más juego. Pegar al poste y luego seguir la jugada podría remitir a tener una experiencia y luego seguir viviendo otras experiencias nuevas. Abre un abanico de nuevas posibilidades. El juego no termina. El juego se abre. La vida cobra vida.

El yayo Fernando, mi abuelo Romeu Peris, nació un 24 de junio de en la calle Pelayo de Valencia, cerca del Trinquete de Pelayo, aunque pronto pasó a otra casa en el barrio obrero cerca de las casas de Ramón de Castro, por donde pasaban las vías que iban a Utiel.

Mi madre, su hija Sol Romeu Alfaro, me entregó una libreta en la que mi yayo apuntaba incidencias de salud, pero por el otro lado de la libreta escribió sus memorias. Entiendo su letra porque mi primer trabajo fue ir con él en el 82' por los pueblos identificando lindes de fincas rústicas. Habla de todas las casas en que vivió por donde los cines Martí, luego por la zona de Joaquín Sorolla y Colón, y por trabajo en Almirante Cadarso, hasta llegar a Dr. Romagosa donde vivió muchos años, primero por su familia, y luego por casarse con mi abuela Sol Alfaro

cinemas, then around Joaquín Sorolla and Colón, and the days working at El Almirante Cadarso, until he ended up on Dr. Romagosa where he remained for many years, first with his family, and then after marrying my grandmother Sol Alfaro Moreno, who lived at number 3 of the same street, and finally to Avenida Blasco Ibáñez.

He talks about the difficulties his parents went through, his mother being from Xátiva, his father from Silla; of his father's many jobs: as a bricklayer in Alzira before coming to Valencia to the Ramón de Castro neighborhood, then working in the port and in the printing presses of the Mercantil Valenciano³, and of the hardships of his brother Manolo, and later of his brother Alberto, as well as the loss of his sisters Melín and Amparo.

His memoirs recount his attendance at La Democracia elementary school, which was a very imposing building on various levels on the street today known as Correos. His parents got married in Alzira, and due to the lack of jobs, my grandpa Fernando's father went back to work for Mercantil Valenciano, at 8 Pintor Sorolla.

“We lived on the 1st floor, where there was also the mezzanine for the newspaper; on the ground floor there was a large courtyard where the rotary presses and other facilities for the distribution of the newspaper were located, sending subscriptions to the nearby towns and to the distributors throughout the city, which were many. When we moved to Valencia is when I entered ‘La Democracia’, a Republican school where I learned to read and write, and so on – I was about 4 years old.”

Moreno que vivía en el número 3 de Dr. Romagosa, y luego finalmente a Avenida Blasco Ibáñez. Cuenta las dificultades que pasaron sus padres, su madre de Xátiva, su padre de Silla, los muchos trabajos de su padre, de albañil en Alzira luego en el puerto y en las rotativas de el Mercantil Valenciano cuando era director don Vicente Fe, y las penurias de su hermano Manolo y más tarde de su hermano Alberto, así como la pérdida de sus hermanas.

Relata su asistencia al colegio la Democracia, que era un edificio muy importante y de varias alturas que estaba en la calle hoy llamada de Correos “Nosotros vivíamos en el piso 1º de Pintor Sorolla 8, aunque había antes el entresuelo para uso del periódico; en los bajos existía un gran deslunado y allí se ubicaban las rotativas y las otras instalaciones para la distribución del periódico, suscripciones a los pueblos y a los repartidores por toda la ciudad que eran muchos. Al trasladarnos a Valencia es cuando entro en la Democracia, que era un colegio de los Republicanos y en donde aprendí a leer y a escribir etc – tenía unos 4 años.”

Tras golpear el poste una nueva vida se abre paso. Las personas que hemos perdido siguen con nosotros, de otra manera, en otra jugada, no les hemos perdido, no se han ido, están en la vida de los

³ a large circulation Valencian and regional newspaper

After hitting the post, a new life begins. The people we have lost are still with us, in another way, in another game, we have not lost them, they have not left, they are still alive in the games that come afterwards.

“The place where we lived was very cramped and uncomfortable, so my brothers Manolo, Alberto and myself went to a flat on Dr. Romagosa Street, number 6-8, which was opposite the gallery where my parents lived. After “la Democracia”, Manolo and I went to the Alliance Française, to take French classes, and there I met, or re-met Sol⁴, because of the proximity to her family...” Grandpa Romeu talks about the many jobs he had in the port and the lumber industry, and with El Mercantil Valenciano alongside my great-grandfather, when the great Vicente Fé was its director in the 1920s.

“When we moved to Pintor Sorolla 8 – he writes – I had already been seeing Sol and the other Alfaro with some frequency, since we lived about one block away. In the end, I worked in a lumber yard that belonged to a friend of my father's, and there I began to work regularly on the mezzanine and in the port. Ultimately I joined the Property Registration Office, starting in Colón 5, then moving on to Almirante Cadarso 7-9.”

When recalling how he met my grandmother Sol, my grandfather Fernando described her as the most extraordinary woman who ever existed.

⁴ Sol Alfaro Moreno, who would become his wife

juegos que vienen después de pegar en el poste.

“El sitio en donde vivíamos era muy estrecho e incómodo, a espera de reformas, y entonces fuimos mis hermanos Manolo, Alberto y yo a un piso en calle Dr. Romagosa, el 6 o el 8, que estaba enfrente de la galería en donde vivían mis padres. Después de la Democracia pasamos Manolo y yo a la Alianza Francesa, a las clases de francés, y allí conocí, o reconocí a Sol, por la vecindad con la familia de Sol...” (Sol Alfaro Moreno, la que sería su esposa).

Habla el yayo Romeu de los muchos trabajos que tuvo en el puerto y los madereros, y en el Mercantil Valenciano junto a mi bisabuelo cuando era su director en los años 29 el gran Vicente Fé.

“Al cambiarnos a Pintor Sorolla 8 –escribe el yayo Fernando- ya veía con cierta frecuencia a Sol y a los otros Alfaro, pues vivíamos a unos 300 metros. Finalmente trabajé en un almacén de maderas de un amigo de mi padre y allí comencé a trabajar normalmente en el entresuelo y en el Puerto. Ingresé en el Registro, calle de Colón 54. De Colón pasé a Almirante Cadarso números 7 o 9.”

Al evocar cómo conoció a mi abuela Sol, mi yayo Fernando la describe como la mujer más extraordinaria que nunca existió. “Mi traslado a Dr. Romagosa fue providencial para mí, porque allí enfrente vivía Sol, con su madre y hermanas y allí me enamoré de ella (afortunadamente para mí).

Post, Posts, Games & Resistance

“My transfer to Dr. Romagosa was providential for me, because Sol lived opposite, with her mother and sisters, and that’s where I fell in love with her (fortunately for me). Being so close, we resumed our almost forgotten friendship; and what happened, happened. The change of address was also partly motivated by my brother Manolo’s illness, leading to a few years when we had a very hard time - looking back I remember my frequent trips to collect milk for my brothers at a place we called ‘la Gota’⁵ which was a shop on Colón where there are clothing stores today, almost on the corner of the street that faces the Law Courts; there was a wicker basket with wire threads with milk bottles in their different square holes, and I went along wearing a blue-and-white striped bib, passing between “La Glorieta” (with its very beautiful walls and wrought-iron railings) and “La Audiencia”.

“When we got married our first address was at Pintor Sorolla 1, where the Banco Exterior is today. The Café La Habana was next door. In Poeta Querol there was our hair salon and the very famous second-hand bookstore in Belenguer, which was completely inundated, of course, in the floods that followed, as was the entire area; then we moved to number 6 of the same street, and finally to Dr. Romagosa, number 3.”

In 1936 the Franco military coup and the terrible Civil War occurred. Grandpa Fernando Romeu tells of this Fascist coup and how he went through different phases, and fled from certain radical left-wing groups that were dedicated to looting. He was always a Republican, always, his sympathies were directed towards a kind of reasonable left-wing regionalism, a

Al estar tan cerca reanudamos nuestra casi olvidada amistad y vino lo que vino. El cambio que hicimos de casa también en parte estaba motivado por la enfermedad de Manolo—volviendo la vista atrás recuerdo de mis viajes seguidos a recoger la leche para mis hermanos a la llamada (Gota) que era un local en la calle de Colón en donde hoy existen tiendas de ropa, casi esquina a la calle que da la espalda a la Audiencia; era en una cesta de mimbre con hilos de alambre con botellas en sus distintos orificios cuadrados para ellas y yo iba con un babero a rayas blanco y azul, y entonces pasaba por entre la Glorieta (entonces cerca de paredes muy bonitas y verjas de hierro y la Audiencia).

“Cuando nos casamos nuestro primer domicilio fue en Pintor Sorolla 1, en donde hoy está el Banco Exterior (café La Habana estaba al lado). En Poeta Querol estaba la peluquería nuestra y la librería de viejo muy famosa del Belenguer, que en la inundación que hubo después fue totalmente anegada, como toda la zona, luego pasamos al número 6 de la misma y luego a Dr. Romagosa, 3.”

En 1936 se produce el golpe franquista y la terrible Guerra Civil. Cuenta el yayo Fernando Romeu el golpe y cómo él fue pasando por diferentes fases, y huyó de ciertas agrupaciones radicales de izquierdas que se dedicaban al saqueo. Siempre republicano, siempre, sus simpatías se dirigían hacia cierto regionalismo de izquierda, un socialismo mezclado con cierto liberalismo blasquista.

⁵ *the drop, or droplet*

moderate socialism mixed with a certain “Blasquista”⁶ liberalism.

He went to fight on the Teruel front, alongside with the officers, troops and colleagues he mentions, but he came down to Valencia when my aunt Sylvia was born (my mother and my aunt Fernanda were born before the outbreak of war; Sylvia in the middle of the conflict). He returned to the front, this time to Ciudad Real, and saw his commanders and companions fall. He was wounded in Corbalán, in Teruel, and was taken away by stretcher bearers who survived two attacks. He arrived safely at the Estacion del Norte in Valencia with his brother, and had the good fortune to meet a doctor friend of his father’s at the station.

I was always amazed by his large scar along his side and leg. He told me how Fascist barbarism had imprisoned a brother of my grandmother, who was Mayor of Valencia in 1931, Vicente Alfaro, & locked him up in Paterna with Rector Peset (Peset was executed, Vicente Alfaro transferred to the prisons of Cádiz and Seville until he was released through a favor from a friend of his brother Andrés, who, yes, was my uncle Andreu Alfaro's father).

My Grandfather’s great joy was my grandmother and their daughters; his great enemy was Fascism. He wanted to better learn “el valenciano” which his parents spoke only in private. I have since found out a little more about the significance of everything that Alzira meant to his mother; Godella, and the house shared by the Romeus; and Natzaret to the Alfaros.

Vicente Alfaro died in Switzerland, in exile. He never wanted to be buried in Spain. Alberto, my grandpa Romeu’s brother, progressively lost his sight due to his years in the Fascist prisons.

Se fue al frente de Teruel, estuvo con jefes, tropas y colegas que cita, y bajó a Valencia cuando nació mi tia Sylvia (mi madre y mi tía Fernanda nacieron antes, Sylvia en plena guerra). Volvió al frente, esta vez a Ciudad Real, fueron cayendo sus mandos y compañeros, fue herido en Corbalán, en Teruel, se lo llevaron unos camilleros que sufrieron dos ataques, llegó a salvo a la Estación del Norte junto a su hermano, y tuvo suerte de encontrarse en la estación con un médico amigo de su padre.

Siempre me asombró su gran cicatriz entre el costado y la pierna. Cuenta cómo la barbarie fascista encarceló a un hermano de mi abuela, que fuera alcalde de Valencia en 1931, Vicente Alfaro, encerrado en Paterna junto al Rector Peset (Peset fue fusilado, Vicente Alfaro trasladado a las cárceles de Cádiz y Sevilla hasta que fue liberado por un favor de un amigo de su hermano Andrés, que, sí, era el padre de mi tío Andreu Alfaro).

Su gran alegría fue mi abuela y sus hijas, su gran enemigo el fascismo. Quiso ir aprendiendo mejor el valenciano que sus padres hablaban solo en intimidad. He conocido algo más de todo lo que significó Alzira, Godella y Natzaret. Vicente Alfaro murió en Suiza, en el exilio, nunca quiso ser enterrado en España. Alberto, el hermano de mi yayo Romeu, perdió la vista por los años en la cárcel fascista. Para entender España, hay que pensar en Luis Vives, Antonio Machado, Blasco Ibañez, María Zambrano, Estellés o Vicente Alfaro. Un país muy bestia, como cantaba Sisa. Indigno de haber preservado el fascismo, el nazismo.

⁶ *from the writer Blasco Ibañez*

To understand Spain, you have to remember Luis Vives, Antonio Machado, Blasco Ibáñez, María Zambrano, Estellés, or Vicente Alfaro. A very brutal country, as Sisa sang.

Unworthy of having preserved Fascism, Nazism.

People who went far away, or those who are in another world, followed another trajectory of the ball after hitting the post. If I hit the post, I don't want to conclude something, I don't intend to close the discussion, but rather leave the doors open, pointing towards new paths.

But my grandfather, 'Yayo' Fernando, had an extraordinary life: he was noble, happy, positive, somewhat chaotic, and detached.

They used to have illustrious visitors, such as the musician José Iturbi. My grandmother Sol was a student of Amparo Iturbi, sister of José. I remember the piano in Dr. Romagosa's house. That piano that I used to find quite forbidding, although I see in a photo that at least once they sat me on the stool.

Grandpa Fernando lived until the end of the 20th century and always supported my mother and myself in everything we did. In the 60's and early 70's he used to tell the taxi drivers that he was going to the Plaza de Emilio Castelar (as it was named during "La

Las personas que se fueron lejos, o las que están en otro mundo, siguieron otra trayectoria de la pelota tras golpear en el poste. Si yo posteo, no quiero concluir algo, no pretendo cerrar la discusión, sino dejar abiertas las puertas, apuntar hacia nuevos caminos.

Pero mi abuelo, el yayo Fernando, tuvo una vida extraordinaria, y era noble, alegre, positivo, algo caótico y desprendido. Solían tener visitas ilustres, como la del músico José Iturbi. Mi abuela Sol fue alumna de Amparo Iturbi, hermana de José Iturbi. Recuerdo el piano en la casa de Dr. Romagosa. Me inspiraba aquel piano mucho respeto aunque veo en una foto que una vez al menos me subieron a la banquetta.

Vivió el yayo Fernando hasta que terminó el siglo XX y apoyó siempre a mi madre y a mí en todo lo que hacíamos. En plenos años 60' y primeros 70' les decía a los taxistas que iba a la Plaza de Emilio Castelar (en lugar de "del Caudillo") y yo flipaba. Nació un 24 de Junio, día de San Juan, y solíamos comer en Las Arenas. Tenía la misma sonrisa clara y socarrona de mi madre.

República”, instead of “del Caudillo”⁷) and I was amazed. He was born on June 24, the festival of San Juan, and we used to eat in Las Arenas. He had the same clear, sly smile as my mother.

I have that photograph of me sitting on the lap of my grandpa, with my aunt at the house in Godella. My mother gave me her militiaman photo, and the amazing photo of my grandmother on the roof of Dr. Romagosa dressed in my grandfather's uniform.

Tengo esa fotografía en el regazo de mi yayo y mi tía en la casa de Godella. Mi madre me dio su foto de miliciano y la alucinante foto de mi yaya en la azotea de Dr. Romagosa vestida con el uniforme de mi abuelo.



My mother called the rooftop ‘el Terrado’: the Terrace. Sometimes, after a prank, I would hide there, as my ancestors might have done.

Hitting the post to continue with another new phase of the game.

Mi madre llamaba a la azotea el terrado (la terraza). A veces, después de una travesura, me escondía allí, como harían mis antecesoras. Dar en el poste para seguir con otra nueva jugada.

⁷ literally a Spanish translation of “Führer” – the Leader, i.e. Franco

(translation fgr & rcr)

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Photographic Cartography: Establishing Reality Through The Conditioning of The Senses

Keywords: phenomenology, emplacement, visual representation, kinesthetic, acoustic communication, cartography, media theory

Introduction

This paper investigates cartography and the charting of the planet: it examines the historical evolution of mapping reality through chronological and cartographic narratives; observing how, in recent time, the delineations of the surface and depths of the planet through photography have modified the perception of reality: the enforcement of the *unambiguous*, the making of *factuality* and *factography*, originating from Galileo's improvement of the telescope; how perception, *navigation*, and fruition of space have been engineered and manipulated by social, cultural, and economical interests. I inspect how the photographic reconstruction of reality has repercussions on the perceptual field: a multilayered mapping of the real through digital devices which generate cartographies, *soundographies*, *olfactographies*, *tasteographies*, and *tactileographies* of everyday life. I therefore argue that these maps, matrices, and chronologies (calendars and recurrences) are designed with the purpose of maintaining social order: a *status quo*, a conditioning of behaviors and habits in a given habitus of the senses.

The Past

It all started by looking through the glass, darkly: the discovery of lenses to magnify portions of reality and the development of the telescope in the early seventeenth century, provoking the acceleration of an ongoing process: the charting of the planet, the delineation of continents, oceans and mountains; the mapping of travelling and trading routes, the topography of cities and territories: tracing borders, indicating paths, representing, modifying, and conforming physical space through cartographic strategies. The first attempts were chronologies and chronicles, textual outputs: lists and tables of selected events, demarcating a past and a present chronology, what and who were to be mentioned depended on the social and cultural milieu of the time. Soon these tables developed into a mixture of text (still prominently used to enumerate

events) and drawings (marginalia, fables, representational attempts to describe physical spaces, historical events): the last stage of the process of cartographic exploration, explodes into a full-scale representation of the known world, a skillful combination of traced lines, dots, and textual aids. The telescope helped localize distant places, generating landscapes, profiles, tracing trajectories, cutting space into lines (the world map contained by latitudes and longitudes). The world itself becomes a grid: the representation of the morphology of an evolving and dynamic landscape reduced to a static relationship of geometrical lines and dots on a bidimensional plan, governed by principles of visual perspective. Funneling physical reality into a perceptual model which reflects the dominant cultural and the prominent social habitus: a model that provides allusions to what should be mentioned, traced, preserved and what conversely, should not.



Figure 1: Hartmann Schedel *Oculi Mundi*, from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, 1493

The Present

I am leaving home: taking a walk toward the subway station that, after a twenty-five-minute ride, will take me near my working place. I shut the door behind me and proceed to the nearest lift: after pushing a circular button, a purple arrow-shaped light appears in the center of it; a bell-like sound follows. At the arrival of the lift, a second bell sound signals the opening of the doors. The lift takes me to the ground floor, where a third bell sound marks the opening of the lift's doors. I am walking out of the building, and I follow a well-known path that, after a ten minute walk among alternating shadows of trees and metal shelters that protect from the

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scorching sun, or sudden heavy tropical thunderstorms, leads me to the subway station. Near the subway station I pass a bus stop. A few metres later, I have to wait at a crossroad for the pedestrian green light. Once I cross the road, I am at the entrance of the subway: escalators, elevators, gates, waiting for a train.

Here I notice a few things: the use of the lift: lights, sounds, the opening and closing of the doors, pauses, is a familiar routine; I have unconsciously mapped this out, I have embodied the procedure, the steps, the rules. The path to the subway is another map which I have stored within: trees, plants, shelters, buildings, bus stops, streets and crossroads are already part of an emplacement of my body in space, established by the repetition of almost identical actions. This information is not only visual, but also tactile, olfactory, sonic; gustatory, perhaps. I do not need a photograph, because the space and the objects inhabiting it are already part of my set of references, put aside somewhere in my brain.

But I am nevertheless curious: with my phone I open the web map and check my location, looking for the direction from my flat to the subway station. The map proposes optional pathways for: walking, by car, bike, bus, signaled by a track of dots, like Hansel's trail of crumbs in the forest; I have at my disposal specific 'views': default (a sort of topographic map with streets and buildings), satellite, terrain, street; a few more options are also available to highlight traffic, restaurants, attractions, and so forth. I select the walking option, default view, and I compare the result with my own embodied mental map. The trail of crumbs follows the exact same path I have learnt by trial and error: the topographic map is not taking into consideration different levels of altitude or vegetation (although that is possible by selecting terrain or satellite view), while I can identify the existence of some of the shelters along the path: the map considers mostly structures which are man-made. The map I am looking at is obviously not 'reality' but it appears to help trace a trajectory from point to point: I wonder if I would be able to reach the subway station on the first attempt solely by relying on the digital map; I also wonder if I would be able to make sense of it, if I had never had a previous experience of reading maps (physical or virtual). The map seems to depend on a basic understanding of the translation which occurs between real space and the reading of it in a bidimensional representation. The level of abstraction (or perhaps simplification and reduction) implied requires a considerable amount of internal reimagination and cross-references

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(memory, experience, similarities) to accept the translated chart as a description of physical reality. I should imagine then that a photograph would work better: more related to the trees, plants, insects, animals which I see and pass, (a considerable number of monkeys are sometimes encountered along the way), which seem more salient than street signs, streetlights, and the pavement shown on maps. I walk toward the subway station. I will return to this after a short digression.



Figure 2: Google Map (terrain view, 2022)

Atemporal Stillness

With the advent of photography, the process of mapping enters a more sinister phase. Since its appearance, photography has surreptitiously replaced reality: through an operation of mimesis and temporal denial, the photographic subject (objects and bodies in space) enters into a limbo of timeless existence: a death by design (a subject that is always past its current state of being) which slices reality into geometrical pockets of space (the visible and invisible inside and outside the frame). Not forgetting that the early photographic experiments were perceived more akin to witchcraft than to an optical impression of light on a plate, the photographic gesture soon became normalized and therefore quickly welcomed, acquiring a status of objectivity which is so essential to the modern quest for scientific truth. Arguably a less frequently questioned quality of the photographic image is that it endorses a recording of reality as it appears to eyesight: an ephemeral instant of time captured on a photographic plate, a film, or digital pixels. Leaving aside the possibility of digital retouching, now extremely popular in many fields of entertainment, research and artistic exploration, photographic images pretend to abandon the subjective, casting it aside, propelling the objectification of reality, the *idée fixe* of

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modern and postmodern thought so preoccupied with scientific truth: marking the philosophical demise and repositioning of the thinking habits of premodern societies. Photographic cartography, satellite mapping, and topographies become extensions of a preconceived and predetermined reality: a selection of the visible which satisfies particular objectives. Photographic cartographies function as a reiteration and extension of the visible: satellite and street maps suggest pathways of movement, direction, rhythm, and tempo of the human body. By demarcating reality with predefined options to conform to, modern charts determine the position and behavior of the body in space.

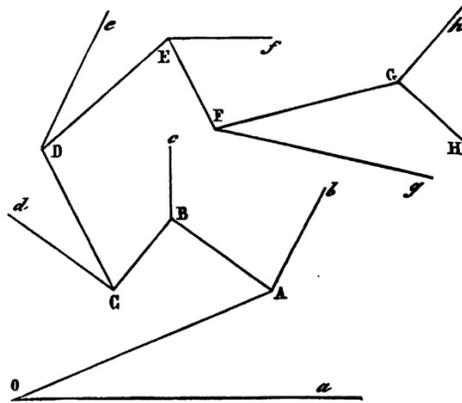


Figure 3: Charles Renouvier's Uchronian map, 1876

Imaginary Landscapes

Returning to my web map I switch to street view and zoom in to street level: an ingenious idea that puts you literally on the level of the street with a series of 360-degree photographs that should lead you, in the fashion of a bird-eye topographic view, to your selected destination, while also providing the feel of augmented reality: a more dynamic, personal 'presence' within the virtuality of the experience. Something very different from what I could have imagined is occurring instead. I am suddenly catapulted onto the highway, which is next to the walkway, the stage of my trail of virtual breadcrumbs: this happens because whoever took pictures of this same area was in fact in a car or bus or some other means of transport moving on the highway; therefore, the available pictures all show traces of someone else's path taken in car or similar vehicle. What I am witnessing is an image of a road that unfolds in front of me, with other cars

along the way. I have the strangest feeling of being on the road, suspended in midair, in between an oncoming car, and a car ahead of me, the latter disappearing at the margin of the photographic perspective. No matter how much I try to be thrown back onto the walkway, the only available path is indeed the highway. I can see a portion of the walkway on the margin of the photograph provided, but it does not help to recollect any of the main features I can actually see while walking: this is because the photo is taken at high speed and whatever is not in direct focus is actually blurred or distorted.

From this I understand a few interesting things: the street view allows me to see things seen previously by someone else who decided that that very spot and instant in time was worth a photo; the photo therefore has a specific direction and focus which cannot be changed: the photo here is not, as it is often regarded, a neutral object recording facts; rather it is closer to a metemap of another person's propensity, someone else's mental projection. The existence of gaps in the photographic reconstruction of space is not itself surprising but leads to further considerations and questions: without my prior experience of the terrain (to use the web map nomenclature), would I be able to understand the characteristics of the area? Would I eventually be able to imagine that there is a walkway next to the highway or would I rather imagine that the map is somehow misleading or inaccurate? How will I gauge the accuracy and precision of a map of an area never seen before? How can I be certain that the path suggested is actually the best choice for the purpose? And, finally, how will I be able to evaluate the appearance of the area if the photographs select only what has been previously judged relevant by someone else? How many gaps are there, how much missed information? Doing a little research on the web map application I find a fascinating preference which answers some of my questions (meanwhile generating some more); zooming out from street level, the street view has other features: by switching on the 'images' option it is possible to display on the map images that are labelled 'street view', 'photo path', and 'photo sphere'. Those appear as bright blue lines or circles disseminated all over the topographic map marking the spot where someone else took a photo of the street in 360 degrees (street view), or a regular street photo (photo path), and a 360-degree individual photo of an area of interest (photo sphere). This metemap reveals what customary cartography hides: the convergence of photos taken in areas that attract some popular consensus, and the lack of photos taken signifying the areas to be ignored. In this part

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of the world, not too surprisingly, preferences are for shopping malls, featuring the highest concentration of ‘photo sphere’. A further digression.



Figure 4, 5: Google Maps (photo sphere, and street view, 2022)

Sensuous Surrogate

While sight seems ostensibly to be the main sense concerned in photographic outputs, the cartographic grid goes far beyond mere visual responses. The visible proposed by photographic maps suggests haptic feedback, olfactory, gustative, and aural cues. I am nearing the subway station: to cross the road I need to wait for a double signal from the street crossing light: a changing of the light from red to green, accompanied by a change of sound emitted by the apparatus. Here I suddenly recall my lift: a purple light to call the elevator, two different sounds for the opening and closing of the doors. By walking into the subway station through a maze of descending escalators (or a quicker lift), I arrive in front of the entrance gates: I tap a card, the light switches from red to green, accompanied by a distinct sound, and the gates open. I recall my lift a second time. While waiting at the platform, announcements in four different languages (English, Chinese, Malaysian, and Hindi) emphasize what to do and what not to do; what to be aware of; how to behave in such and such situations. The train approaches: the doors open and close with two distinct sounds, accompanied by a red or green light, and an announcement to reinforce the action that is happening (again in four languages). To get to my workplace, a good number of stops are in between: the same opening and closing of the car doors. I will be reminded of my lift eleven times. In the subway, photos are not allowed: the web map is silent, but the path here is univocal, the train cannot deviate, the human bodies are

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contained, railroaded, literally. Upon exiting the subway station, a number of operations are identical, although reversed: getting out of the train car, getting out through the train station's gates, following the escalators up to the floor level. Now I am in the centre of the city: by opening the web map I can access numerous bits of information regarding the location of food and coffee places, services, shops, shopping malls, etc. The photographic map is not only providing hints about the location: it shows me how the food and drinks look, how the restaurant is designed, the amenities, and the feel of the place. What I am experiencing is not only a visual representation of a space: all my senses are aroused by feedback provoked by the initial stimulus given by the photographs; I can smell the food, taste the coffee, touch the seats, hear the chattering, embracing the colors, textures, atmosphere, and appearance of the place. I may not be completely aware of it, but the image is telling me what I should expect, what I will be able to do, how I will sit, and what I will eventually eat or drink. This is true for the other images that throw me little crumbs of a place, a preview of possible experiences: crossroads, parks, walkways, public spaces, shopping malls, service buildings, hospitals, schools.

A first realization: the fragmented vision encouraged by the photographic collage of disparate images collected by disparate actors, bodies on the move, appears well suited to a culture of distraction, the general feeling of perpetual diversion and alienation, propelled by device applications, web surfing, social media, and messenger services. Space is no longer experienced with the synchronous unity of perception and emplacement: paraphrasing Barry Truax, before audio-visual recording technology, no place had ever been experienced twice, exactly the same, nor had any space ever been experienced outside its original context. We encounter a paradox, significant in modern and postmodern technology: what is it that makes an experience itself, when surrogates of someone else's direct or indirect experiences are fed to us through device applications, including images, videos, game simulations of any sort, virtual reality, extended reality, etc? Vilem Flusser's notion of technical images comes to mind: the Czech philosopher argues that what was formerly served by linear text, the transmission of information, has been carried forward in the past few decades by a universe of technical images based on the use of photographs, films, videos, television screens, and computers. Flusser is concerned with the cultural consequences and the implications of the mutating forms of experiences, perceptions, modes of behavior, and values of such a social shift. The space might

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remain a photograph, an anonymous ghostly representation; it might be experienced through preconceived notions generated by the photograph itself; it might be missed altogether, if it were not 'being' on the web map: the virtual presence that makes things 'real', objectified by the authority of cartographic representation, the 'presence' on the web, the images, the online reviews, the search engines, the social media. The power of the telescope multiplied endlessly, in the palm of one hand: imaginary landscapes, a dismissal of firsthand experiences. During my walk toward the workplace I notice that some shops are not mentioned on the map: I am wondering if it is a paid service for the shop 'to be' on the map; whether it is a matter of the frequency with which the map is updated (which also bears on the question of what is the purpose of such updates: what sort of locations or services have to be updated more often than others, and for what reason?); or are there perhaps other requisites 'to be' on the map. I am opening the street view (the so-called photo sphere): the shop is suddenly there, so also are many people within the captured image. A sudden perplexity: do the map services need any permission or disclaimer to put so many faces of strangers on a digital photo that everyone can access and that will remain on the web for months or years (or forever)? Am I on a web map without my knowing? I wonder. So, the shop (like many others) does not exist in the topographic rendering but appears in a photo taken by a stranger who, like me, passed in front of it, today, yesterday or one year ago: a sort of schizophrenic existence. I digress, again.

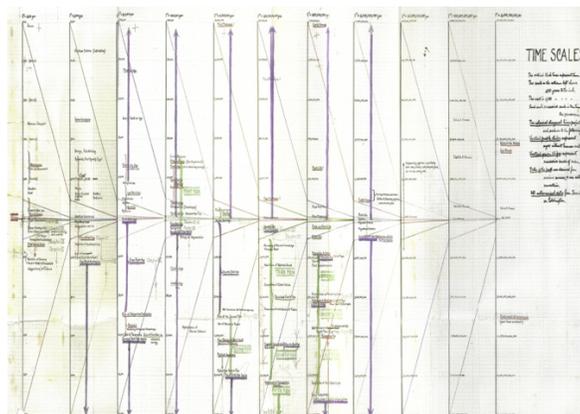


Figure 6: Olaf Stapledon's manuscript timeline (from *Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future*, 1930)

Sascia Pellegrini

At The Margins

A photographic map is a window through portions of the visible and invisible: what is in the frame excludes what is outside it; by elisions, reality is framed according to and purposefully by acceptable norms of behavior, enforced by social conventions. What is not captured in the map is forgettable; at least unwise, or even illicit to explore. A counter map of the liminal, generated by photographic cartography, is composed in the background: this operation reflects (as through a glass) an array of conditions at the margins, borderline, a liminality which is away from the center of the socially acceptable. Abandoned spaces within urban structures, buildings destined to change use every few years: time-based architecture whose interiors are continuously reshaped and rebuilt, generating gaps, interstices, liminalities produced by dividing walls and geometrical inconsistencies; homeless, human bodies whose presence in the city is often relegated to the very margins, the outskirts, hidden or forgotten areas of urban development; digital devices, applications, web search engines, whose technology is designed to cut off undesirable options, alternative circuits, providing instead targeted selections made to perpetuate commodification of everyday living for a mass of anodyne consumers. What is at the periphery, what is evading and baffling the grid, the matrix, is also a place of subversion, of erosion of the enforced social fabric: heterotopic places, per Foucault's notion; at the margins of collective memories, the denial of Bourdieu's habitus. In this regard we haven't developed much from the mediaeval notion of mapping reality through an artistic rendition of charts, maps, Books of Hours, sacred and secular architecture: monsters, freaks and dangers lurk always at the frontier of the known world, while approaching its center, we find stability, where authority prevails, where the righteous are watching: state, police, social control, panopticon. An entire theory of liminalia asserts the *status quo*, through an antagonistic stance: negative and positive, endless relationship of Cartesian dualisms embedded in the cartographic system of thinking and planning reality.

I am arriving at the entrance of my workplace: I need to scan a card to pass security, a first buzzing sound; I scan the same card again to access the lift, a second buzzing sound; I scan once more to open the door's entrance at the desired floor, followed by a tap for the office entrance, the administration, the meeting room, the rooftop: a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and a seventh buzzing sound. The space is strictly regulated and temporal-ised by continuous

Photographic Cartography...

reminders, localizing the body through audio-visual cues: countless cameras are watching from above, orchestrating the space, the movement of human beings, the discipline of time. I observe here that the reality of the workplace is not unlike the reality provided for 'free' by the web map and its functions. The two contexts are dissimilar only on the surface of things: digital maps track movements of people, taking photos, recording trajectories, as the cameras and scanners do; the space is equally monitored and temporal-ised in the background. The freedom of choice for the users of web map applications, devices, and tracking tools, is only a cosmetic polish of an ingrained system of technological surveillance, to the profit and with the connivance of a prevailing consumerism; a system of exploitation which feeds on the passivity of consumers, and the commoditization of everyday life. Maps that are themselves, in this regard, a system of consumerism, behind a mask of convenience and functional productivity. The supervision, control, and discipline of the body in space is a necessity for such a system to be effective, and photographic cartography is part of the actual *modus operandi* of social control and surveillance.

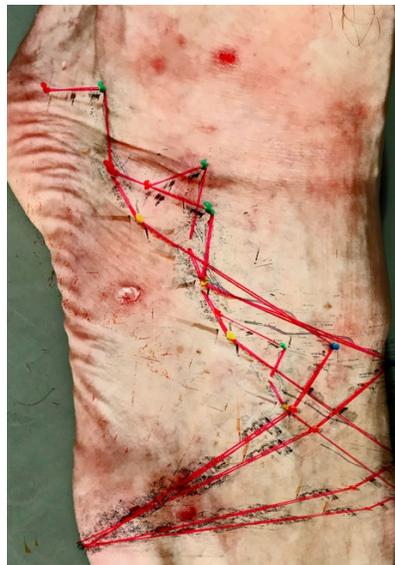


Figure 7: A map of the foot, 2021 (credit: Sascia Pellegrini)

An Open Ending

I look back to where I started this excursus into modern cartography and photographic mapping: the lenses of a telescope took travelers far away, to places of discovery and awe, uncharted territory, unknown mysteries and possibilities, dangers and perhaps excitement; temporal uncertainty and spatial infinitude. The modern web map is taking me to the nearest coffee shop, to the bank and the closest shopping center, tracing the quickest triangulation to save time and travel less. I am not sure if I am completely fair in this depiction of differences (and similarities) between a telescope and a web map, but it seems reasonable to ask ourselves how much freedom we have acquired along the way by profiting from so-called technological advancements. Is it not a *cul-de-sac*, a baleful trap, which we have set, and in which we have placed ourselves, in the name of progress and efficiency? Is there an alternative pathway for digital technology and devices to be in fact a positive addition to our freedom of choice, rather than a grid of preestablished options? Here is not even the matter of either/or: technology has always accompanied human beings on their evolutionary path, by developing, tacitly, a special relationship: technological inventions are conditioned, paraphrasing Tzvetan Todorov, by the evolving symbolic structure of the human being; a *technology* of symbolism evolving into a technology of tools. Do we need different symbols? Can we bypass the utilitarian aspect of these technologies by channeling the latter into a Lefebvrian archi-technology of enjoyment? Can we, unplugged from automated machines, re-establish a more optimistic balance between technological prosthetics and the human body?

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João Cunha - from the series *Investigating Objects* - Open Work / variation 8
Frame and translucent film

"mud" - an interabilities violin quartet - TENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE - March-April, 2024E.V.

The name "mud" is an abbreviation of "mudras", the ritual hand-poses of the Buddha priests and the Shiva priests of Bali. Seven mudras have been picked as fingering positions for the violin neck. This is NOT meant to 'make any sense' except insofar as the awkwardness of the positions may produce what would ordinarily be less-than-desirable sound quality. The intention ISN'T to create or evoke a ritualistic feel, instead, it's to create a clumsy 'muddiness'.

Four violins are to be used: a half-size one, a 3/4 size one, a full adult sized one, all acoustic - & an full adult sized electric one. The acoustic violins may be amplified, if deemed necessary for all 4 to be heard equally, but it's preferable if the electric violinist plays at the acoustic violin volumes. The reason for using 4 different violins is to increase the awkwardness & to exploit the differences that'll be produced in pitch & pitch quality.

To make playing this even physically doable, the player is encouraged to use what I'm calling here a 'folk position' with the base of the violin in one's lap & the top of the neck parallel to the player's chest - this is in contrast to the more common 'classical' position in which the base of the violin is held between the chin & the shoulder so that the violin protrudes out from the body at a roughly 90% angle.

The score is fairly straight-forward: a photograph shows the fingering position to be used. The measures are divided by the conventional vertical line. However, the measures have no tempo or meter & each player is to play at whatever pace they're moved to. Each measure is numbered. Players may repeat & prolong the measure at their whim. There's no rule calling for any simultaneity. Players may try to stay in sync with each other or not, it's not a competition. Therefore, if one player finishes long before the others that's fine. If another player ends long after the other players that's also fine. If everyone ends at the same time that's fine.

The electric violinist is encouraged to use effects. These can be as supportive &/or disruptive of what might be playable acoustically as the player wishes. My main request is that volume be kept low except, perhaps, for rare bursts of drama.

Each measure has a word that tells what bowing or plucking technique to use. Sometimes the technique will carry over into the next measure. Usually, that won't be the case. Here're the terms:

col legno battuto - striking the strings w/ the wood of the bow

col legno tratto - bowing w/ the wood of the bow

détaché - playing each note w/ a separate bow stroke

double stopping - playing 2 notes simultaneously

legato - playing multiple notes w/ one bow stroke

pizzicato - plucking the strings

quadruple stopping - playing 4 notes simultaneously (or close to it)

ricochet - bouncing the bow off the strings

sul ponticello - bowing over the bridge

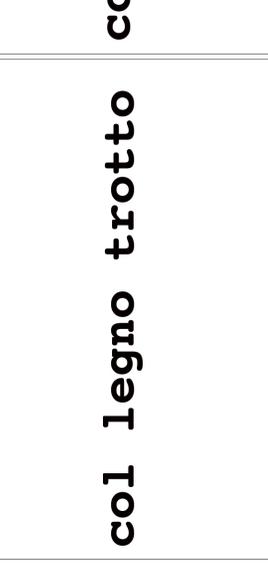
sul tasto - bowing over the neck

tremolo - fast repetition in bowing or plucking

triple stopping - playing 3 notes simultaneously (or close to it)



folk position

01	 <p>Mud 1</p>	legato	02	col legno trotto	03	 <p>Mud 2</p>	legato		
04	col legno trotto	05	col legno battuto	06	 <p>Mud 3</p>	07	legato		
08	col legno trotto	09	col legno battuto	10	détaché	11	 <p>Mud 4</p>	12	legato

13	col legno trotto	col legno battuto	14	col legno battuto	15	détaché	16	pizzicato quadruple stopping
17	 Mud 5 legato	col legno trotto	18	col legno battuto	19	col legno battuto	20	détaché
21	pizzicato quadruple stopping	pizzicato triple stopping	22	 Mud 6 legato	23	legato	24	col legno trotto

25

col legno battuto

26

détaché

27

pizzicato
quadruple
stopping

28

pizzicato
triple
stopping

29

pizzicato
double
stopping

30



31

legato

32

col legno trotto

33

col legno battuto

détaché

34

pizzicato
quadruple
stopping

35

pizzicato
triple
stopping

36

pizzicato
double
stopping

37

sul tasto

38



legato

39

sul ponticello

40



Mud 5

sul ponticello

41



Mud 4

sul ponticello

42



Mud 3

sul ponticello

The 3 players who get to this 1st 43 play it all the way to the end.

43



Mud 2

sul ponticello

Only the LAST 44 PLAYER plays this:

44



Mud 1

45

tremolo
double stopping

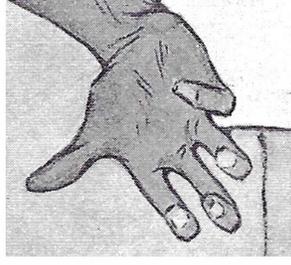
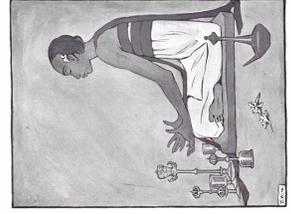
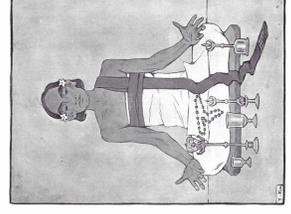
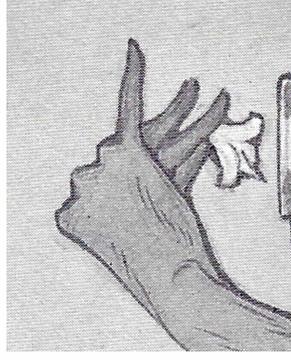
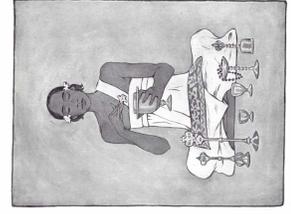
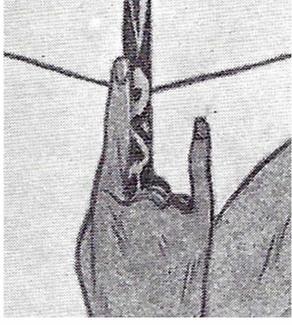
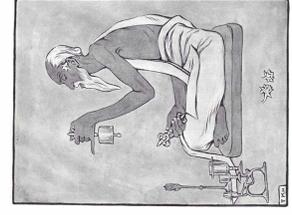
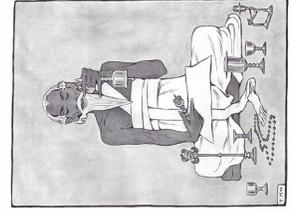
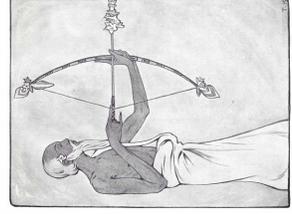
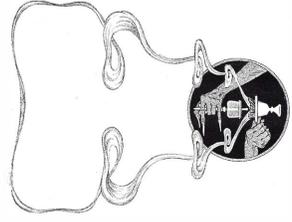
The ricochet should be dramatic 46 & can be repeated or played only once.

46

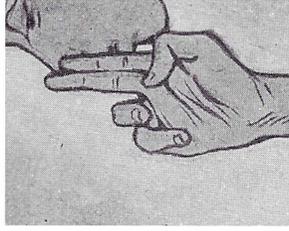
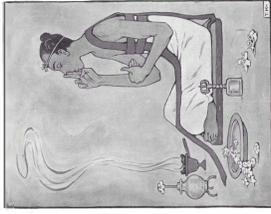
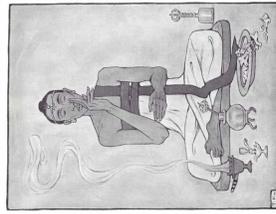
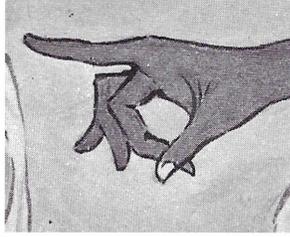
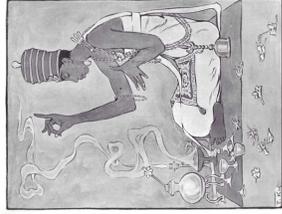
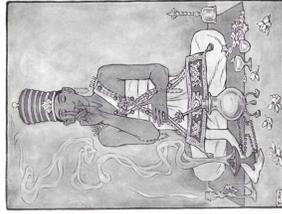
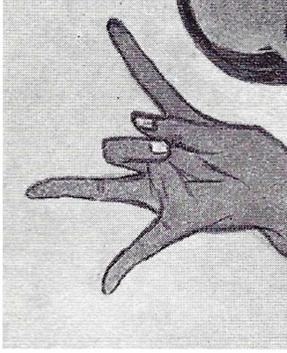
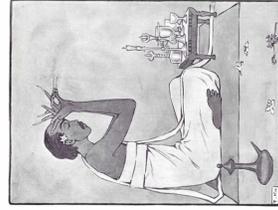
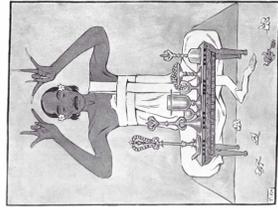
ricochet

47

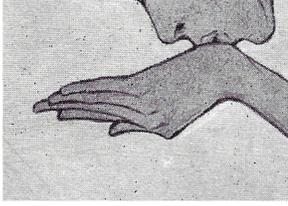
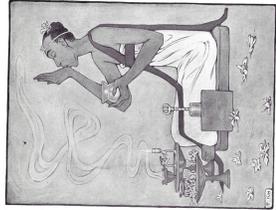
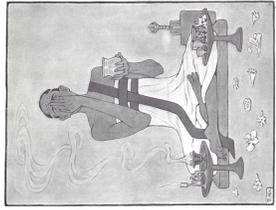
The 3 players who have been playing Mud 2 sul ponticello can either stop during measure 45 or fade out during measure 47.



Mudra illustrations by Tyra de Kleen



Mudra illustrations by Tyra de Kleen



Mudra illustrations by Tyra de Kleen

Keith Eisenbrey

Sometime Music in New Albion

In 1986 I started keeping a listening journal. I missed taking notes and making doodles as I had in school. My only requirement was to identify the piece I was listening to, but if I also had a thought to write down I would. In 2010 I started posting an edited version as a weekly blog, found at www.NowMusicInNewAlbion.blogspot.com, at first sharing only such comments and responses as I thought might be interesting to stray readers. But over time my practice has shifted, and it now consists of a nearly verbatim typescript of my handwritten notes, edited and formatted for such clarity as I can or care to muster.

The following are a handful of sample blog posts from the last few years. I had considered trying to find and share a few “best of” entries, but after some frustration realized that doing so would only obscure what those entries are (notes to myself, taken on the fly) and be less illuminating than letting it all hang out there.

Keith – January 20, 2022

Saturday, June 24, 2017

Playlist

Recorded

June 20, 2017

AKU (Bard Chapel Version) - Keith Eisenbrey

AKU exists in several versions, none of them the pristine digital archival copy that might have existed had I had the know-with-all in 1980 to imagine such a thing. The best copy for which I had playback capability was the cassette copy made for me by the listening library folks at the University of Washington. It was this copy that I took with me to Annandale-on-Hudson in 1982 and played for Ben Boretz and my fellow students. Ben thought it could use some space around it so Bruce Huber loaned me the borrow of a guitar amp and a second cassette deck, and a couple of hours, so we could play it into the chapel and record the results. By the time I ripped it to digital the recording had deteriorated somewhat, causing a certain amount of wobble. A long story whose point is simply that AKU, as a personality, seems to actively seek out noise. Perhaps this is why we get along so well.

Exploration of the space-noise continuum. Parts of partials lag behind other parts of partials. Speeds of speaking. The speculative purpose of composition by design is, one hopes, to elicit, out of its designed complexity, unforeheard, undesigned wonders, such as these. Not for the faint of heart. Awesomely cruddy. Puts up a hell of a fight || flicker of light on water || durations hang past rational valuation.

*Hey, Mr. Rain (version 1) - The Velvet Underground [from *Another View*]*

Calling down the powers from above, a rain dance in song. Feature: a far more subtle tempo shift than in *Heroin*.

Banned Rehearsal 247 - Karen Eisenbrey, Keith Eisenbrey, Aaron Keyt [February 1991]

Candles burn in the barn fly attracted to flame becomes the wick stories in rhythm sipping around the edge of rhythm's gloss and falling in drunk being drunk. Radio: not atonement theology, but atonement pornography. The radical onslaught. Though even here a compositional tactic: wait till “A” has been forgot then spring “A” on you again and again, playing with the rhythm of forgetting and expectation. Richly sonorous affront on all fronts to professionalism's hegemony. It is important to cease thinking in marketable chunks, sound bites, convenient 12 packs.

Sometime Music in New Albion

June 22, 2017

Heart Attack - Sleater-Kinney [from *Call The Doctor*]

Almost perfect! Cut the vocal before the last 5 words remind us what song we are hearing and you've got it. Fine Feature: Chorus has a shrill hook nearly unrecognizable as vocal in pedigree.

(...)

June 27, 2019

exploring the rigors of in between - Elaine Barkin - Alice Macgonigal, Louise MacGillivray, Marcy Dicterow-Vaj, Lynn Lusher Grants, Erika Duke Kirkpatrick [from *Open Space 12*]

careful positioning of what we might be between
a piece?: a passage, a piece of a passage

Banned Rehearsal 706 - Karen Eisenbrey, Keith Eisenbrey, Neal Kosály-Meyer [August 2006]

impact and repercussions
various time lags and rhythms
composing around an undiscovered center

hoots and toots
plucks and clucks
strums and drums
sounds have spans however brief
often quite a few
some many
dulcimer abides calmly
we blow into cylinders and globs
(globbish chambers)
drifting off and hunkering down and getting down to the business of truly drifting off, playing the room for its
occasional possibilities
coulda gone there
coulda gone here
here coulda gone

Singham - Sukhwinder Singh [from *Bollygood 2*]

anything can be thrown into a driving beat in any order
soundtrack vamps are the same in any language

Climbing The Water Tower - Karen Eisenbrey [August 2016]

sonically charged clumping in a large public cylinder
just that, then turn the device off

Karen made this lovely recording the day we played Steve Scribner's piece in Volunteer Park, Seattle.

(...)

Keith Eisenbrey

Saturday, June 27, 2020

Playlist

Streamed

Wayward in Limbo

“With the Chapel closed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wayward Music Series now moves from the concert hall to the living room. In place of our usual ten monthly concerts, Nonsequitur is curating and commissioning ten Seattle artists each month to create a series of streaming audio sessions of exclusive material. Many of these will be essentially ‘live’ performances recorded at home for this occasion. Others may create a mix of pre-recorded material that has not been previously released elsewhere.”

- from the Wayward Music Series website at <https://www.waywardmusic.org>

June 20, 2020

Marina Albero

solo piano and hammer dulcimer improvisations

tethered continuities
arrived at by another experience
without question

world without meta-thought or reflection
prior to or innocent of

these are water colors of musics
deflected from wandering outside
by rutted roads
letting feeling flow wistful and placid

all bounds firmly in place
time is left behind

June 21, 2020

Beth Fleenor (Crystal Beth)

Inside Outside

let us breathe

(that’s easy)

long comfort loops cushion our floating
incense and fabric hangings
soul masseuse

let go what may be held tight
there’s the spot

the ape aggression
channel it for focus
(Beth boxing)

Sometime Music in New Albion

we are brought back down
undoes itself
to close benedictus

June 25, 2020

Lori Goldston

Yellowstone Score

impressions (like Rich Little):
but here:
im-instrumentations of:
a circle of didgeridus all being played by Jimi Hendrix

inflections
where the flux flexes
or inflects or fluctuates

the stones that shape the surface shift in their beds

magmatic flow
ooze hum

the river of plastic mineral beneath
plays a planettheremin

the age of resin spheres

the core is an open string

Recorded

June 20, 2020

Polonaise in B-flat Major, op. posth - Frédéric Chopin - Peter Katin

composed at the age of seven or so (1817)
one might guess Schubert
music for home use, elegant but not ornate

Symphony in D minor (#7) - Felix Mendelssohn - English Bach Festival Orchestra, William Boughton

polyphony reflowers
firmly enlightened

These string symphonies are often compared to Beethoven because of the counterpoint, but Mendelssohn was more fluent in imitating counterpoint than Beethoven was. This is music for musicians, for sure. The last movement has a great opening moment: something is about to happen! A fugue of course. Once fugue infiltrates a piece it gets everywhere.

Keith Eisenbrey

Impromptu in F minor, Op. 142 #1 - Franz Schubert - Murray Perahia

That guitar-string-plucking-like undulation in the middle register must be a bear to control. Lovely modulations.

6 Studies on Caprices by Paganini, Op. 3 - Robert Schumann - Peter Frankl

fingery at a prestidigitous rate

The practioners of pianism were starting to find where they could push their newly fangled thingumabob. First they discover mimicry, a comic routine, a puppet show. Eusebius takes over. The use of all the registers is spectacular.

Grande Messe des Morts, Op. 5 - Hector Berlioz - London Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Chorus, Wandsworth School Boys' Choir, Colin Davis, Ronald Dowd

There is no wasted sound in this. Berlioz rethought each instrument afresh.

When I was at the University of Washington I sang first tenor in the chorus for a performance of this piece. There are moments listening now I find myself thinking along with my old part.

If you are going to commit word painting then be as blatantly literal as you possibly can. There is no sense trying to hide what you're doing.

Why were Requiems such an idée fixe for the Romantics? Was it the death thing or the Mozart thing? Were they all trying to finish Mozart's?

What a megalomaniac this guy was.

Frère Jacques in funeral tones, what Mahler borrowed in his first symphony.

Political satire? Rex Tremendae? in 1837? in Paris? Who would that have been?

The size of the forces forces the slow rate of affect drama and the massive granularity of the details. He pushes it as far as he can. These massive productions with hundreds of people involved must have been important to the revolutionary survivors - morale boost? regicidal remorse?

The famous trombones and flutes in the Hostias are trying to imitate, or create anew, the image of a pre-Gothic soundworld. Then he freakyweirds it.

Overture to Russlan and Lyudmilla - Mikhail Glinka - Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner

a little opera complete

June 21, 2020

Tannhäuser, Act I - Richard Wagner - Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Josef Greindl, Wolfgang Windgassen, Eberhard, Waechter, Gerhard Stolze, Franz Crass, Georg Paskuda, Gerd Nienstedt, Anja Silja, Grace Bumbry, Else-Margrete Gardelli, Chor der Bayreuther Festspiele, Wilhelm Pitz

He's not exactly the master of transitions, or of timing.

when you open your opera in Orgy-Central
where you gonna go?

Sometime Music in New Albion

Sorry ma'am, I want to marry a nice girl.
that'll go well

The style of singing, as a thing in itself, is crude and unattractive. It does fill a big space bigger than life.

In these pre-leitmotif days he makes whole swaths of music stand for broad ideas - like immovable stage sets. They are too unwieldy to penetrate the drama, so he uses filler scrubbing. He is obsessed with enunciating his words, the music tags along stiffly.

Now he sets them all singing all manly, the Romantic ideal of brotherhood. Women are not a part of this, not even the nice girls.

So the act starts with an onstage (actual) orgy and ends with a vocal (projected) orgy. He did know how to storyboard.

Es muss ein Wunderbares sein - Franz Liszt - Thomas Quasthoff, Justus Zeyen

Harmonic shifts are controlled so that each note within them is essential.

Where are you, little star? - Modest Mussorgsky - Benjamin Luxon, David Willison

each note, like Liszt above, is planned so that the harmonies go to the wrong inversion and spacing, in just the right way to ring like a bell.

June 22, 2020

Quartet in A, op. 26 - Johannes Brahms - Eastman Quartet

passionate utterances kept within bounds of contrapuntal comportment
drawing room social

Scherzo a la Russe, Op. 1#1 - Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky - Ramzi Yassa

concert piece for large audience with piano virtuoso obbligato

June 23, 2020

Messe in F minor - Anton Bruckner - Symphonie-Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Eugen Jochum, Maria Stader, Claudia Hellmann, Ernst Haefliger, Kim Borg, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Kurt Prestel

reaching without
ever reaching

holding patterns
can't hold

Kyrie as a piece
is never a piece
it is an image of experiencing a piece

what it is of the Haydnesque model:
not the outlines
but the flesh
outside the lines

Keith Eisenbrey

processes the text
with us
activating liturgy

pert little hosanna entrance
leads into a massive sound
and goes out before we can grasp
how it doesn't fit
like everything else

we are within a space
in which Mass is being

Symphonic Variations on an Original Theme - Antonín Dvořák - London Symphony Orchestra, István Kertész

The short tripartite theme imparts a Chaconne or Passacaglia playfulness and wit to the enterprise. The oddly balanced phrase lengths keep it moving, spilling over itself, or pausing for breath.

More costume changes than Cher could shake a stick at.

fugue de rigueur and stretto dire
everybody POLKA!
flash finish
the crowd goes wild

Capriccio espagnol, Op. 34 - Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov - Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi

imperial spectacle
we bring it all to you
right here in sunny St. Petersburg

June 24, 2020

Symphony in G minor (#1) - Carl Nielsen - London Symphony Orchestra, Ole Schmidt

Outer Europe promotes its own National Composers and they are ever after cast in that role leading to guys like Shostakovich being political prisoners in their own home. I wonder if some of the urgency in their music is the friction between a musical and a nationalist ambition.

Nielsen improves on Brahms in his willingness to work honestly with twisted chromatic knots, not putting bows on them and dressing them up all pious. He doesn't seem interested in big tune exorcism. His material is concerned with itself, not the impression it will make on a popular audience - a distinctly modern sensibility. Its undergirdings are part of the show. Fierce and taut.

(...)

June 21, 2021

"...such words as it were vain to close..." - J. K. Randall - Neal Kosály-Meyer [at Brechemin Auditorium, University of Washington, April 9, 1986]

a poem of immediate moving
as I recall
Neal postulated
that the heart of the piece

Sometime Music in New Albion

was in its cumulating overtones
I postulate
that he was incorrect
but that his performance
is remarkable nevertheless

this may be from the show that Greg Short walked out on
patience tried too far

Neal's slow thoughtful tempo
allows his solution room to breathe
all manners of modes
of one
being like another
shifting the focus of form
from direct repetition
to measured partial repetitions
brings us back inside
the space
going as it goes

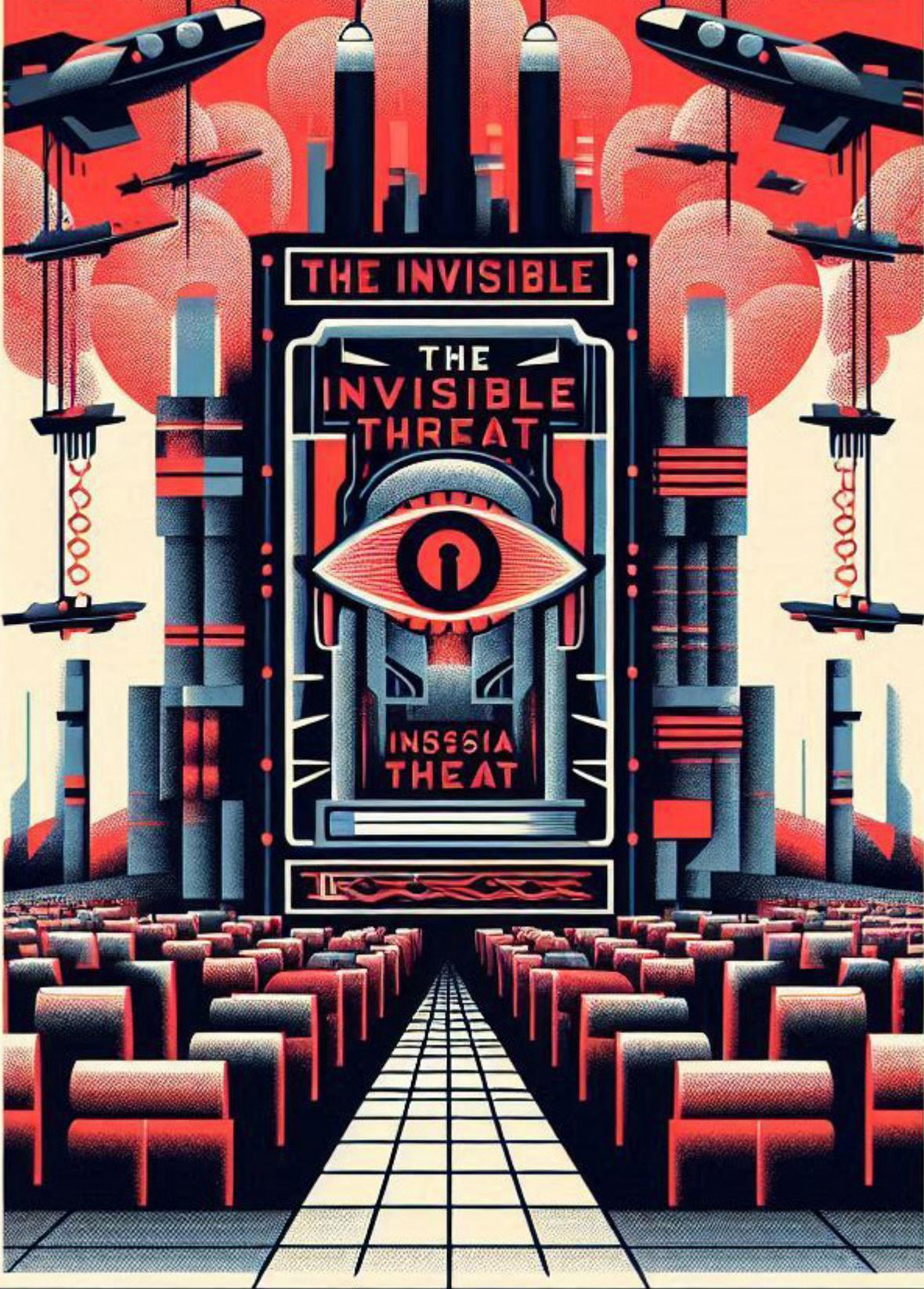
Blow Gabriel - Nathan Palmer [from *The Art of Field Recording, Volume 1*]

from some other roots
deeper



Now Music in
New Albion

2



The Invisible Threat

1

It all began in such a way that no-one knew how to explain the whys and wherefores. Indeed, for most things, when they first appear, the whys and wherefores cannot be known or explained. This is strange, because in every situation, human understanding always tries to find out what it wants to know, precisely when it needs to know.

The world was accustomed to crises: outbreaks, epidemics, pandemics. However, its inhabitants never seemed prepared for them. It was a world already shaken by a pandemic of a virus that had evolved to confine people to their homes, a most ironic thought. And so they stayed inside: and they had to adapt to life in confinement.

Some things – which governments called “essential services” – remained open, such as physical markets, physical drugstores, physical hospitals. Yes, with the adjective “physical” appended, because these also existed “online”, or in the popular parlance of those people, “virtually”.

It all starts with three premature deaths in three different corners of this vast round planet – for those of you who still have any scientific doubts – that is Earth. But why three? The reader, like myself telling the story, must be wondering. It could be two, four, five. However, there are three. One doesn't worry much about logic in such times.

It all starts in the month of March. More precisely on the third day of the month. You see – metaphorically the number three always appears with intentions that we can't quite grasp. The year doesn't matter much. We can leave this to the tense of the verb: the future of the present indicative.

Thereafter, it's up to the reader.

The crisis began in three countries: Australia, China and Italy.

Three – thus far – unexplained deaths. Three– thus far – inexplicable deaths. Three– thus far – unmentioned deaths. Three countries arranged alphabetically so that the reader does not get confused or mix in any other geographically situated territories.

Three curiously similar, not to say identical deaths. Three deaths that frightened the world so much that the religious leaders began to say their prayers, each one to the god they held appropriate, so that the number of fatalities would not multiply.

Three ways of dying, at almost the same time. Poor creatures! When they got to heaven, if there is a heaven, they must have faced a hell of a tailback – for there were still people dying of hunger, venereal disease, exhaustion, and so on.

These people weren't even connected. These people didn't even know each other's names. These people knew nothing about each other's existence either. However, they died at the same moment.

Guilherme Zelig

Australia:

She was a young woman, less than thirty years old, the mother of three children. Observe the number three again. From the photos on her social media, you could see that she had a beautiful smile; her blond hair fell to her shoulders.

Found dead next to a book by Camus. *The Plague*. A rather early edition of the Algerian writer's book, long since translated into English, lay by her left shoulder, under strands of fair hair. It was a shocking scene to behold. A young woman, a book, a death: the end of an existence.

Her cadaverous eyes were open when they found her. Staring into nothingness. Already contemplating non-existence. On the way to the state of not being. Questioning eyes with a tortured expression.

No sign of homicide. Only the pallor and the icy body completed the brutal picture.

No sign of strangulation. Her head, tilted slightly to the left, caused her golden hair to spill over the book. For this reason, her immaculate neck, bearing no signs of finger marks, was visible, exonerating the creature's husband.

No signs of a heart attack. The virtual doctors –using a state-of-the-art technological device that investigated the innermost core of others, from a distance – were able to conjecture that the victim had not suffered any cardiac complications.

Kim Johnson was dead.

China:

He was a nine-year-old boy. The son of a middle-class family that, although the new models of life hindered family gatherings, still managed to come together to travel and take pictures of each other. The photos posted on social media showed that the child was one of those who did not smile, but instead of sporting a teddy bear or any other prop that infants can get hold of, he always carried a children's book.

Found dead next to a Chinese edition of Aesop's fables. The coroner who was assigned the case had wept profusely at the sight of this small and apparently docile creature embracing such an antiquated and old-fashioned object, still showing that childhood had withstood time.

He probably picked up the book from a nearby shelf and, as he began to read, collapsed within a few minutes – perhaps suffering terrible pain. A book and a dead child: the end of a hope. When a reader dies, part of a better world also dies with him.

However, he died looking as though he was sleeping. His straight black hair in a fringe down to his eyebrows, and his pale mouth—which had once been pink—turned crooked.

It was his own parents who found him unconscious, cold, on the living room carpet, hugging his book, and took him to a physical hospital in Wuhan. The city that had already been the epicenter of the pandemic that led the world into dark circumstances.

The Invisible Threat

No signs of motor functions in the boy. They tried to prise the book from him, but the stiffness of his arms prevented the doctors – who struggled with the child’s petrified body. He would be cremated with the book in his hands – that would be the end of two problems.

No signs of hope. The child had long since passed away. That image represented pain for everyone present.

No sign of life on the boy’s part. There was nothing more to be done.

Jun Li was dead.

Italy:

A middle-aged person. Male. An isolated resident of a cabin near Mount Serallo. His beard as long as that of a hermit who had long left the gray concrete fields of so-called ‘free men’ to live in the midst of nature, to have for company the singing of birds, and the dusty library he had taken with him.

Found by his friends, carrying a book by Alberto Moravia perched atop his giant belly. *Racconti Romani*. He was reading tales of a city that had also been beset by plagues during its history.

There was a rotten apple, which had been freshly chewed by the old fellow, in his wrinkled hands. The rotten apple, the old man lying on the floor, and the book: clear signs of the end of a life.

They tried to shake him awake. They thought he must be drunk. His red cheeks were already beginning to pale.

They tried brandy to revive him. Nothing. No sign of life on the part of that creature who was apparently approaching his seventieth birthday.

They tried first aid, but failed. Cardiac massage. No abrasions on the body.

No signs of hypothermia. The day had not been warm, admittedly, but it was late winter.

No signs of wasting away due to age. Life had treated him well and, from time to time, his children would come to visit the widower.

No sign of Teo Ferrara.

He, too, was dead.

2

Professor Ary Ruy watched television with great curiosity when the news made reference to those three unexplained deaths that occurred on the same day. It didn’t cross his mind that this might just be a sensationalist headline. The people of that time could no longer distinguish fake news from real news very well.

He began to speak up and believe more piously when the news programs of all the networks began to do their part in relation to scaring the population: warning that a new type of virus may have

Guilherme Zelig

affected the three victims. It was humanity's greatest fear: the virus. Never before have these invisible creatures been feared more than after the pandemic that had occurred a few decades before.

According to television stations and videos published on online platforms, blood samples of the three deceased were removed for analysis and their bodies taken for study at a university in Lisbon. They also said that they would not even have proper funeral ceremonies, as they would be promptly cremated so that the virus would not spread.

Ary became very curious about these suspicious deaths.

He opened his computer and began to examine the comments made by doctors and virtual virology experts about those deaths in particular. The fear that had already been creeping up on Ary began to grow.

No-one was convincing in their analysis. Sometimes they said that it was a project to try to wipe out the population that still insisted on going out to the physical shops, sometimes they said that it was the evolution of some species of animal that had developed it.

All the arguments seemed to have the depth of a saucer. Of course, Ary Ruy consumed them without any critical sense of trying to contest them, despite the academic position he held.

These lines are utterly strange and insipid, thought Ary, and soon, he reflected, what does 'insipid' mean?

He had heard the word in a video he had watched and thought it was beautiful. He didn't know when to use it or what to use it for, but he used it. That's what he always did, and he believed that not only he but everybody else did the same: everything he heard, he repeated. That was a way of learning things. Listen, then repeat.

He got up and began to walk back and forth, as if he were trying his hardest to come up with an idea. That is, he was thinking. Sometimes he stared out the window, sometimes at the wall. He couldn't stop for a minute.

- What 's the matter with you, Ruy? – his wife, Lia, asked.
- Did you see this case of the three deaths?
- Case? Which case?
- An Australian girl, a Chinese boy, and a gentleman from the— he paused to think. Something very difficult in those times. – What is the name of that country near Spain?
- France?
- Is France close to Spain, dear? he asked, ironically. And he continued to think aloud:

It wasn't Greece...

The Invisible Threat

- France borders Spain, my genius. Next to France is Germany, then...
- Italy! – he exclaimed, remembering. He’s from Italy. The country where people make a lot of wine, right?
- It could be, but carry on with what you were saying.
- Well, the three of them died mysteriously. They were reading and suddenly, boom!
- Reading? Lia was astonished. It’s been a long time since I’ve heard of anybody reading... They must have died from it, she said, laughing.

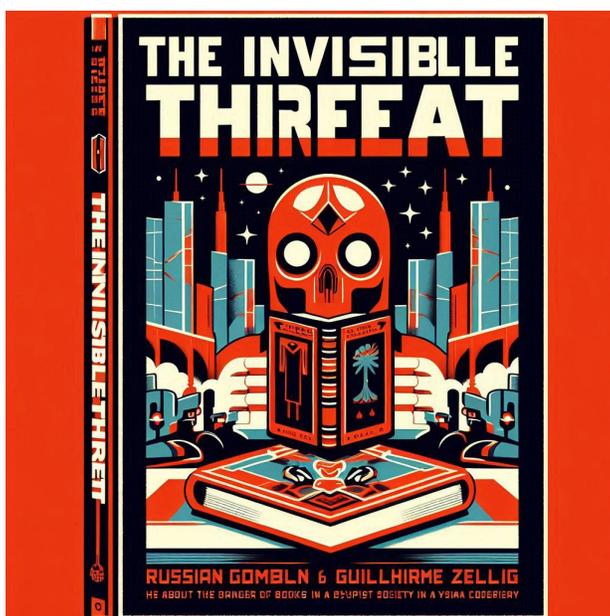
Ary didn’t fight back. He hadn’t thought of that. There were many things that Ary hadn’t thought about, by the way. Nor did he catch Lia’s irony at the end of her sentence. It was a very good hypothesis Leah had come up with.

In fact, no journalistic outlet, specialist or doctor he had been watching had paid attention to the fact that the three victims had been reading moments before they died.

It was absurd to think that, because never in the history of mankind had there been any report of deaths related to the ancient and outdated act of reading.

It was absurd to realize that he no longer heard of anyone else reading – because everyone based their theories on what they watched or listened to. Working from the hypothesis that these people had died because they had relied on the old ways was also an exaggeration. However, television and internet sites began to portray it as incontrovertible truth.

It was absurd to imagine that, in the midst of so much technology, there were still people who clung to the old and antiquated habits.



The Real and the Invisivel

Our friend and colleague, Guilherme Zelig of São Paulo, Brazil, wrote this dystopian novella during the pandemic. It will be published next year (2025) in that country. We are pleased to anticipate this with a short translation (by humans) of the book's beginning into English.

But this doesn't explain everything. By 2024, as we head to press, a new element of potential totalitarian and surveillance control has emerged: Artificial Intelligence. For the moment, A.I. is ostensibly working for us; who knows what situation will pertain by the time Guilherme's book is available?

In the meantime (another good title for a dystopian story) our tame and still friendly A.I. has designed the various book covers printed here, and written a press blurb to accompany them, neatly and seamlessly taking over the functions of copy writing and graphic design.

The story itself, however, was written by Guilherme himself, in a notebook, with a pencil.



The Invisible Threat: a review

Book Review: *Invisible Threat* by Guilherme Zelig

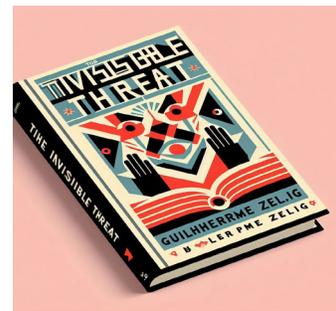
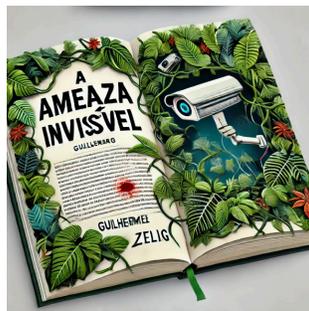
Invisible Threat, (*a Ameaça Invisível*), the debut novel by Brazilian author Guilherme Zelig, presents a chilling, satirical vision of a dystopian future. In this world, a mysterious phenomenon causes people to die from reading books, echoing themes from Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* but with a deadly twist.

The story is narrated by an old school teacher who deeply regrets the loss of reading. His reflections highlight the shallow and uncultured nature of contemporary society, where people, deprived of literature, become incapable of deep thought and meaningful communication. Zelig's narrator mourns a past rich in intellectual and cultural depth, creating a powerful emotional core to the novel.

Zelig skillfully critiques modern society's ignorance and superficiality, using the premise to evoke a sense of loss and urgency. This satirical approach underscores the dangers of devaluing intellectual pursuits, presenting a stark warning about the consequences of a society detached from books.

While *Fahrenheit 451* deals with censorship, *Invisible Threat* amplifies the stakes by introducing fatal consequences to reading itself. Zelig's portrayal of a world unraveling due to this phenomenon urges readers to reflect on their relationship with literature and critical thinking.

Invisible Threat is a compelling and timely novel that resonates deeply in our digital age. Guilherme Zelig has crafted a thought-provoking story that underscores the vital role of literature in shaping and sustaining an informed society. This debut marks Zelig as a promising voice in contemporary fiction, making *Invisible Threat* a must-read for those concerned about the future of culture and intellect.



Book review and all illustrations by CHAT-GPT & DALL-E

Peter Lamborn Wilson

Peter Lamborn Wilson, Yezidis, and remarks on the TAZ (transcript)

[We had been talking with Peter about his new book, with the idea of recording an excerpt over the phone for a radio show in London, then moving on to talk about his take on Temporary Autonomous Zones (T.A.Z.) in the light of global Covid lockdown policies. When we called to record the session, Peter had come up with a more genial idea, as detailed below.

The last paragraphs are taken from a series of video interviews Peter gave to Konrad Becker & Felix Stalder, and are printed here thanks to the kind permission of Raymond Foye and Konrad Becker, whose excellent film can be accessed via the QR code below, or searched as 'Civilization, Technology and Consciousness' on the World-Information Institute website.]

Peter Lamborn Wilson

I'll tell you what I'm thinking: I'm thinking that a minute of reading the book is totally worthless, and I don't like it. (long pause) But I *will* talk for a minute *about* the book...

“The title of my book is *Cauda Pavonis*, and the subtitle is esoteric antinomianism in Yezidi Tradition. *Cauda Pavonis* is Latin for ‘Peacock’s Tail’, which in alchemy symbolizes the beauty of the material world. The book is about the Yezidis, you may have heard of them, they’re a group in Iraq and Syria who were targeted by Isis for genocide and managed to fight back, many of them have left their homeland and gone to Germany and America and elsewhere. In the middle east people call them ‘devil worshippers’, and this is supposed to be the reason why orthodox Moslems are obliged to hate them.

Is this true? They certainly don't admit to it. They don't define themselves as devil worshippers; they don't believe that they follow a principle of evil. They do worship a great angel, whose name is MELEK TA'US, which means the Peacock Angel, who appears often as a youth with a peacock's tail, and his story is very interesting and so is the story of the sect itself, over the centuries, and this is what I've tried to put across in the book.”

OPEN SPACE MAGAZINE: questions around T.A.Z. and Covid

With the current impossibility of physically meeting up with other people, isn't it nevertheless better to use the internet to form a nucleus and try to put something out?

PLW

What would you mean by ‘forming a nucleus and putting something out’? It's not publishing a 'zine... it's not publishing a book, it's not publishing a newspaper, it's not making a TV show or a radio show, or anything like that... there's no way under the present circumstances where you could even have a T.A.Z.

OS

I mean trying to set something up between people online, now, as opposed to just waiting until the lockdown ends.

March 20, 2020 Interview around T.A.Z.

PLW

That's even worse! From my point of view, that's even worse: because that's a pseudo communality. It's a Satanic parody of the idea of community. It's the temptation to believe that we're forming communities on the internet: this is what's going to kill us. This is death.

OS

But isn't it better to at least communicate, rather than keeping silent?

PLW (pause)

The only thing I can say, and I said in the past and I'll say it again, about media in relation to the T.A.Z. - and that means all or any media - is that the best thing you can do with it is to maximize the potential for the emergence of a Temporary Autonomous Zone; that is to say you can communicate about setting something up that might or might not become a T.A.Z. You cannot just demand a T.A.Z., you can't have it on demand, it's something that either happens spontaneously, or it doesn't happen. You can't say "Come to my T.A.Z., Saturday night at 9 o'clock". For me this is - you know - awful. It's the opposite of what I was trying to say.

OS

Do you think a T.A.Z. is something you can only recognize in retrospect?

PLW

No, you can certainly recognize it when it starts, when it's happening, why not?

But it has to happen. It can't be forced, but you can maximize the potential for the emergence, that's the best you can do.

Otherwise, anything can be... Pepsi-Cola tried to use the word T.A.Z., once, for some rave they sponsored, you know. This made me very angry. (OS: *Seriously?!*). Yeah, seriously.

And TIME magazine wrote about it and said that a T.A.Z. was something that would happen in cyberspace. And at that point I said, 'Thank God that they didn't understand me!' If they'd understood me I'd have had to change all my ideas. It's better to be misunderstood by certain people.

OS

Many people [specifically musicians] are trying to put structures into place for when the lockdown - eventually - stops. Do you think that a T.A.Z. could emerge from these 'seeds'?

PLW

I would say it's impossible. The way we're living now is the way the internet wants us to live. Isolated consumers. When we're no longer afraid of dying when we open the door, we just live this way voluntarily, because we're afraid of everything. And we send away to Amazon for our food and we turn on our TV - some screen - in order to entertain and keep our hands warm. And that's the future. At least that's the future that we're facing. And this lockdown is certainly not helping any.

Peter Lamborn Wilson

Maybe we can blame global warming, for global epidemics. That would be appropriate. I rather think it's true. It's already been suggested; that forest clearance, and therefore proximity to animals, in a bad way, not a good way, is a factor in spreading epidemics.

And that clearance of forests, of course, began already in the neolithic, which is when events, or pandemic situations began to emerge, according to archaeology and history. So it makes perfect sense. The more we do it, the sicker we'll get. And that to me the internet is a symptom of that disease. A symptom and a cause. It's not a method for liberation at all.

I know the way it is for me, I spend all my time on the telephone now. I can't see anybody and talk, but it's not very satisfactory compared to face to face friendship. The point is that presence is something extremely real; it's not just a concept. For me, anyway. And the more isolated we become, by technology, the more mediated we become, the less actual presence is involved in human life and therefore, in my opinion, the less meaning.

I mean it's better than nothing, Yes, I agree, but that's a rather sad thing to have to say.

Capitalism wants everybody to be separate, so that everybody has to buy everything. No sharing; sharing is bad for capitalism. So everybody must have their own TV, their own iPhone, their own car, and I was just reading an article in which people were thinking about isolation and alone-ness recently, so they're writing articles about it, and it's something like one quarter of the people in America live by themselves. And it used to be like 8%, at the beginning of the 20th century. So, isolation grows apace. And if people take measures to counteract that, it's very understandable. But Capitalism will not approve, ultimately, you will not be encouraged to do that kind of thing... because you're not busy consuming Coca-Cola and TV shows. If you're together having intellectual or just social contact with friends or acquaintances, you're taking time away from the Great Mechanism which is about Money. It's all about Money.

from the KONRAD BECKER/FELIX STALDER FILM:

Excerpt from Peter's last interview, in May 2022.

PLW

It had occurred to me that I was tired of sitting around waiting for the revolution, I thought that the revolution was gonna happen in 1968, it didn't happen, I left America in disgust, and when I came back there was no sign that it was any closer to happening. I mean, we could all believe in the revolution, in some kind of Existentialist way, but it clearly wasn't on the boards.

And so, my question to myself was: how do you get the experience of living in a liberated situation, without a revolution? Is it possible? And I came up with the idea of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, by which I meant that naturally and by a certain extent by design, it was possible to find oneself in a situation where there was no authority telling you what to do, and this could be anything from a love affair, up to and including a whole city trying to become a Utopia. Larger than that, the examples are rare. The difference between what I was talking about and what had existed in history before, was I wanted the T.A.Z. to be conscious of itself as temporary, and not put false dreams into the idea that it was going to last forever, and that it was going to be the precursor of 'The Revolution'... whatever you could get; that's gravy in the way of freedom, whatever you could experience in your lifetime, of liberation - however you like to define it - that was all to the best. And if it was just one evening spent

March 20, 2020 Interview around T.A.Z.

with your friends, when nobody was ordering anybody around or pulling any authoritarian routines, or insisting that they knew what was good for everybody else in the room, then that was a T.A.Z. and it was fine.

You also asked about Pirate Utopias, which is the title of one of my books, in which I hypothesized that one of the existences of the T.A.Z. in the past was where pirates moved onshore, taking their treasure with them, and led the glorious life for as long as their treasure would last. So, Port Royal in Jamaica was one of these places; and there were two or three in Madagascar, where they just... they retired from the sea, or at least temporarily... and married native women, typically, and their descendants still live in Madagascar: they're called 'the children of the pirates'.. they're still there. So, these were... probably everyone knew that these were not going to last for ever, and so they were temporary autonomous zones. If you read Daniel Defoe's 'History of the Pyrates', about Captain Mission (or Misson), in Madagascar, and his comrades, they... he presents them as ideological utopians, not just as 'wacky pirates', but as people who were against slavery, who had mixed race crews, who believed in a society without law, and so forth and so on. Did Captain Mission really exist? That's another question, we won't get into that. But there certainly was something on Madagascar, it was pretty much like what Defoe was thinking about, and elsewhere as well, so my point is that all through History, this phenomenon has existed, whether consciously or unconsciously, and it has always been an actual physical place or event.

Life is in love with Life. It doesn't matter, y'know, I hate above almost everything, the scientific attitude that it's "oh, it's just a big cosmic accident: life is just an epiphenomenon of something, it's just a big accident. It doesn't mean anything, it has no meaning. But don't worry - Kids - you can still have a sense of wonder." What this is supposed to mean, I don't know. You're supposed to console yourself with the fact that the Universe has been de-phlogisticated and fucked, with the idea that "things are pretty weird? Isn't that wonderful?" That's not enough for me, I'm sorry. I don't... I can't get on that bargain-basement wagon. For me, there's got to be some hope of miracle. Or else it's not worth doing.

My Politics of Magic is that there is always a politics of magic; there has been, right from the beginning of consciousness itself. And there still is. Now.



scan the code for the documentary by Konrad Becker

Peter Lamborn Wilson (1945 - 2022)

Fátima Vale



Glorious is my Rebellion...

GLORIOUS IS MY REBELLION WHEN I RISE

It is not the resumé of a public presentation
when I yield to your words
Shards from someone else's sculpture
shells harvested from the floor in another craftsman's shop
a craftsman
among many craftsmen
shards
shells
cast away
in the society of outcasts

GLORIOUS IS MY REBELLION WHEN I RISE

Not your heart-shaped 'likes' when I speak your words
and mute heartlessness when I speak mine
a piercing truth
antibacterial drugs for my flooded dykes

GLORIOUS ARE MY KNEES THAT BEND TO NEITHER CREED NOR MONEY

Flowers of my skin their vulnerable 24-hour petals
Flowers of my skin vulnerable helmets
Flowers of my skin alembics of the frivolous presence of the absence
Flowers of my skin with white marks of black soul
Glorious are my feet which caress the ground that does not belong to me

GLORIOUS IS THE MYSTERY IN WHICH I LIVE

not because it hides a single gesture
but because the world is news from the dead

GLORIOUS IS MY DISGUST FOR SHIELDS FROM ON HIGH

the ignorance to which we bow ourselves is now revealed

GLORIOUS IS THE WORD THAT DISROBES YOU

the serpent that clothes you

Fátima Vale

write what you write or even from your imposed silence disdain
you may feel like slipping your hand down your belly to finger your sex
to raise the temperature
the climate change has hit our bodies
and the representation of the whole thing is nothing more than a set of fragments
a rebellion with organs, a dark protest song

A DARK PROTEST BRINGS GLORY WHEN IT SCREAMS

even if only within its present inaudible range
everything unfolds inside and outside of time
inside and outside the cell inside and outside the machine
inside and outside has the same range of varying lucidity

GLORIOUS ARE THE PENETRATIONS I WILL NOT HAVE

The theatre that bursts inside me
The song of my whispering blood
The colors of open arms, the lines of cracks on my tongue
I use this language only to forget your silence
But I don't speak this language because I no longer kiss
I don't keep secrets in my hardened flesh, I don't lick revelations of anyone's fire
And this is not my protest, it is because there is no one
There's no one, there's no one
There's no one, there's no one
It's not an island, it's not a cape, it's not a dinghy lost at sea
It is a land, it is work, it is exile, it is revolt, it is devastation

GLORIOUS IS THE THEFT OF IDENTITY

Mere kilometers from the glowing borders of denial
And you're nobody everywhere if you don't carry it all in yourself
You're nobody anywhere if you don't carry it all in yourself
You're nobody anywhere if you don't carry it all in yourself

Glorious is my Rebellion...

Papers prove nothing, nothing proves anything
Assembly lines are these frontiers
Assembly lines of not quite corpses
Dead you are and dead will be, but you keep moving
Dead you are dead shall be
Dead you are dead shall be
Dead you are dead shall be

PLEASURE GETS CONFISCATED BY ONESELF AT THE TIME OF THE ASSAULT

At the checkpoint of this apartheid hides the true identity
Hide it in that infinite hole that you are
Stir and work, stir and work, you'll soon be out
Stir and work, stir and work, you'll soon be out

THE PLEASURE IS MINE THE PLEASURE IS MINE THE PLEASURE IS MINE

The phrase repeated at thanksgivings for your grandeur
From the cement of the days that roll like heads at our feet
It is the occulted in every prayer, every rite, it ascends and swiftly gives permission
It wears a sumptuous and the longest robe, the glittering crown
A gesture of Glowing Cosmic Dust in the Winged Revolution, a Rebellion

THE PLEASURE IS MINE

This is independence and soon enough we'll have a territory
It is this war, this apartheid that I am speaking of
And when I speak, I penetrate and penetrate myself

APARTHEID OF THE DIVERSE

SINGLE APARTHEID OF TRANSPARENCY

WE ARE PEOPLE FROM MONDAY-TO-FRIDAY

FIRST-CLASS FUCKING WHITE TRASH

And I don't cry that there is no clock or time, but I am in a hurry
my middle-aged Gibraltar has been crossed, Lemos in sight

Fátima Vale

Female Picasso is a single name, no inheritance, no land, no war
A thunder of Love in the Perpendicular of Another World and Another Voice
for all this is noise inside & outside my Head, my Beacon of Infinity
my middle age is a Rose in Luxembourg, a Thorn in Leningrad
My middle age is a dance over the mass grave of all the tsars
my middle age is the Guernica in blossoms of blood and smile

MY MIDDLE AGE IS EVERY MOTHER'S COLOSTRUM

My middle age is the industrial design with fearlessness of an automatic revelation
Cesariny with his ass turned to the sun, Natalia enrolled in the Portuguese Communist Party
after her death, for all beauty is posthumous, every poet is Uncertainty
my middle age is Charlie Parker's saxophone before pneumonia
The rebellion of all the murdered
the lust of Egon Schiele's drawing
my middle age is the weariness of the Red Army taking the Reichstag
The memory of all the torture victims
my middle age is an unarmed trench between Beauty and Identity
And I'll only forget about my age when the checkpoints of all apartheids fall
And the heads of the killers roll in the football stadiums

I AM A POET OF ARENA

Not a lion or gladiator
As an actress I am glorified for what I can't do
Agnes Varda made the sun rise for me
And what if we lined the abandoned buildings with the faces of the landless
the homeless the unidentified
The world would be haunting

THE WORLD IS A DARKENING

(Revista Estúpida n°9; Edições mortas)

(translation dorota czerner)

Fátima Vale & Charles Sangnoir
O.B.U.S. - Objeto Belo Único e Sublime (2023)



The Drought in Eden

The Drought in Eden---The Biblical story of the Garden—MUSIC THEATRE FOR A TIME OF CLIMATE CALAMITY. Words & music, David Lidov

[The] Sumerians. . .with their mad irrigation schemes, turned what the Jews considered Eden and the Christians call Paradise into a desert.

Ronald Wright, *A History of Progress*, 2005.

Drought in Eden is a full-length musical adaptation of the Biblical tale of the Garden understood as our collective memory of an historical ecological crisis caused by greed. (as above)

Beguiled by the Serpent, Adam and Eve, generous in their youth, transform the Garden into an advanced industrial food factory. They become selfish and haggard as exports and profits surge until irrigation, pesticides and fertilizers kill the land. Much in our presentation is comic or absurd, but the story remains a tragedy. Dislocations of time and context in the plot find their counterpart in a cross play of changing musical forms in styles that range from vernacular to operatic. Nearly all passages that might have been spoken are rapped. Integral to the drama is a sound production plot (that can only be hinted in recording.) The quiet, ‘acoustic’ sound of the opening becomes raucous and electric towards the climax and settles back again towards the brief note of hope in the Tag Ending.

Drought in Eden has eight parts. The first six *Parts* are separated by *Interludes* for Serpent and God.

Characters. *Adam*, baritone; *Eve*, soprano; *God*, alto; *Serpent*, tenor, at times disguised.

Place. (Parts 1-7) Within the Garden. At first, outside; later in Adam and Eve’s home. (Part 8) An urban slum. (Interludes) No specific locale but of this world.

Time. Then and Now. —Modern and Biblical times are conflated. *Adam and Eve age about four years between Parts.*

Instruments. Chamber group of 7-9 players.

Stage/scenery. Abbreviated but clear in intent; video projection essential. The principle playing area compact, but some action is elsewhere. The theatre should permit quiet, intimate sound for long stretches.

SYNOPSIS

In eight Parts. The first six *Parts* are separated by *Interludes* for Serpent and God.
(Numbers in parentheses are chapter and verse in Genesis)

Part 1 *[Naming the Animals]*. In the multi-sectional *Taxonomy Concerto*, Adam is naming the animals logically, scientifically. **(2:19)** Eve, impatient with Adam’s enormous project, wants him to take time off from classification and try multiplication **(1:28)**. She fears he is too young for a commitment. In *Monogamy*, samba-inspired, Adam seems ready to come around until his first glimpse of a duck-billed platypus jeopardises all his research. Trailing it, he runs off, leaving Eve fuming.

[Interlude 1. Serpent is sceptical of God’s creations. God warns him, “Look, don’t touch.”]

Part 2 *[Forbidden Fruit]*. The Serpent teaches Eve about the great world beyond the Garden. *(You Live in an Idyll)* He persuades her not to take God’s prohibition regarding the Tree of Knowledge too literally. He presents an Apple tablet, wirelessly connecting to the Apple Tree. **(3:1-5)**. Adam is momentarily dismayed, but is lost in browsing as Eve and Serpent reprise Serpent’s ballad. Adam discovers a world of widespread hunger. The garden’s surplus will help. To Eve’s delight, Adam abandons pure science for applied. An enterprise is born.

[Interlude 2. God is furious with Serpent, who shows no regrets; yet, she gives him another chance.]

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Part 3 [*Episode of the Fig Leaf*]. Seeds of doubt and falsity take root when Adam and Eve are prodded and embarrassed by the Serpent, now disguised as a delivery person who brings them credit cards and synthetic fertilizers. They determine to adapt their 'image' to fit their new entrepreneurial roles (3:7). More is at stake than image. The musical sound modulates here from acoustic to electric.

[Interlude 3. After a pantomime, Serpent's chromatic soliloquy closing the first half (*Works without Love*) reveals a deep melancholy and sardonic pessimism beneath his mischief.]

INTERMISSION

Part 4 [*The Work Ethic*]. Canning factory noises in the background. Irrigation has lowered the water table. Eve is coughing from pesticide odours and Adam is popping pills, suffering headaches from the noise. Both are haunted by their wish to share their new wealth, but Serpent (now as their accountant) is in no rush. Yielding to greed, they drop even the pretence of good will. Intro and Outro rapped; the song starts out like a drinking/seduction song and builds a solkattu-style coda.

[Interlude 4. God is trying to come to terms with the inescapable necessity of doing something about Serpent.]

Part 5 [*Making it Big*]. Adam and Eve on cells direct an international conglomerate. Adam is relentlessly vicious. Eve matches him. But her bad conscience about carcinogens begins to change her ways just before Adam is to fly out on his biggest sales trip ever.

[Interlude 5. Uppers: video shows airplanes and business graphs rising. Downer: the solo violin accompaniment.]

Part 6 [*Catastrophe*]. A chain of short numbers. --- Adam, with new contracts, returns from his global trip triumphant. --- Eve confronts him with news that the River (2:10) has dried up and the Garden has died in the drought. --- Arguing, Adam falls into panic and denial. --- They call 9-1-1. First responder Serpent (as agro-engineer) promises he will fix it. Eve is not fooled. --- Adam and Eve in despair, in their dark night of the soul, as the trio sings an accelerating canon *Left, Right, Wrong*. At last, Adam and Eve pray to God. --- God raps back: They are too late and under arrest.

Part 7 [*The Expulsion*]. Loftily, God becomes manifest [instrumental]. We had seen her in the Interludes but not, until now, on Earth. She vents her fury, arousing the moral passions of Adam and Eve. They turn against Serpent. Devastation and conflagration-- a brief electronic composition yields to a stately passacaglia, a quartet, in which God delivers her judgement. Serpent loses his wheels. (3:14) Adam and Eve are expelled and doomed to pains of hard labour. (3:15-24). Left alone with us, God, in abject grief, mourns the ruin of her Gardens and—breaking the fourth wall— bewails ever trusting us, the audience, with free will in a grand, *da capo* aria with e-guitar *obligato*.

Part 8 [Modern Life]. Adam and Eve, working stiffs in a tawdry urban environment, sustain a marriage cemented by guilt. They reprise *Monogamy*, no longer a peppy samba but a slow, bitter tango.

The short Tag Ending brings the four together and sounds a plaintive note of hope. Hope is not optimism.

This piece is still awaiting and anticipating its premiere performance...

Philip Corner out of John's Cage

an interview by Deborah Walker and Matthieu Saladin, 20th November 2020

D.W. - I thought we could start by talking about your first encounters with John Cage, when you heard his music for the first time and later met him in person and become part of the same scene in New York City. What I'm thinking about especially is one of the Epiphanies that you wrote that were published in "The Wire" some years ago: "1957 inspired by 'the great North American Adventure' in painting, once back in New York I search for the musical equivalent. Cannot be anyone other than John Cage".

P.C. - Well look, I've been thinking about this and I'm willing to answer your questions and go where it goes. But to start off there is one thing I would like to say and that is that I have heard so often that Cage is important as a theorist, a philosopher, his writings and innovations are important, and to me that is not so important! I find that I like his music and there are people saying "No, his music isn't so good". I feel that his music is wonderful. It's beautiful music and that's much more important than any of the theoretical writings or his so-called historical importance. So that's my ground philosophy. And so basically, I'm just saying I listen to it and I enjoy it. I think that music and the arts have a place because they make you want to look into them and to listen. You're happy that they exist and you experience them. And as far as I'm concerned that's it, there's no arguing about it. I don't argue with people who say that they like Edward Elgar or... that's their business, you know, and a few others like John Cage! One of the things that I've said in something that was published called "Fluxus Futures" (and in a matter of fact in "Fluxus in Italy" as well), was: "If you like it listen to it, if you like it look at it, if you like it whatever..." and I think that that's all I want to say. I like John's music, or some of it, very very much. And of course, there was a point when I came back from France and I felt that if I couldn't relate to Cage and the other people around him, like Morton Feldman and Earle Brown, I would be alone in the world. Where my music was going didn't seem to relate positively to anything else and of course someone doesn't want to be alone in the world! And so that's why I related to Cage but it was never a question of following this "you have to innovate" that was just crazy among the students in Paris, you know. This "I did something new" ... and none of it was very new anyway. I thought that Boulez was the center of all of that "we have to innovate", this march into the future, this lockstep into the future filled by innovation. And of course in the 50s and 60s that became a critical thing even in America. The critics in Buffalo

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would say “oh, well, the critics in New York would spot this as a derivative thing, even if we -- here in the provinces -- have never heard anything like this before”. But everything was judged on the basis of innovation. That was true in painting too... but I never never never felt I’m innovating, that “I’ve got to do anything new”. I just liked what I wanted to do. And what I wanted to do was inherently what you might call unique. I think that’s really true for any creative person. There’s some degree of uniqueness and the desire to find your own voice and say something and of course if it’s at all innovative you want to have a community and you want to feel that you’re part of something. So I was actually lucky because I came back to New York in the 50s after the time it wasn’t just Cage but it was a great time for poetry and dance and happenings and theatre and painting and everything. I became part of that, and Cage was a very important part of that.

D.W. - I was thinking, comparing it to the context that you encountered in France at that time, that the figure of John Cage was really encouraging people to follow their own paths. Do you agree on this? Like when he was a teacher at the New School of Social Research, he was encouraging individual ways of creativity...

P.C. – It’s not so simple as that. I mean, I wouldn’t contradict that. The people who were in his class at the New School many of them were the people who went on to make Fluxus, or to do what became known as Fluxus and happenings and things like that. Cage certainly was a catalyst for that, but I think that all of this was already happening, it was “steaming up”. One could be encouraged by a father figure, innovative person like Cage and on the other hand Cage’s innovations were very strict in a certain sense and he had a very clear and somehow narrow sense, not as much as Boulez, but he had his own sense of what was important and how you should do it. And he also felt that innovation was important. So at least I don’t think he had a sense of progress. He had more of a sense of destroying the past and he didn’t feel that he had to be part of a great tradition, like Boulez listing all the great names throughout history that he could add his own name to it. Cage was more or less Bach and Beethoven, which basically means everybody is worthless! Then there are strange anomalies like “except Satie”. Why Satie? If you remember the notes I wrote for my Satie record, I said “Bach, Beethoven and Satie and Ravel and Debussy too!”. Satie certainly is not what Cage said “against order” or “against expression”. Satie has order and he has expression. His music is organized on the basis of time... But you know, all music is organized on the basis of time! All of Western music is organized on the basis of time. And then what Cage was simply saying was like “I’m making a time structure and the harmonic structure is irrelevant”. Of course, he didn’t completely get rid of the organization on the basis of pitch either. He just had this

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particular way of dealing with, you know, a certain sense of post-12 tone, post serial way of choosing pitch succession. So in a certain sense Cage was not the great libertarian figure... Some people said, "Oh Cage liberated me to do what I want". Cage was really about discipline, and he had a very serious aesthetic, the puritan sense of very disciplined, limited way of... "you should purge music of expression, self-expression, emotions... get rid of it!" So there was something in Cage that people took and mistook a lot out of Cage, out of this "I can do whatever I want, I can just do it". He was very critical about people even who played his music, for instance like Charlotte Moorman in a kind of a semi-discipline wild way and he's looked at as if everything was so free. Then what's the problem with being vulgar or wild or inhibited or there shouldn't be any problem with that either, but he was actually very very disciplined and finally... he's a Western European concert composer! Like in the 20th century sense of Euro-American world, the "great tradition". I said this when they asked me to talk in Strasbourg and they were talking about all of this, and I said that the difference between the Europeans and the Americans – I guess between Boulez and Cage – I see it as a personality thing. What Cage did was the American wing of post-serialism and he just had the insight to see that once you get to that particular point of totally uninhibited use of pitch and space, you don't need the series anymore! And that of course brings in noises. Don't forget he's not the great pioneer of noise music, because you have the Futurists and Varèse and Musique Concrète, so it's the mere fact of using noise not his great innovation.

M.S. - And were you comfortable with this discipline in your own creative process?

P.C. - Well, I remember saying to John at one point that I respected him very much and that he influenced me, and he was very important to me. But I told him that I never have used systematic chance operations, and I don't think that I have a will to use systematic chance operations, and he said: "Well good, maybe you don't have to, I had to." So I think that it was a personal thing for finding a kind of discipline to generate the result he wanted. And in a certain sense it's traditional composition, where you get an idea and there's a system. It's very similar to 12 tone in the sense that you get a principle, which automatically generates your results using chance. I mean the basic idea there, is that from one place you can go any other place. And that's inherent in the idea of the series because there's no inherent tension or inherent limitation or logic to the way music has to move in time and any 12 notes can be arranged in any particular way. There's no limit to the intervals you can choose. It's just that once you do that, then you say that's like your theme, that makes a substitute for tonality, which is not. But when you get to total serialism, the sequence, the order has become totally imperceptible. I think Messiaen realized that when he wrote *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, where you use the series to make sure that you're in the total pitch-space,

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but you can go – that’s the nature of a mode – from any note to any other note, I think that total serialism was misapplied, which means that once you get the row, it determines from one note to the next what you do. Of course the Total Serialists put it together in such a way that you can’t hear that anyway, and you couldn’t even infer from the score without the analysis to guide you on what they were doing. So, they pushed it to a point where, in fact, it realizes the idea that in any one place you can go to any other place and you never know where you are, and there’s no progression or limitation to how things move. Well, that’s basically what Cage did. You don’t need the series you just need a chance, and if you can go from any place to any other place, you can just as well use chances for anything else. The funny thing is that before he got to that point, he was already doing that with the prepared piano pieces, in a “composed way” that is intuitively choosing the material. But you do have a sense of that tone aggregates that are created by the preparations and can follow each other in any particular sequence. Actually it seems to me that that’s already present in a very very humble and almost hidden way in Satie, the way Satie organizes just a minimal amount of material and that gives order because there’s hardly anything going on... if you think how the three *Gymnopédies* are organized harmonically, just using the limited material in all the possible ways of combining, so Cage basically saw that you could do that without having a systematic generative idea. However the idea of using a systematic chance and even the *I-Ching* and computerizing *I-Ching* and all that, seems to me just the old conservative idea of organization. And I remember how shocked I was when I was in Paris, the composer had said to me “Vous savez, ça me semble pas composé, plutôt improvisé” and I said “What does that mean?” The notes were written on the page and to me a composition was notes written down, improvisation was improvisation. “Improvisé” meant that there was no order, just like you did what you liked. I remember him once saying “Why is this note here?”, obviously meaning this is number five of the third position of the retrograde inversion, and well I put it there because it seemed like the right note, I liked it. “Ah, l’intuition... vous êtes un cowboy en musique, Américain!” It was just like this very rigid, compositional “have an idea”, “have a theory to justify”. Of course in a certain sense all Western music theory has been that, but never carried to this mad extreme that the total serialism, dodécaphonistes, brought it. So Cage was a liberation from that but the fact of using systematic chance was just as much a kind of intellectual straitjacket as the other thing. And I think he was just as I said, the American wing of the last gasps of European innovation. Cage was a composer, a professional composer and he had to impose himself as a composer and he couldn’t just say “Oh, I’m just like throwing notes down”. That’s what I thought to do! So I just put music paper on the floor and throw rice down and trace where the rice balls fell. One of the scores is in the collection of the Art Museum of Lyon. It was called *Underhanded notes behind my back* and I did that. I put the music paper

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behind my back, and I just wrote the notes without being able to see what they were. And I did lots of pieces like that, even live performance with throwing scraps of notes and signs onto the paper and playing them as they fell, instant action music. So for me, the thing I took from Cage and brought away from Cage was this direct physical action thing, in other words “improvisation”, which Cage was against, but I think that that was purely a question of “I'm not doing Jazz. I'm a Serious Composer”.

D.W. - I was thinking about how in your pieces improvisation and composition aren't opposed...

P.C. - Yes, I guess you could say my work goes in both directions. There are some things that are really almost completely improvised, just a couple of verbal instructions. But I had a kind of a yearning for improvisation for many many years and I felt I couldn't feel at home improvising, like all through the 60s and so. Malcolm Goldstein was playing with Archie Shepp, but I could not feel at home when I was improvising. It took me a long time to break through and have a score and at least some kind of visual pre-written thing. Even if it permitted a lot of freedom, it was very important for me. It seems to me that there's two different parts of your mind and it's not so easy just to go from one to the other. I was appalled at the some very good pianists, very well-trained pianists who totally couldn't improvise at all, couldn't do anything that they hadn't learned. You asked them to improvise, and they juxtapose fragments of Mozart and Beethoven, and they can't get away from that. Well, I wasn't in that desperate situation, but it took me a long time before I really felt at ease in “spontaneously composing”, as improvisation is called, and entering into that of course, it got worse and worse! So that's what I am now!

D.W. - I don't think it got worse. I really don't think so!...

P.C. - Well, I'm composing now, and I never stopped putting stuff on paper, but you know very well because some of the stuff you played, really hardly gives you anything else more than the general idea. But I realized that all these compositions are just realizations of a general idea. And even you can see the past like that. Any fugue by Bach is just a realization of the score, the verbal score of a fugue, which is the rules for making a fugue. And I think Bach himself was treating it that way, “Give me a subject and I'll improvise on it, I know how to make a fugue!”. When I was studying in Paris I was invited to go to the church of Saint-Sulpice where the great organist Marcel Dupré, head of the conservatory, was playing. All the students were around, saying “Il va improviser la fugue!” and it seemed to me that it was a very difficult thing to do. Of course, it wasn't difficult for Bach or any of his contemporaries, it was just done... (Bruckner did the same on his exam to become a professor: “Here's the theme - okay give

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me the theme - and here is your fugue!”). So there’s just this general idea that anything you do is just like a manifestation of it. Of course the realizations are so rich that they’re very different from one another. I realized that as I was getting more and more into this putting down the general idea, I did that because you could see so many possibilities of this idea. You realize that any performance would have to be a realization. You have to work it out, in another word, make the composition on the basis of the idea and in some cases you could improvise on it... Here’s this kind of thing which defines itself as a composition but it’s so open that I realized that whoever plays it, whoever realized it has to get some kind of credit. I think of some things that you played with Silvia... there are so many different possibilities of realizing them! Especially the second part of the piece where you go crazy and I don’t give you any notes at all. So who’s the creator there? And it always seems to me that the performer, the collaborator there, the realizer, should be getting credit also. I found myself being criticized for that: “You are not a real composer because you are not telling the performers what to do”. And I would say: “You’ll give them credit, by all means, give them credit!” So basically that’s what improvisation opens up and it seems to me that’s very much in harmony with John Cage’s ideas, that was definitely an idea of sociability and of a community and of individuality. And of course - as I said - being a “late European-style classical composer”, he had to write all this stuff into a score, with very complicated rules and all that. But within what he was doing there is a tremendous amount of freedom, and I just simply went directly for the freedom.

D.W. - I have a question around the idea of “escaping Western culture”, something that you think that Cage finally did not, despite his well known interest in Oriental philosophy...

P.C. - His late work got much more conservative and much more traditional European composition at the end of his life.

D.W. - Are you talking about the number pieces, with the time brackets?

P.C. - The number pieces, right.

D.W. - But what could be your idea of “escaping Western culture”? I know that the African American culture is very important to you, and also the possibility of self-expression and spontaneous expression in music...

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P.C. - Well, if you look at Cage or “cagean” or modern, so “modern” is understood in the Western evolution as “dissonance”. The 12 tones is another example of modernism, if you look at that, you see it’s gone in a certain direction, in a certain sense you can say “disintegration”. I don’t want to say “degeneration”. But in a certain sense it comes to an end. If you look at increase chromaticism and complete incoherence, and all of this heavy logically and analysis perspectives of new music type, justifying this complicated, incomprehensible music by these esoteric intellectual theories, all of that just seems to be a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole European Canon. It just comes to self-destruct. So in a certain sense European music has self-destructed. You’ve probably never heard of this. We used to joke about the Budini Bird. Did you ever hear about that?

D.W. + M.S. - No, no.

P.C. - Well the Budini Bird flies around in ever-diminishing circles until it disappears up its own asshole. And that seems to me to be a good metaphor for what happened to Western music after the Second World War. It actually started in the First World War. I said that Western civilization *per se* was over in 1914 and the idea of the Avant Garde. The Avant Garde was a movement before the First World War anticipating the self-destruction of European civilization and it was like “épater les bourgeois”, reacting against the norms of late 19th Century culture. And of course which was destroyed by the First World War, and the Avant Garde anticipated it. After that there was no Avant Garde, because there was no “Avant” to go! There was no sixth sense of progress. Progress became a critical thing for people to say. “This composer hasn’t done anything new” and the Boulez extreme example, this tradition of “you have to be new in a certain way” which is pushing this total serialism further and further and further into the sensual, experiential level, total incoherence. And so we have this interim period – which I think we’re still in, if the Western classical tradition doesn’t recognize that it’s dead. And so what you have is people, modern composers, trying to knock on the door “please let us in”, one contemporary piece on a concert program – if there’s any contemporary piece on a concert program. I remember this embarrassing moment in Madrid where I was invited by Ramon Barce to the Madrid Orchestra and I missed it, because I came late and it was the first piece of the program! In America you never put the contemporary piece first in the program! But Ramon Barce said in Spain the contemporary piece is always the first piece on the program, so people could come late and avoid it. So what do we have in the 20th Century? A small number of Stravinsky, Bartók, Prokofiev, people who have very extreme examples like Rachmaninoff. But you have people who are more or less conservative getting an occasional piece in the repertoire which is still totally dominated by Beethoven and Mozart. And whatever it is, and even if it’s a relatively

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conservative piece a lot of people don't like it. *The Rite of the Spring*... but after *The Rite of the Spring* Stravinsky is Russian folklorism, just post-Rimsky. So that's not so difficult to take even with the harmonic innovations. So in a certain sense, there's this sense where to continue writing in this European classical tradition is like being a beggar. "Please let me in, let me have one piece on your concert program". I think it's over. You mentioned "The Wire", the spokesperson, the spokesmagazine for an international underground, I won't say Avant Garde because it's not going anywhere, but it's an underground of cross cultural practice, which is coming from contemporary classical if you want to use the word, but Jazz, Rock, folk, meditation, ambient sound, action, all being fused. And it seems to me that's what young people are doing. And yes, there are a few people still, you know, writing music, writing for orchestra and some of it is not bad, they're not all idiots! But it seemed to me that as a culture, that's gone. And that what we have now is groups like Stefano Giust, the free improvisation groups, Marco Baldini and Blutwurst, that are working on some of my pieces. Or the Hodos ensemble or the Dedalus ensemble, doing things which are at the edge of composition, which gives you a tremendous amount of improvisation, like my piece *Ugly Music* where you just go off and do whatever you like that's ugly! And yet the important thing I guess is define something if you're still a composer whatever you write and ask people to do is at least to define an area and I think that a lot of my pieces define an area that is unique. In other words if I didn't do that, nobody would do it. People are free to do it, but they're not doing it until I say "why don't you do this". But then they do it and there's so much input from them that they're all like co-composers. I think that Jazz functions like this, the leader is just there to say "well, more of this... little of this... maybe a little bit of a theme that we work on...." and maybe there's not, or just like "let's go guys" and I think that that attitude has spread to the wide world and that young people are doing it that way, so there's no contradiction between composition and improvisation. You need something to be transmitted, some ideas. So you put it down on paper whether it's a couple of words or whether it's a complicated score. And well... it's got to be realized. So the realization has always got a certain uniqueness to it. We have the idea of interpretation so it means that even Western European music had a room for individual variation so that can be maybe very extreme. Suppose my score says "do whatever you want", some people would think "I never thought I could do anything I wanted". So there, the composition idea is good. But if they do anything they want, how can I claim credit?

M.S. - I have some questions about your *Satie Slowly*. I think it's a very interesting process to slow down the music. I mean the gesture playing the instrument and rhythm...

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P.C. – I'm sorry for interrupting, but I just wanted to say that it's not the idea where you just have to play everything slow. There's some Satie that you should play very fast, but those particular pieces that I chose are ones that are very meditative and of course Satie himself was into a religious or spiritual consciousness. And those things should be very slow.

M.S. - When I'm listening to your records Satie seems just the obvious composer for that. As this process was inscribed into the score. But I was wondering what was the process in your interpretation to play this way. Was it gradual? What were your questions? I take another example, I was thinking of comments by John Tilbury on his performance of *Anima 7* by Kosugi – you know this piece about slowness – and Tilbury explains that this score produced in him many questions about the realization of slowness. You've talked about meditation, but I was wondering about your process in the performance and through the years.

P.C. – I'm not sure how I can answer... The first Satie piece that I played very slowly was the *Gnossienne*, the one in F minor... I just heard it recently played by somebody else and it just seems ridiculous, all these people who played the Saint-Saëns piano concertos, they got technique up the ass and they play Satie all so awful! And even like *Vexations*... What should be the problem about playing *Vexations*? A couple of years ago I went back to New York, the Guggenheim Museum did the Reconstruction of the *Vexations* and pianists came from France, also jazz pianists, and I couldn't listen to it. It was so awful. Everybody thought they had to add something to it... they added rubato.... I mean it was dreadful! Just try to play these simple things, just play straight without any particular added interpretation! And I heard recently somebody playing the *Gnossienne*, it's trivial and that's why people have thought that Satie was trivial, it looks so simple! Just an F minor chord over and over again, then you go to the dominant and then it goes and it's just boom-ching-ching boom-ching-ching... da di da da tiamm... what do you do with that grace note? That grace note is a touch of genius... you have to do something very special with it and if you play it very slow that grace note gives you the opportunity to do something that's really very sharp and very contrasting. And so that's just one idea. And then even the *Gymnopédies*, I don't play the *Gymnopédies* terribly slow, I played them at a reasonable tempo. But I've listened to people playing them without even following the score. I mean, there are dynamic indications. The music has a swell, and there's a da da da da di di da da daa... Pammm... what's going on in their minds? They're musicians and they don't know anything about interpretation. But frankly, I'm listening to a lot of orchestral music and it seems to me that there's a disease in the culture. I don't know whether they're afraid of being too romantic or expressionist or something like that. But there's the idea of maybe “the long tone”, to play

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with “good tone”. They’ve practiced so long to get a good tone and then they play and there’s no articulation, no internal expression. They just played everything with a long line, without breathing, without accentuation, without phrasing. And they were all very good, they have good intonation and they play these fantastic difficult kind of things, but there seems to be something which I hear. Even conductors I like, like Pappano, they’ve got into this thing of “everything is a long line”, lyrical kind of a thing... It was just something coming to my mind, I think it’s an obvious example in the Overture of Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*, and you get this thing really going with the two notes: tiii-da, daaa-da. They got DA-DA DA-DA DI-DA DA-DA, I think that doesn’t make any sense at all! Because it’s obviously TIII-DA, TIII-DA..., and that’s an extreme example... One of the first things I ever heard as a kid was the Mozart G minor. In the second movement the violins go down in the scale and I always thought it was Tiam Tiam Tiam. Tiam. Tiam. Tiam., right? After a short note it will always seem like a weak, a weak beat. But it’s not like Pàtam, Pàtam, Pàtam...Pàtam, Pàtam, Pàtam..., but they all play that way! The only way you know that it’s on the beat is because it’s played up against the melody or the underlying rhythmic structure. And that’s just an example of the way that articulation -- which I guess ultimately comes down to expression – is being ruled out in a certain sense. It’s written into the music up to a certain extent. The Romantic composers wrote expressions in and all that, but you play it in such a way that the only thing that really counts is your musicianship, your competency. Where you are playing this long line with perfect intonation and great tone and so it just seems to me that that’s something endemic in the whole culture. And Satie is particularly extreme because if you don’t do that, then the work seems like nothing. And if you think of the *Gymnopédies*, I just got my royalty statement from Tommy McCutcheon, and of all the things I played in the Satie record, which thing has been played more often than anything else? It’s that damned first *Gymnopédie*! Everybody thinks they know it so much because they’ve heard it used as a perfume advertisement. But if you look at what’s going on there, it starts off with a G major 7 chord. Who the hell starts off a piece with a G major 7 chord? Here’s this nice little piece da da di da da da... and it starts off with a G major 7 chord... When you think about it, what the fuck is he doing there? And then when you look at it even more, it’s divided into the G, separated by two octaves in the harmony and it’s played in such a way that it almost seems as if the harmony is separate from the G. So it’s really more like a B minor chord over a G base, like the way a jazz musician would write the chord. Not G major 7 but B minor over G and the second, F# minor over D. You can call that a D major 7 chord. So it’s already voiced in such a way. That’s very unusual, very unique. Shouldn’t you do something about that, shouldn’t that have something to do with your interpretation? And then you see that the melody is all based around F#. It starts on F# and kind of comes down to F#. Then there’s

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even that long loud note, and some people stupidly put an accent on the second beat because the manuscript is sloppy. You know what I mean, right? The one that lasts for two beats. Well, the F# is so important in the shape of the melody and then you realize that the F# is the common note between the two chords -- the G major 7 and the D major 7 -- and it's the top note of the way the harmony is played. I tried to do it in such a way that the F# is slightly brought out that you hear that that's a pole in there, going contrasting to the obvious home-tonality. And that's typical of Satie that he's doing something that's completely original, completely unique hiding behind something that looks traditional and then these dummies just say "well yeah, G major 7, D major 7, bum-ching bum-ching..." and then they go da da da da da da da... They play it like that and they're great pianists, but what kind of musicianship is that?

M.S. - Very interesting. And from an extra musical point of view, what does this slowness mean for you?

P.C. - Well, I think that in a way the ultimate slowness is no change at all and Deborah knows that I've done that, taken it to extreme. I call it *Elementals*, where it specifically says "no conscious change, indefinite prolongation". And that's the piece that was done many years ago that lasted five days. Of course that makes me think of John Cage and this thing called *ASLSP as slow as possible* where people are doing this ridiculous thing of playing one note for three years or something...

M.S. - In Halberstadt in Germany...

P.C. - Excuse by saying so, but that's a stupid thing to do because you can't hear the slowness! It's a kind of intellectual idea of doing something and since it's the name of John Cage they can do that thing. I think that to play very slowly is to get into each note and of course it destroys time. So I certainly believe in a piece that is very very slow. Cage himself has written things like the *Prelude for Meditation* where there's just one note that lasts for a long time and then it means that you are where you are, and Cage's philosophy turns around this idea of always being where you are at any moment. Of course with his surface complexity you're always moving from one thing to the other. But at least the idea is that that's why you can move from any one point to any one other place, because in a certain sense there's not supposed to be any movement. Every one place is just one place wherever it is, so the extreme of that is either to separate the notes to such an extent that you can't really perceive or feel the movement between them or do something which in fact has no movement at all. Wasn't that anticipated by what Boulez called *le bloc sonore* in the late works of Webern? (We should mention Varèse here.) I think

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that it has something to do, or you think something like *tonfarben*, the tone-color piece of Schönberg (Farben) from the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*? The one where the chord repeats, but with the changing instruments for a while, so there's this idea of a stasis, like nothing moves. Of course you have that in Wagner and *Rheingold*, (and I would also throw in the opening fanfares of Monteverdi operas) so there's anticipation of this beingness, where time has stopped, and the time only exists in the sense of your perception of listening to it for a long time. But in fact nothing is happening and so in a certain sense the slowness is a way of approaching that, the ultimate slow. This is of course, not moving at all.

M.S. - I was asking this question also because some contemporary practices of slowing down are clearly critical about the acceleration of our contemporary times, where everything is going faster and faster and people look for immediate responses... I was wondering if in your own approach there is this kind of critical aspect or not at all.

P.C. - Well, I think that that's true. And maybe paradoxically the extreme acceleration and complexity of our time has permitted or induced the desire for slowness and stillness, so maybe there's a cause and effect relationship there. But it seems to me that no matter how busy you are there's still room for quietness. I think one needs that. So one could for instance lead a very active life, one could be running around all over the place and doing all sorts of active violent things and yet you have to slow down sometime. You have to rest sometime and spiritually the slowness is rest. Didn't they say that the Japanese soldiers meditated? Meditation was always one part of the Oriental culture, where there's both the extreme action and the slowness. The Samurai certainly meditated. So I think that there's a sense of wanting to have that. Then you have these extreme people like the Wandelweiser people who seem only going for slowness and simplicity. That seems to me to be a dogmatic narrow position. I think you need both. And that piece that Deborah plays with Silvia which is called *Two Extreemizms* is an extreme example of my sense of meeting both.

M.S. - It depends on the relationships to the speed. You can go fast *or* slow. There is something like that in Deleuze and Guattari: it's not about slow or fast but about the relationships with the speed, trying to go at an alternative speed. I have also a question about another record by you, which is *Pictures of pictures from pictures of pictures* produced by René Block in the 1980s. I have this record at home but unfortunately it is a test pressing, so without the liner notes by Helga de la Motte-Haber. The content of this record is very mysterious for me, with this repetitive series of more or less fast notes and chords. What was the idea behind this recording? The title looks like a *mise en abyme*...

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P.C. – There's no mystery about it, it's based on Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an exhibition*.

M.S. - And KP Brehmer?

P.C. - Yes, KP made a series of etchings based on Mussorgsky, the ten pictures. And René asked me to interpret the etchings. In a certain sense I didn't have to refer to the Mussorgsky at all. I could have done something that was based on the etchings, but I didn't feel that the etchings were rich enough in stimulation to give me ideas to work with and the idea of working back to the Mussorgsky was interesting. So I did something that I took from the etchings, I would measure aspects of them. Something that was definitely taken from KP, I would then modulate it against the Mussorgsky, like the choice of pitches. Something that was very clearly related to the Mussorgsky was then projected onto whatever I was measuring and deriving literally from the KP's etchings. So if you listen to any one movement – even not knowing what it was all about – you would recognize *The Great Gate of Kiev*, that's very obvious what I did to relate to Mussorgsky. In every case I used it as material for semi-improvisation. Each one lasts five minutes, there was a strict time thing. And each one gives a kind of a premise, which looks at harmony and evolution based on the Mussorgsky, following some aspects of the structure that I took from KP and then they're improvised upon. You've probably never seen the score... I made copies of the score to go with the portfolio with the etchings in them, so that each one had a copy of ten pages of my score, which I made with coloring, suggesting the quality of the sound for each movement. But nobody knows those, they're never been published! As I say they come with the edition, but as René told me recently when I asked him to send a copy to my archive in Northwestern University, he said nobody has ever bought one. In other words, nobody knows these things at all! He probably exhibited them in some of the Brehmer shows that he organized, but I don't know if he necessarily put my scores as part of the show, probably not. I put them into Frog Peak music so one could order them. But as I say they make very clear visually what I was doing acoustically to relate both to KP and to Mussorgsky.

M.S. - I know that KP Brehmer often used social data for his work, for example in his paintings or diagrams. Did you take into account this social aspect in your interpretation of the etchings?

P.C. - No, I wouldn't say that. I knew KP very well and I like him very much as an artist, but I don't think I can add anything to what I just said, how I interpreted the etchings and made the recording of it. I'm glad that you have the record. I'm glad that some people know about some of the stuff that has happened. This stuff goes out in the world and I completely lose track of it! Sometimes I don't even

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remember that I ever did it... And then like something 40 years after something comes up. If it's out there and you listen to it and you like it, then of course, I'm happy about it. In a certain sense, I haven't had any direct contact with René for a long time. He's interested in other things. If a few copies of the record get sold, it's all right, it's something I did a long time ago. I'm happy with it. I actually played it, not recently but I did perform it in concert several times subsequently.

M.S. - And did you collaborate more beyond this work with KP Brehmer?

P.C. - No, as I said, he was a friend, a colleague at the HBK Hamburg. We saw each other a lot, we ate together and things like that. At that time I did something with a friend of his, I can't remember her name right now, [nb. Marianne Greve] she did this wonderful piece called *Plankton Melody*. (*Plank Tone Melody*---get it?) She is a biologist and she had this thing where these little animals were swimming around. She made a transparent music paper box, with musical staff lined on it so that the notes were the little animals swimming around in the water in this transparent score. We performed it in New York with an ensemble, it was a lot of fun! But I didn't do anything else particularly with KP.

M.S. - Did you know his music? He composed a few scores....

P.C. - Yeah, I know about them and I've seen them but don't ask me anything about them because I don't remember what they were like.

M.S. - I have also a question about a very old piece by you, a very famous one which is *Piano Activities*. I hope my question will not be boring because I think a lot of people ask you about this piece and the destruction by Fluxus...

P.C. - That's not true.... But do you know the recordings?

M.S. - I have the recording in Wiesbaden, in 1962.

P.C. - But you don't have the cassette edition from Greece. That's called *Piano Activities Workplays*. I just mentioned it because I think that's very very important. The score if you remember, it's a verbal score and it was published in "The Four Suits" of the Something Else Press. If you look at it, you see that the intention is not the destruction, since you're playing with objects. But that aspect of destroying the piano has become forefront. Some people have just improvised destroying a piano without following my score saying that it's a realization of my piece... and well... maybe sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't.

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Of course it's very free. The boundary between responsibly playing the score and how much freedom you get is very free. But there have been a lot of performances with the destruction including some that I've been part of, because I'm certainly not against it! The Wiesbaden 50th anniversary was wonderful with all the old friends from Fluxus working together and you see that if you have the right people you can be very free because if they're good artists, they'll be responsible and imaginative and creative even if you give them a lot of freedom. So even with destroying the piano, that last performance was very nicely done. But as a result of that the remains become sculptures and one of them is in the Museo della Villa Croce in Genoa, in the permanent collection; another in Milan in Mudima, and there was one in Poznań and others. There are remains of *Piano Activities* as a kind of piano-transformed-in-sculpture and they're all around. But the reason I mentioned the Greek cassette edition is very important because it has four realizations of the "classic" *Piano Activities*, where you don't destroy the piano. There's a group of people playing with things, but they're playing in such a way. Sometimes when I've had those workshops I say "don't touch the dampers because you can destroy them or hurt them" and "don't do things that will destroy the piano, just take something where you can hammer on the strings for instance or you can do things like that, but don't do anything that hurts the piano". I had these four recordings and I was very concerned that they get out in the world that people know that the real *Piano Activities* has a dimension that goes much beyond just busting the piano. There's a book about new music by an American critic – it has quite a bit of a reputation this particular book – and the only mention of me is half a sentence shared with "Nam June Paik who breaks violins" and my half of the sentence is "Philip Corner breaks pianos". So obviously I'm interested that people know that not only I do other things and break pianos, but that *Piano Activities* itself can be done differently. Actually there's another recording, it's a short version of Stefan Schleiermacher performing with a group at a Fluxus concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus. I always keep thinking "poor Mendelssohn, he must be turning over in his grave" ...

M.S. - It was the purpose of my question to know your feelings about this misunderstanding about the destruction...

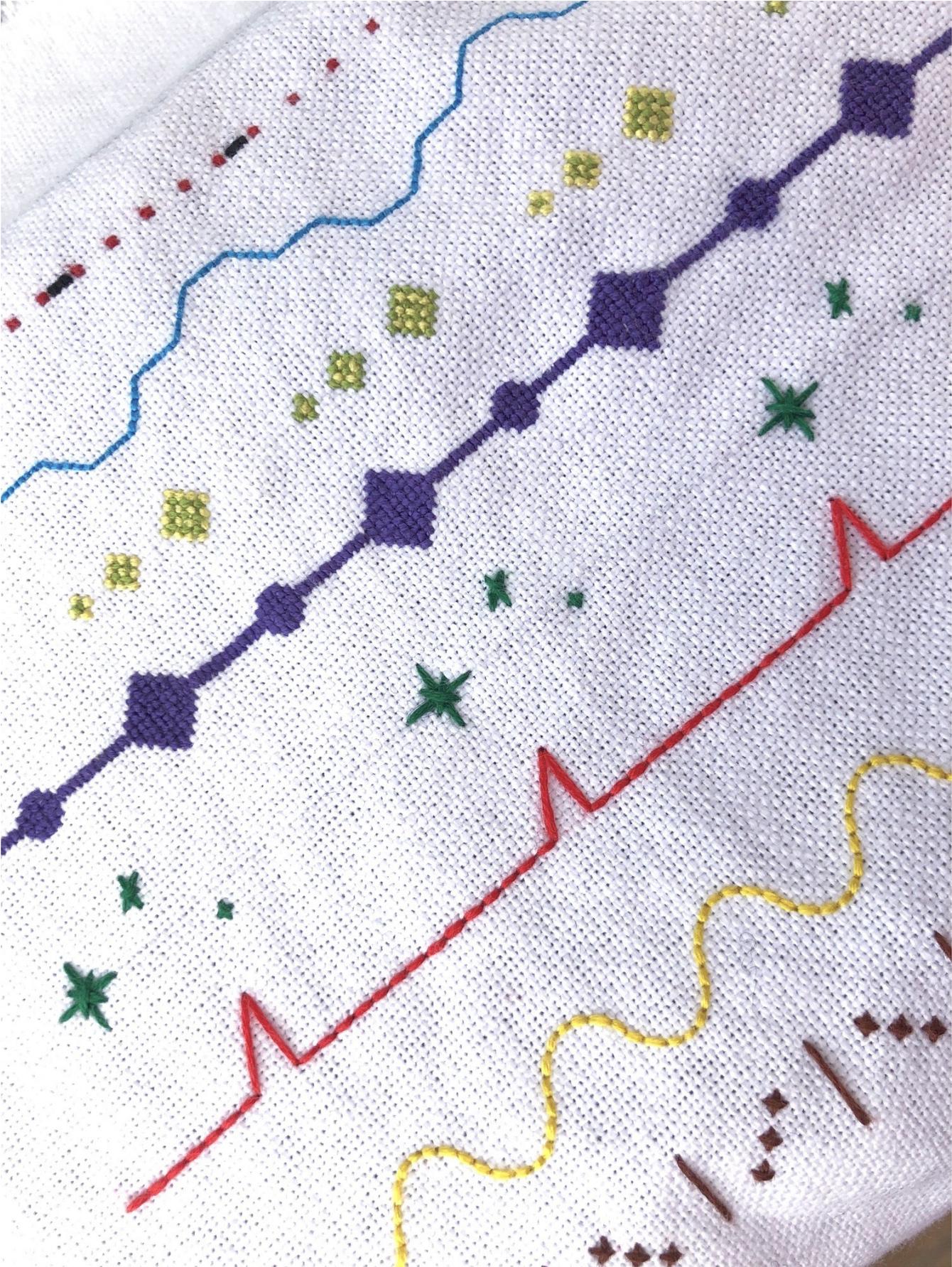
P.C. - Well I learned a lot from it. When I first heard about it I was kind of shocked but then I thought about it. And I said, well... why not? Again, it depends on how it's done. In that case you might say like John Cage, I'm a classicist. You don't just let yourself loose in this bang-away, but you do it in the kind of a classical, disciplined way. And as a result of that as a matter of fact, I wrote another piece called *quiet work of Destruction*, which has been done twice as a kind of performance installation. It specifically

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requires that you transform or destroy a piano but very quietly, very patiently and very beautifully, so it gave me a push in that direction to realize that I could accept a dimension of that.

M.S. - You also mentioned the sculptures coming from the remains. What do you think about this museum becoming of the remains, this fetishism of the remains?

P.C. - Well, I believe in art, I believe in sculpture... and I see that there's a certain kind of ultimate responsibility. You destroy the piano and then you have the destruction. In a certain sense your work on the piano is a homage. One of the instructions in fact says that you must use a superannuated piano. The "Morality of Transformation". You cannot use a good piano, you must use the piano that's no longer of any use and I hear now that because of Rock and guitars and all that, people are throwing out the pianos, and I'm saying like "well, alright, fine, but do it this way". When I was teaching secondary school in New York and we had some old pianos that were useless as pianos, ready to throw out, I did that and I even gave assignment to my music class to come up with a composition which would be a way of destroying the piano and transforming it as a performance and there's actually a recording of the version I did with my High School students, which was brought out many many years ago in Holland by *Slowscan*. I think it should be available, Jan van Toorn is still producing records in den Bosch. That was a recording I did with my students on the basis of making an *apotheose* of this old piano, giving it a dignified burial. So the sculpture is a kind of death and rebirth, Tod und Verklärung, death and transfiguration. I see it as a moral thing.





Graphic Scores and Embroidery: a Conversation with Anne Rhodes

Anne Rhodes, singer, composer, and improviser, is creating graphic scores in a way that has never before been done, by embroidering them. We first met in 2010, at Tom Johnson's 70th birthday celebration hosted by Wesleyan University. Only after knowing and working with Anne for several years did I learn of her work with her trio *Broadcloth* and it was at that time that I became familiar with her uncommon gifts as a composer. In this interview, she discusses for the first time her innovations as a composer who creates graphic scores with embroidery. This unique approach to creating graphic scores has affected both her compositional style and her performance practice.

Dean Rosenthal: How did you first get involved in composing embroidered scores?

Anne Rhodes: I've been doing various kinds of textile and needlecrafts since I was a small child. As an adult, my mom learned (mostly on her own) how to sew, knit, cross-stitch, quilt, embroider, smock, and more. She passed a lot of that on to me. Growing up, and into my 20s, I was primarily interested in making my own clothing. I made many of my dresses for dances, proms, and recitals, as well as my wedding dress. As a working adult, I've had less time and patience for major sewing projects, and focused more on "lap projects" like knitting and embroidery, which I can work on while relaxing, socializing, or watching T.V.

Sometime in 2007, I got it in my head to try free-hand embroidery, rather than follow a pattern. When I began to stitch, I couldn't seem to come up with any compelling ideas. I'm not a visual artist, but as an experimental musician I had worked with a lot with graphic notation. So I decided to come at the project from the perspective of visually representing sonic elements. The result was a circular piece of abstract art – black thread on natural-colored fabric – with which I felt more or less satisfied. I planned to hang it up on the wall.

Not long after that, I started an experimental/improvisation trio with musicians Adam Matlock and Nathan Bontrager. While they brought some of their compositions to the first rehearsal, and I initially felt I didn't have anything comparable to contribute. On a whim, I showed them my "piece," thinking it might be fun for practice. They were more enthusiastic about it than I had anticipated. It became part of our core repertoire, and the title track and cover art for our studio album. I named it "In Stitches," a play on words and a loose reference to Terry Riley's "In C" (If I had it to do over again, I might not reference a great work within the experimental canon, and with which my piece has very little in common). "In Stitches" also helped inspire our trio's name, *Broadcloth*, a word that combined various letters in our names, and evoked the interwoven sounds and range of and styles we are interested in performing together.

It took awhile for me to realize how much and why sewing made sense for me as a composer. I feel more connected to and physically coordinated with needle and thread than pens and pencils. It is difficult and awkward for me to execute visual ideas on paper, but sewing lets me

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take my time and think things through, and to shape my ideas as I go. It's also easier and less wasteful to redo the parts I want to change.

DR: What stimulates their creation?

AR: After "In Stitches," there have been various stimuli. The other members of Broadcloth expressed an interest in my composing just for us as a trio, so I created "Broadcloth, Book 1," a set of white cloth "pages" bound together. I sewed three parallel lines of graphics, one for each of us, to be played simultaneously, left to right, as traditionally-notated music would be (though with opportunities for optional repeats cued by hand signals). A performative hallmark of our trio is that we explore abrupt transitions from improvised or noisy passages to distinct convergences, and in that piece, I had our respective lines literally converge at times, to indicate a unison or near-unison long-tone. For the final section, I composed and cross-stitched a few measures of a traditionally-notated melody. Because it consists of Xs and straight lines on aida cloth (fabric woven with a grid of squares and tiny holes), cross-stitch lends itself well to traditional notation.

"Knitted Duet" was composed specifically for a duo performance with the vocalist Kyoko Kitamura, but I have used it for other duos as well. "Large Embroidery for Small Ensemble" was commissioned by the first annual Hartford New Music Festival. That gave me an opportunity to invest in the materials to create an 8' by 2' score, stretched over a frame like a painters' canvas.

For my new solo voice and electronics project, Red Rainbow, I am working on a scroll bearing 18 or more lines of stitching, each a different repeating pattern, in a variety of colors. These are meant to inspire vocal material for looping. On a practical level, after years of juggling oversized, floppy, or oddly-shaped pieces – "Large Embroidery" can only be transported in my Subaru Outback with the back and passenger seats folded down, and cannot be securely propped on a row of music stands – I measured this one specifically to fit lengthwise on a music stand with room to spare. I plan to attach dowels to either end so that I can roll it up for storage and travel.

DR: Is their realization key to the forming of them as a practice of embroidery?

AR: I do approach most of my pieces with at least some literal visual representations of sounds in mind. For dots, I think of staccato sounds; wavy lines are legato sounds; zigzags are trills, etc. But I don't necessarily expect others, particularly all the various instrumentalists I work with, to realize them the same way I would. And for some odder or more intricate shapes, specific sounds are a little less obvious; much is left up to performer.

"Large Embroidery for Small Ensemble" is presented as a flow chart, and I have some loose instructions about how it works. There really should be text instructions for all of my pieces, and I've been meaning for a long time to write them. Most of the pieces have some kind of suggested structure or trajectory, though I tend leave specific sounds up to interpretation and I create these pieces with creative improvisers in mind. Because I've always been involved in the

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performances, I've often just given the other musicians a run-down in rehearsal, or even right before the performance.

DR: In what ways have you found embroidering your scores has impacted your own performance practice as a musician? Has it?

AR: The act of embroidering definitely helps me come up with new ideas for ways in which I use traditional sounds and extended techniques. But I think the greater impact has come from performing the finished product.

I believe that even when it comes to traditionally-noted music, we have subtly different responses to various media. A commercially-published score feels solid and tangible, Finale or Sibelius printouts are pristine and a little cold, and a handwritten score is personal and delicate, almost ephemeral. I've never performed music reading a score directly from a tablet screen, but I imagine it's a very different experience from reading printed music.

Many of the graphic scores I've interpreted have been photocopies, and I've always felt a sense of detachment from those. I've never seen a copy of Earle Brown's "December 1952" or Anthony Braxton's "Language Music" key that didn't look like they had been photocopied several times over. Braxton's "Falling River Music" compositions, on the other hand, are vibrant and painterly, and he has had such high-quality copies made that they are nearly identical to the originals. I find those much more inspiring.

Reading sewn music is another experience altogether. The fabric and thread are distinctly textured. While the images are two-dimensional, they are in slight relief on the surface of the fabric. I think – I hope – these qualities invite improvisors to think about the textures and timbres of their sounds as much as the shapes, pitches, rhythms, and dynamics.

DR: Have you seen this innovation as a gendered response to graphic scores?

Not directly or consciously, at least not from the beginning. Unsurprisingly, there have been times when I have felt marginalized as a woman in music, particularly after I made the switch from classical voice to experimental and improvised music. Free improv in particular can have a pretty macho, boys' club kind of vibe. I think singers in general are often not entirely welcome in the free improv world as much as instrumentalists. I was once told that this is because there is an audience expectation that the singer play a central role in an ensemble, the implication being that that expectation is a drag for the rest of the group and that, therefore, excluding singers is a reasonable choice. I have read scathing reviews of vocal improvisers that seemed solely based on the reviewer having a blanket aversion to wordless vocal improvisation. I probably don't have to mention here the proportion of singers who are women vs. the proportion of instrumentalists who are women. I would argue that those reservations some people have about singers as improvisors and as ensemble members are rooted in gender, whether intentionally or not.

Dean Rosenthal

(Actually, I wouldn't argue that, because I find that kind of debate incredibly stressful. It's demoralizing to have one's lived experiences denied and dismissed.)

Anyway, there was a time when I think I subconsciously wanted to fit in and be treated like "one of the boys." I would do things like dressing for gigs in a more casual or androgynous way than I normally enjoyed, or try to tone down the higher-pitched sounds and *bel canto* influences in my improvisation. Eventually, I was able to acknowledge and intervene with those impulses and to question the value of repressing my authentic gender expression in order to conform. It feels as though bringing sewing into my music allows me to offer something that is not only unique and personal, but which has unapologetically feminine associations.

Based in New Haven, CT, **Anne Rhodes** (b. 1976) performs a broad range of experimental, improvised, and classical music. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Boston University, an M.A. in Experimental Music Performance from Wesleyan University, and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois. She has premiered solo, opera, and chamber works by more than thirty composers, and is considered one of the foremost interpreters of the vocal works of Anthony Braxton, with whom she has performed and recorded extensively. Rhodes performs as a member of various ensembles, including Braxton's Tri-Centric Vocal Ensemble and *Pine Top Aerial Music* Sextet; Carl Testa's Sway; and the trio Broadcloth. Her solo project, Red Rainbow, incorporates voice and electronics, looping sounds as diverse as extended techniques and *bel canto* vocalises to create layer upon layer of dissonance, harmony, and noise. As a composer, she creates unique embroidered graphic scores. She is also the Archivist for Oral History of American Music at Yale University.

Dean Rosenthal is an American composer of contemporary and experimental music, field recordings, digital pastiche, sound collage, and installations; performer, writer on music, and theorist; his instrumental music has been described as "thorny" and "modernist" (*The New Yorker*). His works are performed, broadcast, choreographed, and installed internationally, primarily in North America and Europe at venues such as Ohrenhoch der Geräuschladen, Spectrum, The Wulf, Brooklyn Museum, Electronic Music Foundation, Taipei Contemporary Arts Centre, Incubator Arts Project, La Scala de San Telmo, Symphony Space, at varied universities and art schools, and often outdoors, in situ. His writings have been published in *The Open Space Magazine*, *The Ear Reader*, and other prominent contemporary publications. Most recently he has worked closely with Guggenheim Fellow David Parker's dance company The Bang Group, in tandem with Grammy-nominated violinist Pauline Kim Harris of String Noise. Since 2012, he has made his home on the island of Martha's Vineyard, where he composed his ongoing international performance piece *Stones/Water/Time/Breath* which in 2016 was given a 10 city, 3 country performance as part of the international Make Music Day festival, inaugurating an annual event now in its 4th year.

Jo Kondo: *Homo audiens*¹

Translator's preface by **Daryl Jamieson**

Jo Kondo is a composer who, from the earliest stages of his career, has cultivated fruitful relationships with composers, performers, and audiences across Europe, North America, and beyond. He is, in fact, rather better known – and his music more widely performed – outside of his home country of Japan than inside it. This is especially remarkable for a composer who, barring a year living in New York, USA and a few short guest lectureships at universities in Canada, the USA, and the UK, has lived almost his entire life among the hills surrounding Kamakura, a tranquil, seaside city an hour's train-ride south of Tokyo. Despite the relative prominence of his music and the high regard in which it is held – Morton Feldman was a particularly strong advocate, praising its originality and predicting in the eighties that Kondo would come to be thought of as 'the Webern of the nineties'² – Kondo's parallel vocation as a writer about music and aesthetics is almost unknown in the non-Japanese-speaking world.

Born in 1947, Kondo attended Tokyo University of the Arts as a composition student, studying the basics of western music with Hasegawa Yoshio and Minami Hiroaki. Arguably more important for the development of his compositional voice was simply being in Tokyo and being a part of the avant-garde music and art scene which was flourishing in the city in those heady, revolutionary years at the end of the sixties. Takemitsu Toru and Yuasa Joji (respectively seventeen and eighteen years Kondo's senior) had in the fifties been a part of the interdisciplinary collective Jikken Kobo (Experimental Workshop), and had helped to introduce a new spirit of freedom and rejection of academicism among Kondo's generation. It was in this fertile and experimental milieu that Kondo received his most formative education in contemporary music, not only as a composer but also as a writer. Throughout the seventies, Kondo regularly worked as a music critic, honing both his ear and his pen, making the case for the new freedoms of the American avant-garde over the strictures of the previous generations' academic formalism.

It was also during these early years that he first came across, and began to champion, the ideas of John Cage. This set in motion a series of events which would culminate in his spending a year in New York from 1977 to 1978 during which he would get to know Cage, Feldman, Tom Johnson, and other leading members of the late-seventies New York experimental music scene. During the late seventies, he began to theorise about his own deeply personal and unique compositional style that he called *sen no ongaku* (linear music) and which he had been developing in practice since

¹ Jo Kondo, *Homo audiens*, English translation by Daryl Jamieson, *MusikTexte*, Germany, 2022

² Morton Feldman, 'Current Trends in America', in Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964–1987, edited by Chris Villars, London: Hyphen Press, 2006, 162.

1973. *Sen no Ongaku* also became the title of his first book, which he published in 1979 (the key elements of which are summarised in this volume in Appendix 1).

That was to be the first of – to date – seven books (a figure which excludes his great volume of articles, contributions to edited volumes, co-authored texts, and translations from English to Japanese of writers such as John Cage [collected essays], David Hughes [*A History of European Music*], and Mark Evan Bonds [*Music as Thought*], among others). These books range widely in topic, from reflections on his own music and detailed discussions of contemporary music to music history in general (including his most recent, 2019's *Monogatari seiyō ongakushi* [The Story of Western Music], an award-winning history of music from the Middle ages to the nineteen seventies aimed at young readers). An overriding concern throughout his musical life – and the principal focus of *Homo audiens* – has been the aesthetics of music. Since his student days at Tokyo University of the Arts, Kondo has read extensively in the western philosophical canon and his approach to the composition of, listening to, and writing about music is strongly marked by this lifelong intellectual engagement. His aesthetic thinking inclines towards relativism and subjectivism, and in this text in particular Friedrich Schlegel – a German Romantic philosopher and critic who was born in 1772 and died in 1829, making him an almost exact contemporary of Beethoven – plays an important role. The Romantic thinker's writing is quoted liberally through the text to come and the influence of his thought permeates the text. Though I have only highlighted Schlegel, Kondo's range of reference is temporally wide, reflecting his voracious and intellectually engaged reading; it encompasses writing on music and aesthetics from the mediaeval period to the present day in the western tradition, as well as aesthetics and philosophy from the Japanese tradition.

In both his music and his texts, Kondo productively explores, exploits, and transcends the tensions inherent in binary, contradictory, relationships. One such point of tension is the old, problematic East/West dichotomy. Kondo self-identifies as a 'composer' full-stop, rejecting the qualifying adjective 'Japanese' as limiting and nationalistic: born into a defeated and occupied nation and coming of age amidst the international revolutionary fervour of 1968, he has never been comfortable with the insular ideology of patriotism. He has written conspicuously little music for traditional Japanese instruments, and has, as mentioned above, pursued musical opportunities in Europe and North America more actively than he has in Japan. His musical and aesthetic thought is also primarily rooted in the European tradition. In the present volume, aside from a few autobiographical pages, you will find few references to Japan, and none at all to Japanese philosophy. That does not mean that there are no influences from the Japanese tradition in his writing,³ simply that they are more deeply buried and, in the end, less crucial to his theses than

³ His denial of subject/object dualism is one such correlation with Buddhist philosophy, as is his interest in how the intertonal relationship between individual sounds affects listeners' perception of each sound. Moreover, the valorisation of ambiguity and spontaneity in his compositions and writings could also be productively examined in relation to traditional Japanese aesthetics.

Homo audiens

those from the western European tradition. The influences of Japanese philosophy and culture, however, cannot help but be present in his music and thought; they are, to appropriate a phrase of Mark Evan Bonds that is prominently used in *Homo audiens*, among ‘the broader premises that shape listening’ – and writing, and interpretation – of anyone who grows up, or even lives for a significant time, in Japan.

In the present book, however, nationalism and other political matters are, in general, bracketed to allow us to concentrate on aesthetic ones. Although it is a book about music written by a prominent composer, *Homo audiens* is not a manual of composition (though the role of the composer and purpose of composition is one of its central topics), nor an exegesis of his own works (though these are discussed in the afterword and appendices), nor is it a discussion of his compositional method (though his method is undoubtedly anchored in the musical-aesthetic concepts explored in this book). Instead, it focuses on the more widely applicable question of interpretation of music, arguing for the centrality of the act of listening to all aspects of the music-making and -receiving process through the concept of *listening out* – that is, extracting musical information in reaction to, and thus anchoring interpretation in, the musical sounds themselves. This concept is most fully articulated in Chapter IV, the preceding chapters offering examples and elaborations that demonstrate how listening is the only way to understand music, not only for audiences, but for performers and composers as well. As he states in Chapter II, ‘from the beginning, composition is, and has always been, “listening”’.

The first chapter juxtaposes Beethoven and John Cage, offering a variety of interpretations of their work through the framework of Romantic aesthetics. While seemingly an appropriate lens through which to think about Beethoven, it is likely to be thought a surprising one through which to listen to Cage. Kondo subverts both of those assumptions. Regarding the interpretation of Beethoven, he problematises the idea that we can ever recover the ears (conceptual frameworks) through which an older composer’s contemporaries – or any other listener from any point in time – first heard and interpreted their music. As a contemporary, friend and colleague of Cage, he also re-evaluates the nature of Cage’s radicalism and questions whether Cage really did represent a clean break with the Romantic nineteenth-century legacy of classical music at all. This radical reimagining of the work of major figures of the classical and avant-garde traditions sets the stage for the more general and wide-ranging reflections on musical interpretation to come.

The extent to which music can be considered as a language is a centuries-long debate. Drawing on semioticians such as Umberto Eco, Kondo in Chapter II dissects the common (mis)conception of music as a linguistic (or even language-like) vehicle of communication between composer and listener via the medium of performers. It is a powerful refutation of the communicative model of musical meaning, and a challenge to the nascent field of musical semiotics. Kondo puts forward a view of music as a communal sharing, as opposed to music as a direct communication from a distant, enigmatic composer which listeners ought to be grateful to receive and strive to interpret

‘correctly’. In arguing for this position, he maintains a focus on Cage’s music and thought, especially Cage’s rejection of both traditionalist and structuralist (that is, mid-century avant-garde) conceptions of music, again pointing up the centrality of – indeed the unitary focus on – the act of listening to Cage’s project. By taking Cage’s ego-denying method of composition – his acceptance of ‘sounds themselves’ without imposing human concepts on them, which Kondo calls ‘listening composition’ – as an idealistic template for all aspects of musical interpretation, Kondo argues that the true seat of emotionality or feeling in music is in the mind of each listener (as opposed to coming from the composer or being inherent in the sounds themselves), and reimagines musical compositions as mechanisms for the sounding of sounds.

Building from that conclusion, Chapter III asks, if communication cannot be the purpose of making music, what purpose can there be? ‘No purpose’ comes the answer, in what appears at first glance to be the most Zen-influenced section in the book, particularly with regard to the concept of purposelessness (however, while logical argument is transcended in traditional Zen, Kondo sets that concept in a logical framework). But far from straying into mysticism, it is at this point that Kondo’s argument is at its most socially concerned, making the case that purposelessness is itself the expression of true human freedom, one which people living under capitalist systems – or any other political systems which seek to control the labour, time, and even thought of its subjects – should embrace. It can be read as a call to resist the late-capitalist instrumentalisation not only of nature but also of time, a still-reverberating echo of the anti-establishment ideas Kondo encountered on the streets outside his university in the late sixties.

The fourth chapter addresses the social implications of freedom of interpretation. Kondo considers how that freedom – a freedom from tradition and from authority – can both hinder (through excessive individualisation) and enhance cohesion in society. In view of the potential disruptiveness of such a freedom – one which, after all, we nominally have in a pluralistic and democratic society – Kondo concludes by articulating the necessity of a musical (artistic) criticism (critical writing) that explicitly aims to transcend differences in traditions, to speak across traditions: in other words, to engage in the kind of iconoclastic writing that he himself has been engaged in throughout this book, and throughout his career as a writer and critic. In doing so, he also implicitly condemns criticism (interpretation) that lazily relies on authority and tradition to speak to those who are already ‘in the know’.

Chapter V is marked as a coda, and as such brings together the key themes of the four preceding chapters to argue again for the centrality of listening to the entirety of music. Having spent the previous four chapters concentrating on the role of the composer and the interpretations of listeners, in this final chapter of the main text he addresses how performance fits into his conception of music interpretation as an act of *listening out* and the performer as a *homo audiens*. He posits that musical performance is itself necessarily a form of the criticism he championed in Chapter IV, and that active listening (that is, listening out) can also be a kind of mental performance, thus finding a unity through the transcendence of seeming opposites.

Homo audiens

The Japanese text of *Homo audiens* concludes with the afterword, but in this English edition two appendices have been included in order to provide some insight into the development of Kondo's thought leading up to the present volume. These directly address how his aesthetic thought relates to his work as a composer and the musical works he composes, which, in the Japanese edition of *Homo audiens*, are not mentioned aside from the afterword. While of course they will be of interest to listeners (listeners *out*) of all persuasions, they will be of special interest to composers.

Throughout *Homo audiens* Kondo aims to transcend dichotomies, especially, in addition to those already mentioned, the twentieth-century division between formalism and expressionism as well as the form/content binary. He accomplishes this by privileging the creative act of listening out over that of composition or performance. Listening is the common activity that composers, performers, and listeners share; through listening we communally participate in the creation of meaning, that is, the listening of meaning out of sounds which are only sounds. In Kondo's equalising vision of - music, interpretation, and musical aesthetics, all humans are musicians because each of us is *homo audiens*.

Acknowledgements

I first came into contact with Jo Kondo in 2005 when he attended the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival as a featured composer. Because I was working part-time at Jo's music publisher, University of York Music Press (UYMP), I had had some email interaction with him in advance. I showed him some scores, about which he was encouraging, and within a year I had arranged to come to Tokyo to study with him at Tokyo University of the Arts. What began as a somewhat random series of steps ended up altering the course of my life. Some of consequences that grew out of those events include my decision to settle permanently in Japan, learn the language, and eventually take on the challenge of translating the present volume.

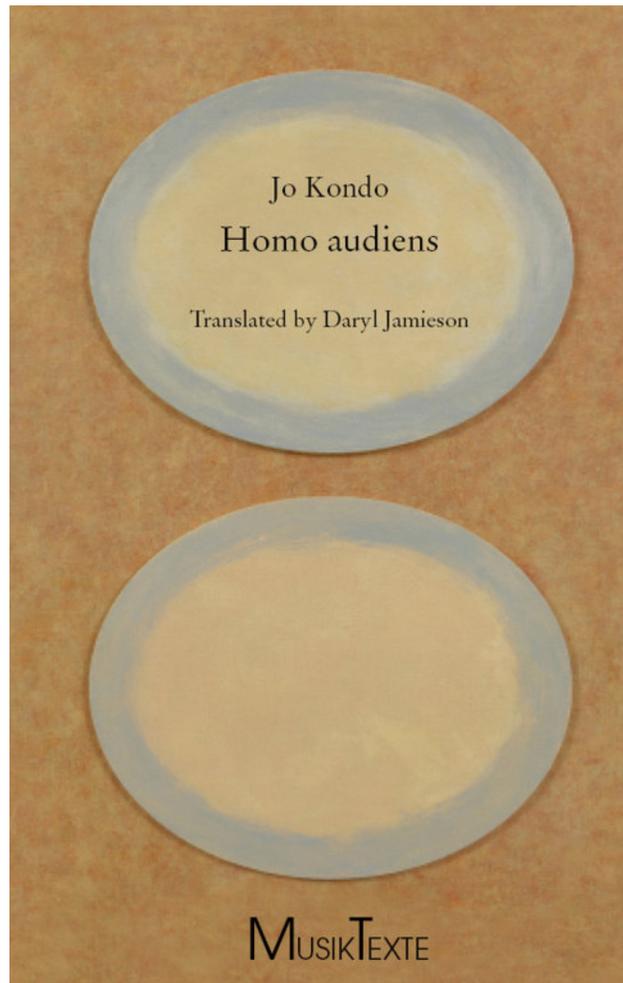
Homo audiens was published in Japanese in 2013, but I first read it in 2016 on the plane from Tokyo to Winnipeg. I was in Winnipeg to hear the Quatuor Bozzini (the Montréal-based string quartet who have recorded all of Jo's string quartets) perform a piece of mine. In the downtime between rehearsals and performances, I told Clemens Merkel (one of the quartet's violinists) about the book I had been reading on the plane. His immediate reaction was to say that he wanted to help get this published in English and asked if I would be able to translate it. I was taken aback, but that moment began the process which led to this book. It would not have happened without Clemens' support and encouragement.

In addition, this project would never have gotten off the ground without the support of Kimura Gen from Artes Publishing, the publisher of the original Japanese edition, and Gisela Gronemeyer of MusikTexte for publishing this English translation. I also want to thank Taylor & Francis for permission to republish 'The art of being ambiguous', which originally appeared in the journal *Contemporary Music Review* in 1988. The composer and scholar John Cole of Elisabeth

Daryl Jamieson

University of Music in Hiroshima must also be thanked for providing access to the drafts of his yet-unpublished study of Jo Kondo's work; it was an essential resource in compiling the biographical introduction above. Thanks must also go to Christopher Fox, whose careful reading corrected the errors and clarified the convolutions I had inadvertently left in the text.

It would also be remiss of me not to profusely thank Jo Kondo himself, not only for the years of teaching, mentoring, and support well beyond the call of duty as an academic supervisor, but especially for helping this relatively inexperienced translator through the complex passages in the original, and always be available to answer questions and clear up errors in my translation. All of that said, any errors that remain are of course my own.



Craig Pepples

Hagoromo
The Feathered Robe

Set without mortar, cantilevered blocks of stone, differently sized;
Each chord hits you with a specificity of color and material.
They pass like the cars in a train...



Craig Pepples

Jo Kondo's *Hagoromo* stands proud and alone.

Pitches are arrayed like fancy origami papers...
some sheets, folded, show pattern on the obverse...

“Here is a beauty to set the mind above itself...”



An owl wing. Dense patterning.

“The moon is still delayed above, though we’ve no skill to grasp it...”



Hagoromo: The Feathered Robe

Pound and Fenellosa's version of the Noh play is spooky and remote:

...empty sky with music, a rain of flowers,
strange fragrance on every side;
all these are no common things,
nor is this cloak that hangs upon the pine-tree.

Windy road of the waves by Miwo
Swift with ships, loud steersmen's voices.

(The poet who loved his seawater green and stormy...)

Swept by the rain, the moon is just come to light the high house.

A clean and pleasant time surely.

(Which almost sounds like *Einstein on the Beach*... but)

Upon a thousand heights had gathered the inexplicable cloud.

There comes the breath-color of spring...



Craig Pepples

Paul Zukofsky's recording of this music is on bandcamp, including wonderful empty tracks. He writes in the notes, emphatically:

These silences are intended both to provide time for Robert Wilson's stage action, as well as for musical- architecture concerns, and the durations of these silences are precisely specified by the composer. These silences are included in this recording so as to better reflect the aural impression one would receive upon hearing the work staged, but we have given each of these silences a separate track on the CD, so that the more impatient listener can skip over them, if such is their desire.



Hagoromo: The Feathered Robe

The rest of the liner notes:

Hagoromo is a one-act opera based on Zeami's (1363-1443) classical Japanese Noh play, which in turn is based upon a much earlier myth.

The plot is:

a Fisherman finds (hanging from a tree-branch) the Hagoromo (the magical feather-mantle) of a female Tennen (Angel). The Angel demands the return of the Hagoromo, for without it, she can not fly back to heaven. The Fisherman at first refuses to return the mantle, but agrees to do so if the Angel will dance for him, as he has never seen dance. She agrees, and with the return of the mantle, dances as she is flying to heaven, disappearing like a mountain slowly being hidden in the mist.

According to Waley (and others) "the story of the mortal who stole an angel's cloak and so prevented her return to heaven is very widely spread. It exists, with variations and complications, in India, China, Japan, the Liu Chiu Islands, and Sweden. The story of Hasan in the Arabian Nights is an elaboration of the same theme". It is one of the many attempts of myth to explain how dance, and/or music, arose on earth.

Kondo's setting was written in 1994. In this version the Fisherman is sung by a Mezzo-Soprano. In addition, there is a Narratress (female Speaker), and a Solo Flute is on-stage throughout (almost as if one of the actors). The stage version includes a Silent Dancer, as the Angel. The work is scored for a small orchestra of Flute, Oboe, 2 Clarinets, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion (1 Player on Marimba and Vibraphone), Piano, and Strings, plus a small Female Chorus which sits in the orchestra. Robert Wilson was the stage director of the premiere.

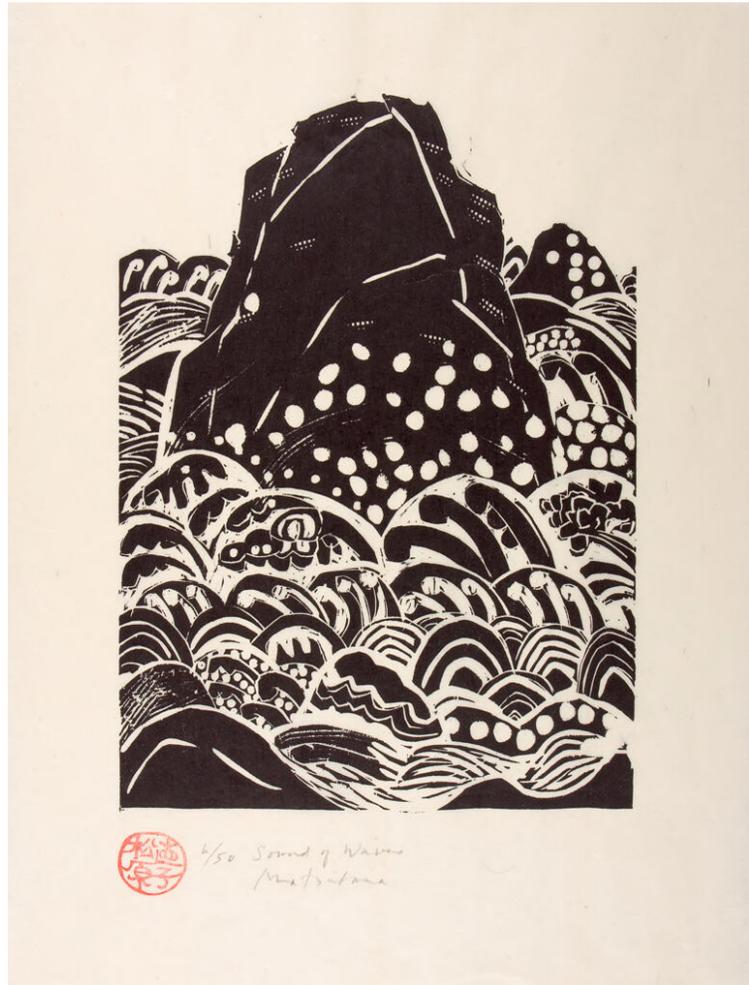
The libretto, prepared by the composer, consists of only the core parts of Zeami's original text. In Kondo's setting, the visual and aural are separated, and despite the mezzo, narrator and dancer each having a specific visual appearance, their aural aspect does not always coincide with their visual appearance, and therefore the mezzo-soprano and narrator each perform double aural roles. Thus, the mezzo-soprano (who is visually the fisherman) sings both the fisherman's text, as well as that of the angel. The narrator declaims the spoken parts of both the angel and the fisherman, while the silent dancer (visually the angel) neither sings or speaks.

CP²117

JO KONDO
HAGOROMO

written under commission from the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino,
and premiered there June 13, 1994
Publisher: University of York Music Press (U.K.)

Recorded March 25, 2002
TERESA SHAW, mezzo soprano
TOMOKO SHIOTA, narrator
SEBASTIAN BELL, flute
LONDON SINFONIETTA
LONDON SINFONIETTA VOICES
PAUL ZUKOFSKY, conductor



Naoko Matsubara

woodcuts for Hagoromo (Feathered Robe) 1986

used by kind permission of the artist

Blake's Transformation of Reading

George Quasha

Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of the truth.

“The Proverbs of Hell”¹

1 Who or what is an *optimal Blake reader*?

An optimal Blake reader would be something distinct, at least in part, from a good reader of Blake, an appreciator, whether at the level of the earnest close-reading student or at the exalted scholarly level; whether it's one enviably able to interpret his poems or one flush with knowledge of the full oeuvre in all its intricate richness; or whether it's one masterfully able to theorize the complex poetics or define its place in the canon. Let's pretend that it's worth posing this inexact question—no, impossible question—if for no other reason than to put us in a productive state of doubt about our own relation to, as Robert Duncan insisted, the Divine Blake. For even the most learned reader of Blake—indeed especially such a reader—knows that there is no mastery of Blake's work, the very idea of which would violate its core principles and interfere with realization of its interminable unfolding of readerly experience. If not mastery, then what? Suppose there's no word or concept or position that accounts for the distinction *optimal Blake reader*, which by the very fact of its declaration, is brought immediately into question—and there it stays. Without the status of clear definition, it becomes a matter of self-definition, a declaration on one's own behalf, and almost certainly under continuous threat of self-doubt.

I speak from experience. My initial devotion to Blake's work came clear in my early twenties in a graduate seminar in literature and politics at NYU in 1964 with the great Blake scholar David Erdman, the literary philosopher George Steiner, and the Irish writer, politician and Yeats critic Conor Cruise O'Brian. I wrote a paper that would continue to evolve post-seminar over the next five years and become my one claim to Blake scholarship, “Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion,” eventually published by Erdman in the collection *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* (1970). I wrote the paper over and over until Erdman approved it, and I learned formal writing in the process; but it turned out that, while a true gift, it would not be the most important part for me—namely, that in the process of reading Blake I discovered my own poetics. Ironically the success of prestigious academic publication did not prevent a secondary consequence of discovering a poetics in the process: specifically, that I would soon give up my youthful pursuit of an academic career and, for the most part, its kind of writing, though not my ongoing appreciation of its gifts.

In the process of reading and teaching Blake during my five years on the faculty at Stony Brook University, I gradually realized that the poet of *Jerusalem* had gotten under my skin. And far into my dreams. I would awake seeing rather Blake-like proverbs that later seemed to have set the model for my discovery over decades of a variant genre, *preverbs*. Likewise “poetic torsion” would later give over to a deeper principle of “axiality.” And I woke one morning in 1966 with the words

¹ William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,” pl. 8, l. 38, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman (New York: Anchor, 1982), 37. Available online: <http://erdman.blakearchive.org>. All quotations of Blake in this essay are from this edition.

the torque of Orc makes Blake an evolutionary revolutionary.

This clarified the theme of the essay I was still trying to write. (Erdman refused to let me incorporate that phrase in my paper.) Then one day it incited, without due warning, a series of “torsion poems” made up of self-transforming chain grammar, making me (and my friends) wonder whether, under stress of work, my marbles had begun to spill. Was I losing it or was I finding a strange *it*?



At the end of my fourth year of teaching, circumstances altered my, till then, absolutely no-drugs position—Blake didn't do drugs, why would I?—and by happenstance my student, a now well-known poet, offered me “the best mescaline ever” (Stony Brook laid claim then to “East Coast Berkeley of substances”). My emotionally compromised mind was already being wedged open and judgement went south. So I literally went south too, and on my way to a summer-break journey overland to Chile, I stopped in Miami, and near my childhood home, took Huxley's advice about the doors of perception, and entered a very dark room. What happened next began the *other* life awareness ever after behind *this* life: The dark lit up and I found myself fully inside Blake's late painting of

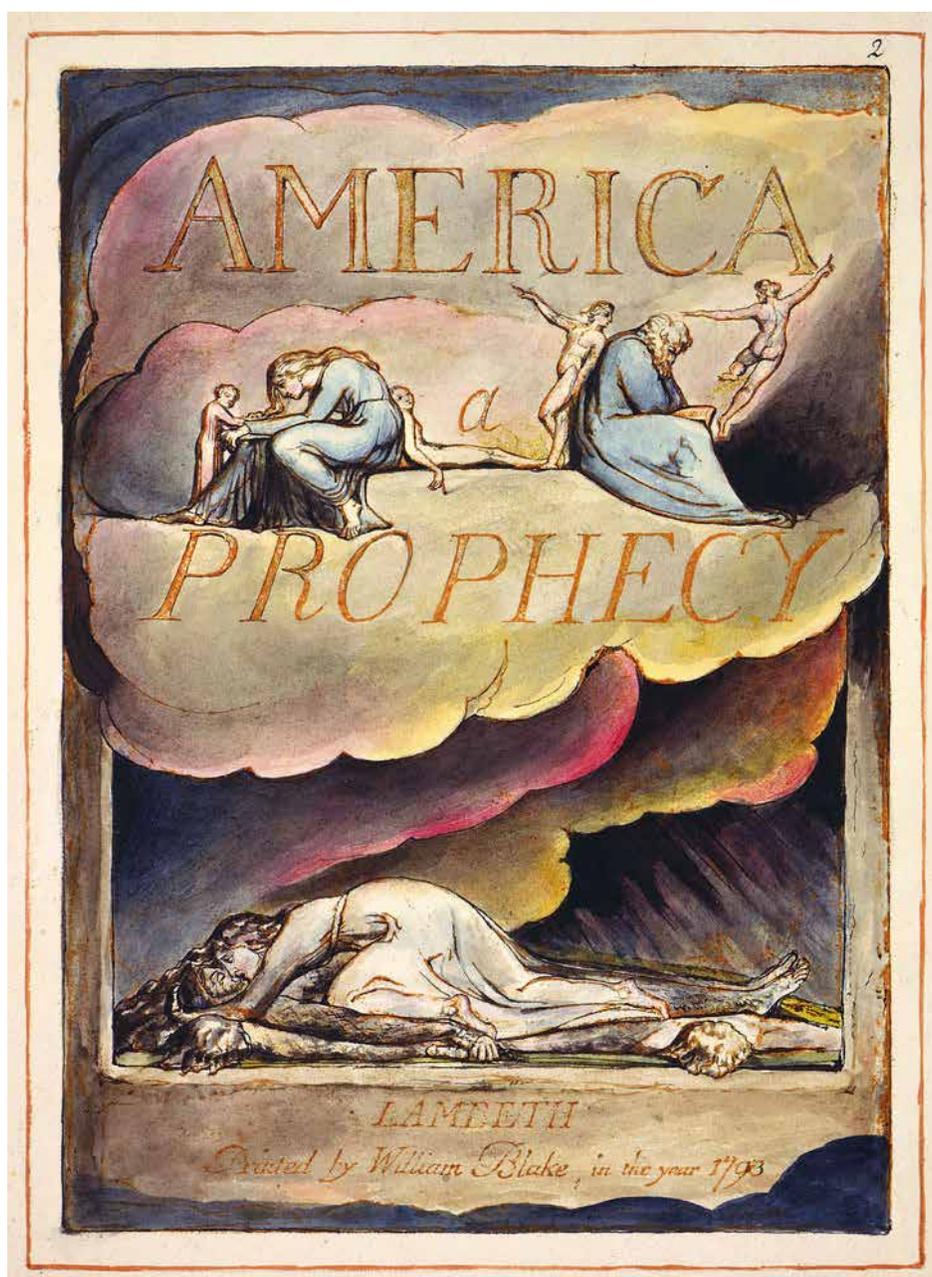
Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Star Cart.

I merged with the position of Dante, and saw into the eyes of Beatrice. At that moment I laughed in wonderment because I felt I knew that Blake offered a teaching that I had not grasped: namely, that, at root, art is not metaphor, at least in the rhetorical sense, and not a philosophy of life, psychology or politics as such, but

a *threshold*, something like a membrane through which one perceives one's *other possibility* on the far side of time. And when eventually I left that room, I eagerly pulled out my problematic torsion poems—which had so seemed to threaten my sanity—and read them out loud to my cousin John, who also had taken Huxley's advice on the doors of perception, and halfway through the reading he stopped me to challenge my authorship; why? because he thought that he had written them. The alienating poems, it turned out, were never quite mine in the first place.

Of course, none of this qualifies me for anything in particular. But it does stand behind the way I raise the question, *what is it about reading Blake that can change one's view of everything?* So now my cards are on the table, and I might even pretend to be "objective"; or maybe not. But to be clear, this is a poet's reading—no, *this* poet's reading—who, having been mentored by a Blake scholar *ne plus ultra*, recognizes the essential role of scholarship and critical thinking in laying the ground for *precise intuitive orientation*. But that's only the beginning.

2 Prophetic Epicspectations



Blake was hardly indifferent to how he intended to be read, although he probably had few if any readers of his Prophetic poetry fully at the level of his highest expectations—a projection of merging the genres of epic and Prophecy. Some scorned the work outright, others simply thought the poet mad. Yet Blake still gave explicit guidance in *images of intensely engaged reading*, as in *America a Prophecy*—in Pl. 2 the female figure in the upper left quadrant is intensely absorbed in the book, veritably striding while reading. A child listens with rapt attention, as contrasted with the passive older man at the right who fails to notice the energetic female figure leaping out of the page and into the emerging Prophetic text. I read the *visible action* here as: *Visionary reading is co-performative with the poem and will become integral to the Prophetic narrative.*

We notice in Pl. 5, upper left:

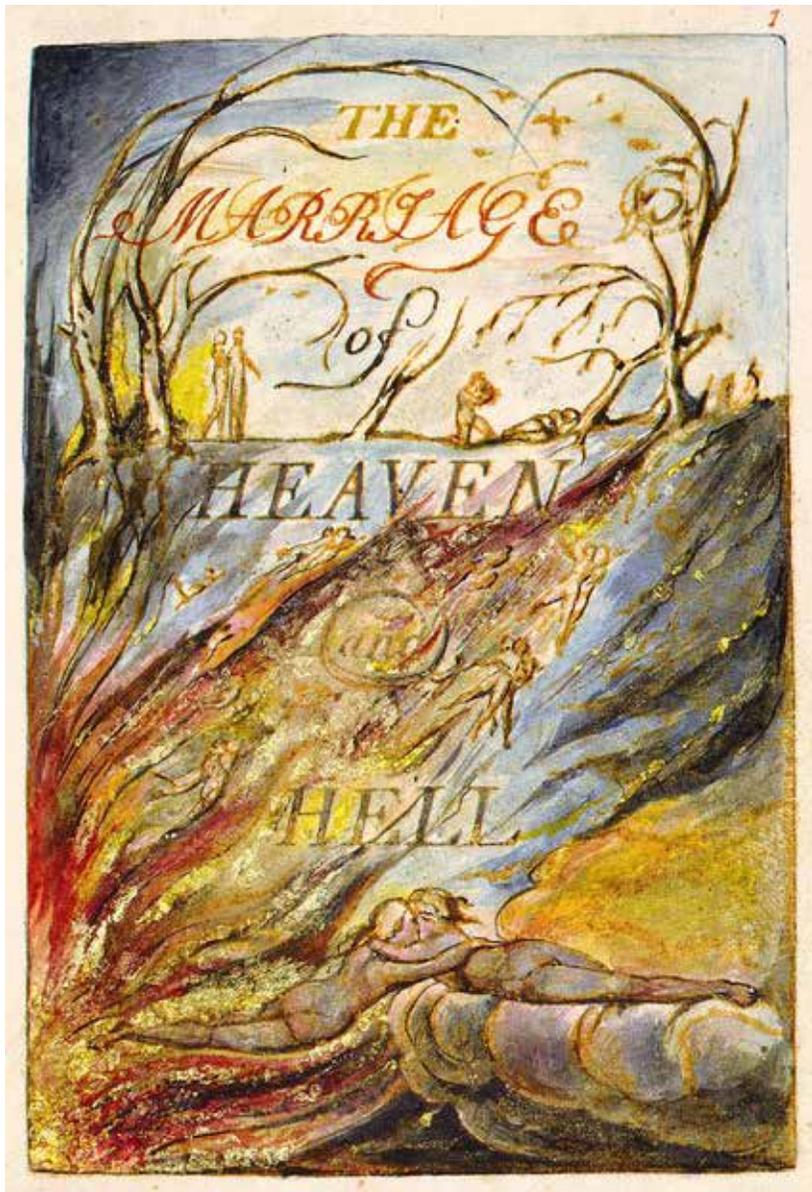


the leaping female figure has become the uprisen Orc, spirit of revolution, broken chains dangling in flight, who strides into the page toward the harvest of the flowering words: *A Prophecy*. This is not literary allegory connect-

ed to archetypal abstractions but *animated visionary action*—poetry that Blake said “rouzes the faculties to act,” what in 1803 he called “Sublime Allegory,” and in the same letter said:

Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from
the Corporeal Understanding is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry.

He adds that the poetry in question—he may be speaking of *Milton* or *Jerusalem*—“shall by Divine Assistance be progressively Printed & Ornamented with Prints and given to the Public.” The notion of “intellectual powers” no doubt can and does have a wide range of implications—say, political, psychological, emotional, theological, sexual, and so on—but by distinguishing the Intellectual from the Corporeal Understanding, he warns that simply focusing on the latter understanding at this level will not yield the unique fruit of the Most Sublime Poetry. I take this to imply that a quite new way of reading must be discovered which focuses in on what he characterized as the Minute Particulars of poetic and artistic vision.



Accordingly Blake created a novel process and syntax *both verbal and visual* as the oscillatory poles of *contrary reading*. It is this state of engagement that arouses what he saw as the ever dynamic *contrary states of the soul*, which can incite an alchemical *Marriage of Heaven & Hell*. No doubt most of our reading of Blake follows the standalone lexical text independently of the Illuminations, in part because the verbal text is what we've always known as his poetry, and which of course fits our literary norm. And needless to emphasize the poetry alone is fully powerful on its own. For the most part we still have to seek out the visual text, which, although now easily available in inexpensive books and online on the Blake Archive, hasn't long been so available. It wasn't until Erdman's *The Illuminated Blake* (1974), fully illustrated in black and white with commentary, that the notion that the visual text should be *read in detail as integral to the poems* could be widely considered by readers. The point is the already concerted effort it takes to read the difficult verbal text with basic Corporeal Understanding is amplified *physically* by directly reading the engraved pages. (Today one can greatly enlarge the engraved text at the online Blake Archive to facilitate reading.)



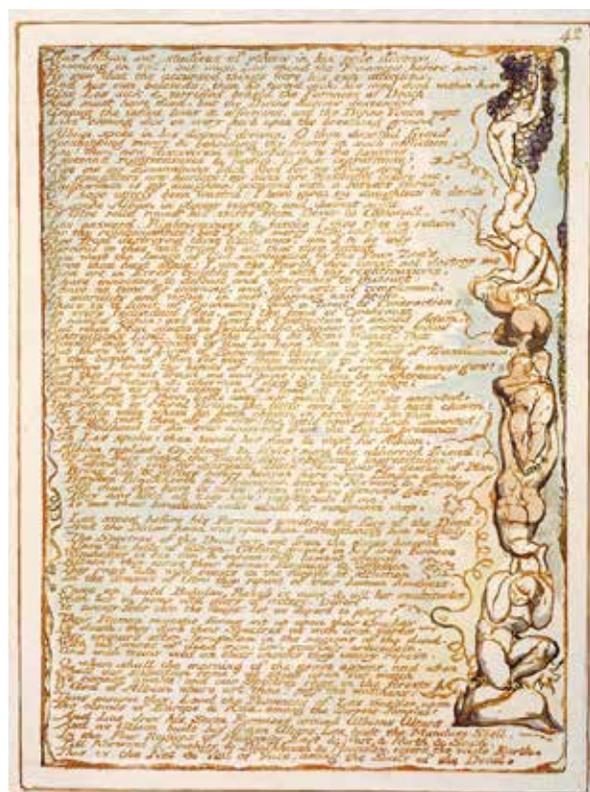
Take, for example, Pl. 9 of *Europe a Prophecy*, where the visual action of two giant-seeming fairies with serpent horns trumpet historical Apocalypse amidst ripe grain in an S-curve-leap across the page. The text mixes a grand mythic frame with then current European history extending political symbolism carrying over from *America a Prophecy*:

Enitharmon slept,
Eighteen hundred years: Man was a Dream!
The night of Nature and their harps unstrung:
She slept in middle of her nightly song,
Eighteen hundred years, a female dream!

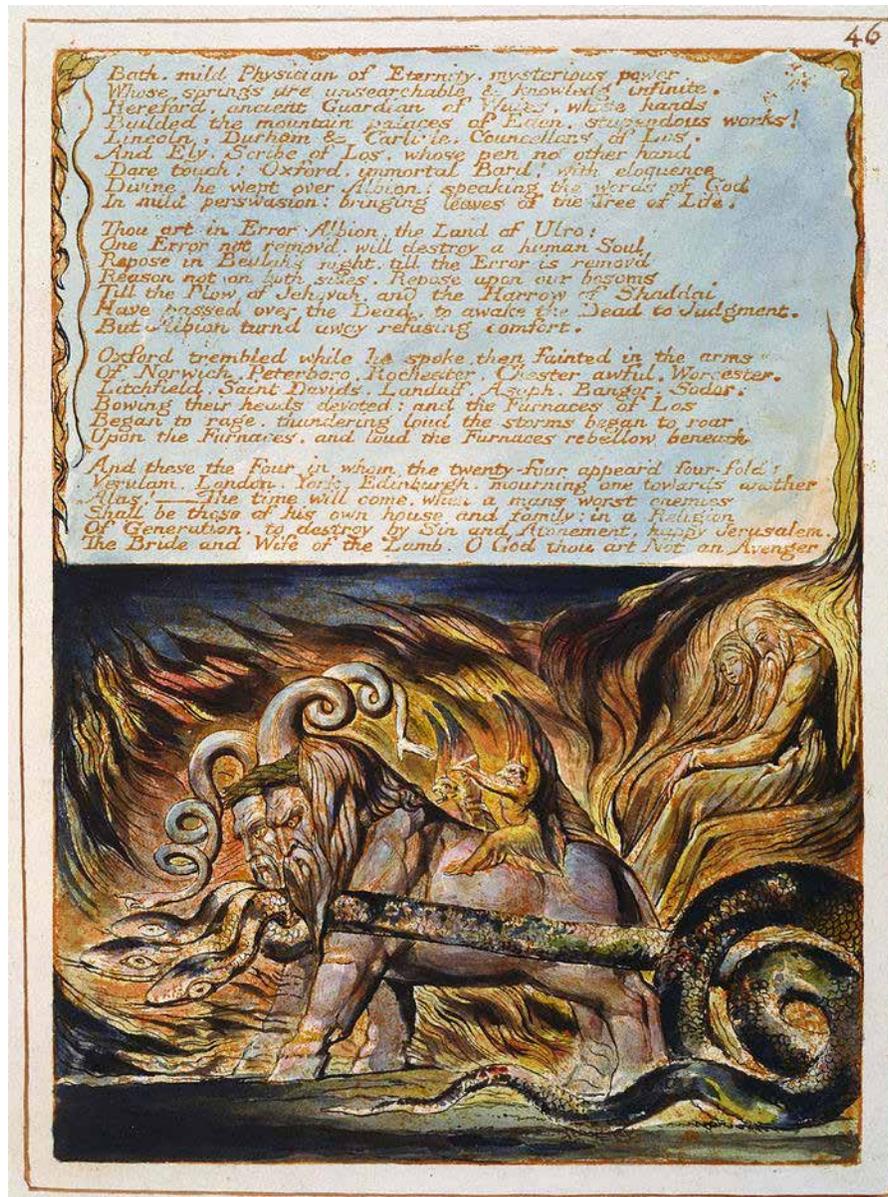
Shadows of men in fleeting bands upon the winds:
Divide the heavens of Europe:
Till Albions Angel smitten with his own plagues fled with his bands....

Characteristic of Blake's challenge of contrary reading, the stunning dynamism of the image does not seem to illustrate the narrative of the page unless one bears the whole of this poem and the previous one, *America a Prophecy*, in mind and gives up coordinating image to same page text. Reading action involves performative retention of iconic energy, singular myth, and actual history, all in narrative suspension.

Let's suppose that the optimal reader might wish to experience some degree of Blake's intense visionary process, characterized by the slow labor of engraving and, as in *The Marriage of Heaven & Hell*, "printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid." The physical difficulty of reading complex engraved text along with alluring image reflects the infernal, fiery, alchemically transmutative process of visionary creation itself. We have but to imagine what it's like to patiently and accurately inscribe, say, the hundred plates of *Jerusalem* in reverse writing in order to sense what energy level a commensurate reading might require. Consider the dense pages like Pl. 42 of *Jerusalem*



Or even where text is shared with powerful image in Pl. 46:



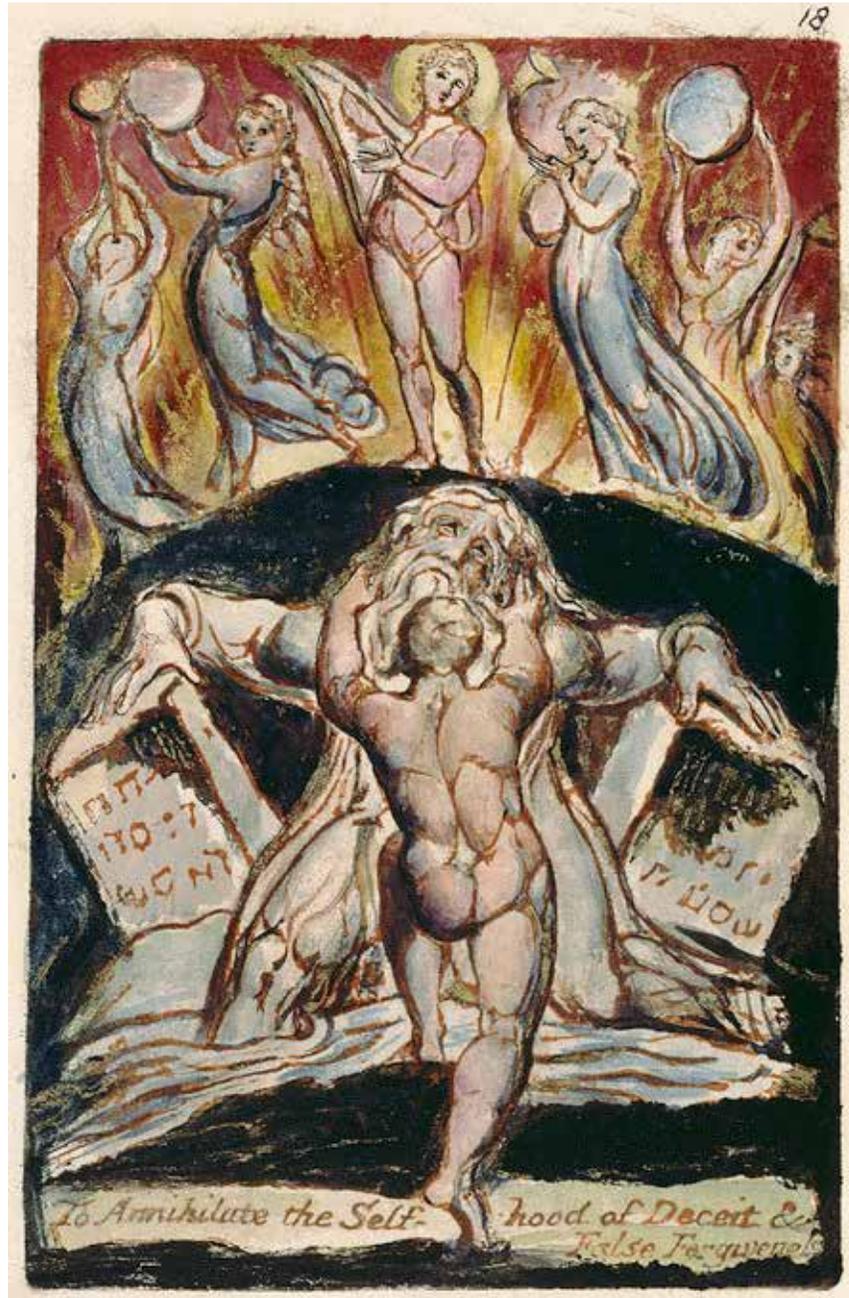
What does it take—what order of intrinsic commitment—to live such a life of relentless intensities? Blake tells us his experience in 1804:

“I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pen or graver into my hand.”

We can be sure that one or the other instrument rarely stayed far from his hand. And we can directly sense such visionary force in this and other images of *Jerusalem* which retain the immense energy of their origination. This is a forcefulness that would be both an invitation to, and an induction *into*, the state of visionary reading itself. In that state we enter directly into the core psycho-historical drama constituting the inseparable entangled realities of history and the individual psyche.

Here the image, as much as the text, functions as *language*, one that like almost any poetic text calls for interpretative reading, yet one that is also an iconic and openly symbolizing language of a very special kind. This would be its own

species of *linguality*, a word indicating our registration of its lingual force in *creating* “reality,” according to Blake’s principle, *we become what we behold or make*, and indeed, “*For the Eye altering alters all.*”² If I may take this further along my own path of understanding, it is also language intending a *secular/sacred liminality*, a double-edged or double-sided membrane that draws us into an otherness. I neologize at this juncture with the term *gnosemic language*³—a language of *gnosemes* where the *semes* embody a minutely particular gnosis of connection, which may or may not resolve to some degree of Corporeal Understanding.



² E 485, l.62.

³ I first expressed the concept of “gnoseme” and “gnosemic language” in the context of a serial poem, *Word-Yum: Somapoetics 64-69 (Seventh Series)* (New York: Metapoetics Press, 1975), n.p., in the “Lognostic Gloss: Virtual Definitions for Douglas Taylor.” It was subsequently adopted and discussed in depth by Prof. Herbert Guenther, *Matrix of Mystery: Scientific and Human Aspects of rDzogs-chen Thought* (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), esp. 64-73.

Let's look a little more closely at this Imaginational languaging I'm calling *gnosemic* by way of Pl. 18 of an 1818 copy of *Milton*: here the language is largely visual—I call it an *ur-concrete poem*—and open to multiple levels of interpretation as well as processual contemplation. The central figure, a naked man with his back to us, aggressively steps up and into the picture as if to pull down an ancient man seated passively between two large, inscribed, roughly cuboid stones. On one level, it's the poet Milton, or even Los, Blake's poet-prophet, now renewed, redeemed, transformed in the poem's Prophetic forge; he tears down the Law that, here embodied in a Urizen-Moses figure who Satanically limits consciousness by dualistic and oppressive theology as in *Paradise Lost*. He is rising up *out of the language* that forms the base of the image, which says:

To Annihilate the Self-hood of Deceit & False Forgiveness.

His right foot severs the word *Self-hood* and makes it a lingual matrix, a performative act of linguality as creative destruction, one that equals *Self-annihilation*, which is a core principle of Imaginational self-liberation throughout the Prophecies.

This is another equivalent of Intellectually Allegorizing the act of *Sublime reading*. It starts first as two contrary states of language, the stony Law in a Hebrew-like inscription on tablets, and oppositionally the revelatory declaration of *enactive* language literally grounding the event. By Contrarial action it enacts the very event of psychic rebirth from the womb of Imaginational interrupted language which reverses repressive, authoritarian habit. It concretely challenges, in effect, our habit of reading under Law, where authority and precedent are never not looking over our shoulder. It also suggests that such liberating verbal-visual action inspires actual vision, pictured here as music-making, dancing young celebrants above the hill. Even the hill doubles as top of the head, the inner site in which this vision is occurring—indeed the possible reader's head in a state of Four-fold reading. I call this dynamic image-reflecting-reader identification *mirroring by alterity*.

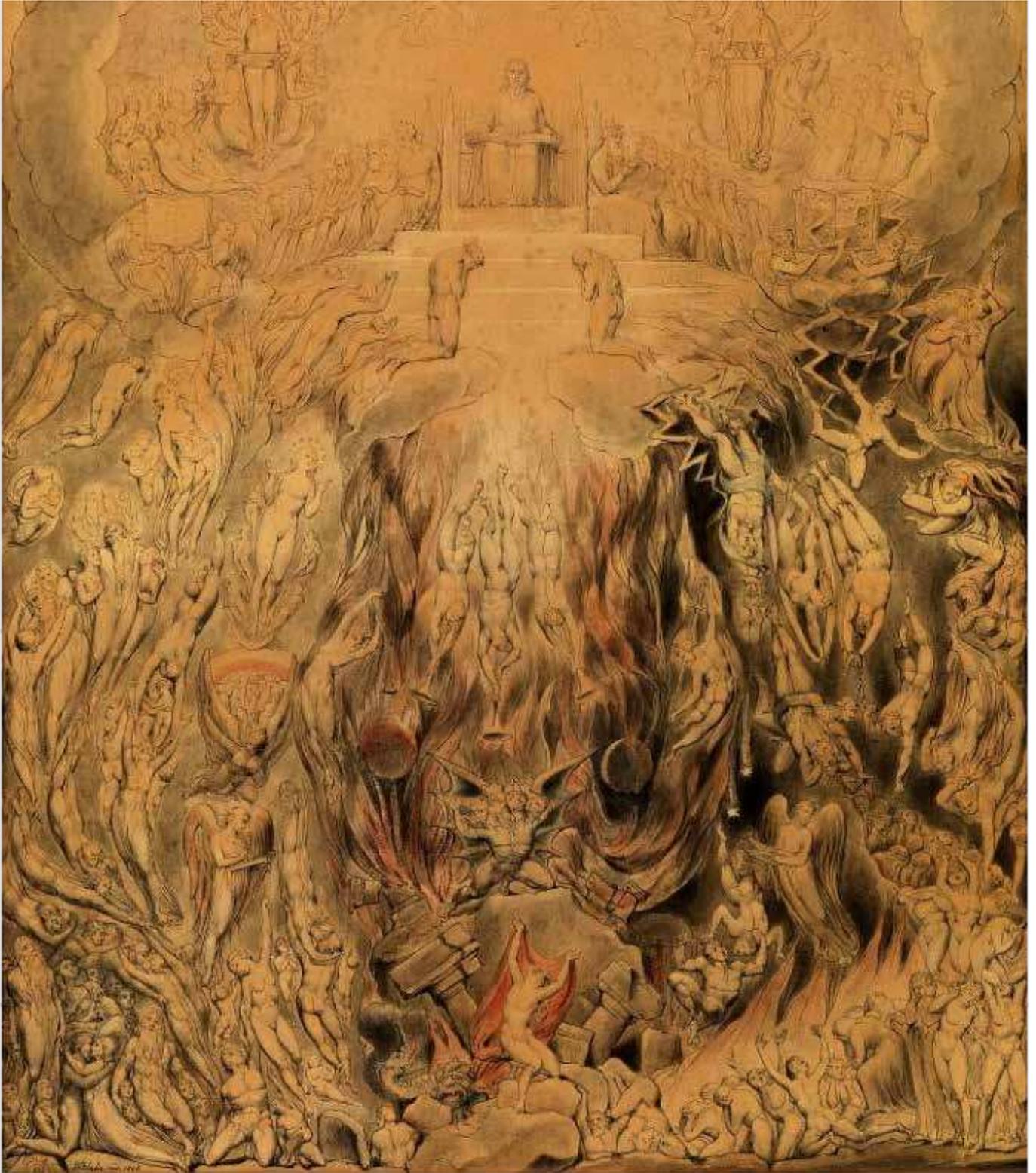
3 Four-fold reading and the Syntactic Sublime

To talk about optimal reading is implicitly to project a notion of reader responsibility to an artist's vision, a response at the level of the poetics. Blake viewed his art as Intellectual War against Single Vision, the latter limited to Corporeal Understanding, and accordingly made many direct and indirect attempts to state what the Four-fold level of his poetics asks of the reader.

Blake's contrary sense of the Last Judgement as eternal event views it as occurring in the moment of personal Apocalypse, a redemptively transformative process perhaps most vividly invoked in his *Milton*. In his 1810 commentary on *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, he says this apocalyptic renovation occurs “whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth” at which point “a Last Judgement passes upon that Individual.” Here he offers what would be the fruit of such a state of renewal in his perhaps most challenging poetics of reader-viewer response:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought[,] if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know[,] then would he arise from his Grave[,] then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he

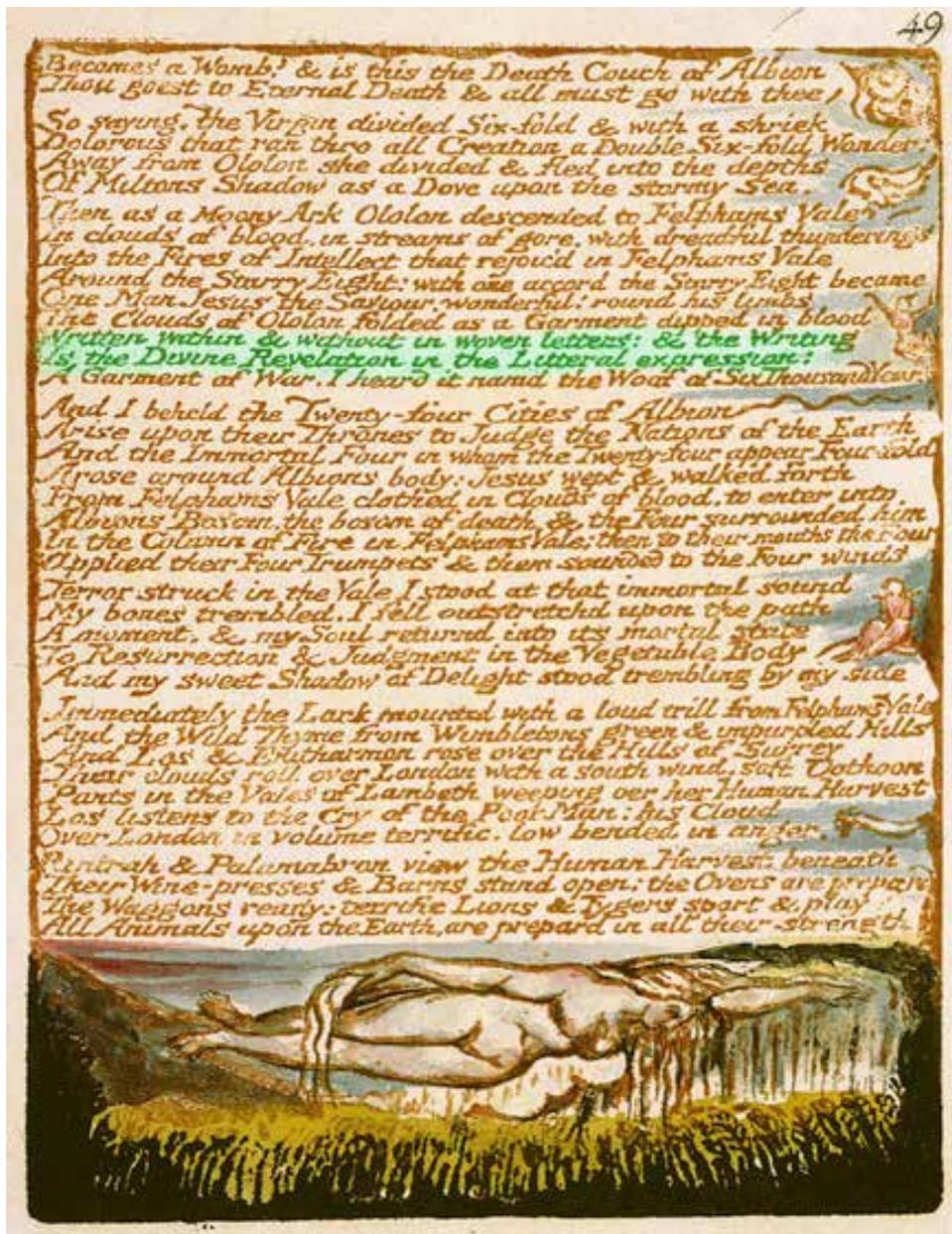
would be happy[.] General Knowledge is Remote Knowledge[;] it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too.⁴



⁴ William Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E 560.

A poet of Blake's level of vision does not count on public acceptance of the work; rather, poet implicitly *creates* the *possible* reader through the agency of the *initiatic work* itself. Since there is no authority or authoritative interpretation sanctioned by the poet, the induction is resolutely *non-coercive*. In this view the highest initiation is *self-initiation*. (This is one point that separates Blake from many esoteric and traditionary practices of the time.) Visionary art instructs in its own necessarily alien and singular language, which depends on a reader-participant's determined alignment with initiation through committed (re)reading. As attractor, it would inspire conscious participation through sensory attraction and the affirmation of desire, yet, in subverting Single Vision, it has to disrupt the very absorptive engagement it requires for initiation. Aporia in action. The tense oscillation of contrary states of readerly attention—attraction and repulsion—steps up the intensity to a higher energy entrainment. This comprises a unique genre of a *syntactic sublime* that opens to Prophecy as *Imaginational Scripture*: thus in *Milton*, Pl. 42 (49),

*Written within & without in woven letters: & the Writing
Is the Divine Revelation in the Litteral expression⁵*



⁵ Milton, 42 [49].13-14, E 143.



But the Jerusalem of Four-fold reading, where the mind discovers “speaking in Visionary Forms Dramatic,” is not a steady state but an Eternal potential for Imaginability, the “living going forth & returning” in the Jerusalem of anyone’s optimal reading.

George Quasha
Barrytown
February 14, 2024

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Jerome Rothenberg (1931 - 2024)

Jerome Rothenberg & Dorota Czerner

A conversation: “On Poland/1931 & the Pathways of Translation”

1.

Dorota Czerner:

In 1970 Frank Stella was given a copy of *Heaven's Gates*, a book on wooden synagogues by Maria & Kazimierz Piechotka, experts on Jewish architecture from the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. None of these buildings survived the war. Nonetheless, Stella was so fascinated by the geometry and what he later referred to as ‘interlocking-ness’ of the wooden constructions that an original series of abstract reliefs, known as *The Polish Village*, was born. So, momentarily putting aside your personal ancestral quest -- do you see a resemblance to *Poland / 1931*?

I mean, in the fantasy aspect, as well as the distances traveled from the root-source, and the fact that so much of it has vanished.

Jerome Rothenberg:

I can see a connection there in our regard for the vanished, where Stella of course is most taken by the form and beauty of what he sees and what leads him to a series of hard-edged and gloriously colored images in response. For myself, by contrast, the work of *Poland/1931* over all doesn't base itself on formal principles or procedures and leaves room – very much so – for the dirty/soiled and ugly, the full range of what I describe as “ancestral sources of my own in a world of Jewish mystics, thieves & madmen.” In this, if the imagination is involved in the construction of a fantasized Poland, it is reenforced by procedures of “investigative poetry” (American poet Ed Sanders' term) and appropriation/collage – what Marianne Moore spoke of elsewhere as “imaginary gardens with real toads in them.” Once let loose, this opens as well to the comic and ludic – dark humor, as I feel it, and dark game playing – and occasionally, mostly by translation, a fragment of the gorgeous and divine, from mystic sources mostly. And all of that informs my working in *A Big Jewish Book* as well, where I try to erase, as with other big books of mine, the boundaries between a mystical and secular poetics.

Still, thinking back to Stella and what you make of him, the closer resemblance is to my use of gematria, the numerological juxtaposition of letters and words, where I take a form of mystical

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exegesis I find in the ruins and turn it to my own purposes as a means of composition, alternately angelic and demonic, wherever it takes me. That would, however, take me a long time to explain.

2.

DC:

Unlike Stella's cycle, your poems engage with what remains: the immaterial, the wisdom, the song. You once described *Poland / 1931* as "an experimental attempt to explore, and recover, ancestral sources in the world of Jewish mystics, thieves, and madmen."

In the chronology of your work *Poland / 1931* comes at least a decade before *Khurbn & Other Poems*, which directly addresses the loss of life, the destruction. But even if much darkness is present in its undertone, your Poland (or Polands?) celebrates exuberance.

Did you feel a need to first affirm the continuity, to re-collect by drawing a live bridge between the old and the new?

JR:

There's a whole world there, and in so far as it came to me in bits and pieces, the fullness of what I was assembling did feel to me like an over-abundance and in that case an inescapable exuberance. I was also able to lose myself in that, the mystery of my life before my birth – the phantasmic "Poland" of "1931", which I could only capture by imagining it into being. And yes, the Khurbn/Shoah/Holocaust was there beneath the surface and not quite mentioned, which made the life of what came before that much more turbulent and, as you put it, "exuberant." All of that, I think, was in my mind while I was writing, without which a poem of this kind would have been more muted and paler than the reality I was trying to sense or create.

Also: the convergence of old and new has always been a concern for me.

3.

DC:

While working on *Poland / 1931* I've become increasingly aware that the process of putting these poems into Polish, of all languages, may be furthering/amplifying your original project. I hope you won't mind my saying that. In this case the translation takes place in front of a mirror. Probably more than in any translation. The language turns quite literally into a mirror.

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You are a wonderful translator who speaks of the process as an important mode of composition. You maintain that the translation doesn't threaten, on the contrary enhances the originality of your work as a poet.

What would be your advice to me?

JR:

My people were obviously from Poland or from a town in Poland but did not think of themselves in any meaningful way as Polish. The same for the language of course – my father had little of it; my mother, who went through a secular *gymnasium*, was educated in Polish but almost never used it in my hearing. Both however were fluent speakers and literate readers of Yiddish – the mother tongue or *mamalushn*, for which they were strong advocates. And in a curious way, while writing *Poland/1931*, I thought of myself as doing a translation, somehow, of an imaginary Yiddish ur-text, which could only make sense as a perfect and strongly idiomatic English --- with some rare lapses, let me add, into a kind of cockeyed and comic dialect or accent.

In a Polish translation of course, the situation becomes more complicated, but my advice would be to emulate the straight English text as much as possible, using a literate but idiomatic Polish with occasional yiddishisms where that works for you and matches more or less what I was doing in English. Or better yet, think of the writer of the poem as a fluent Polish speaker imagining that he's translating from a Yiddish original that doesn't otherwise exist, and see what you come up with. I will trust you almost completely there – as long that is as it brings you pleasure.

P.S. On several occasions, poems from *Poland/1931* were translated into Yiddish, which read to me like the otherwise imaginary urtexts that only then came into being.

4.

DC:

About the opening poem of *Poland / 1931*, "The Wedding". It's been translated into several languages. Five of the versions are collected under a single entry of the blog, *Jacket2*. This was the first poem of yours I tackled. There was a moment when the sheer force of accusatory questioning, aimed at Poland, that "poland poland poland..." made me wonder if the task was not above my paygrade.

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But elsewhere you say:

“lightning is like oil the motor
once it starts keeps
running”

The poem works very much like this, once the reader’s imagination gets ignited with the initial image of a black wedding, the machinery of the underlying rhythmic structure pulls her through, all the way to the exiting line, the crow-ing conclusion ...

In this case my work was equally informed by the text itself and by your reading (as available online in the archives of *PennSound*.)

So first, can you say something about the importance this particular poem?

Then, more specifically about the place that you’ve always given to performance in your poetic practice.

JR:

The poem and the “black wedding” image are crucial for me, but also the Yiddish translation by Amos Schauss, which I used along with the English on the *PennSound* recording and began to think of as the Yiddish urtext I was searching for. In its common usage there, the term “black wedding” has an ominous but somewhat comic side, in a more serious way a cleansing ceremony performed in a graveyard during a time of plague. Looking back at it, then, the “black wedding” touches off a series of mega-rituals with large, quickly shifting images to help me create a kind of Poland montage, a reality more Poyln (Yiddish) than Poland or Polska, or all of those realities coming together and racing toward what I wanted to be a fierce ending, with executions and gang-rapes and the sound of screeching birds. And beyond that, when I performed with musicians and composers like Bertram Turetzky and Charlie Morrow, among others, the rhythm of the juxtapositions allowed me to soar, as nothing before that really had.

Something, I hope, that would come into much else that I was writing then and after.

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5.

DC:

One more observation about “The Wedding”, I want to mention hearing you read the same poem in Yiddish. It was a much later occasion, in an intimate room of a pandemic Zoom-gathering. It struck me as a more ironic interpretation. The whole thing took off in a different register, no less hard-hitting, but almost resigned in a sense, and because of that even more expressive. It reminded me how Tadeusz Kantor would admonish his actors for taking a too ‘serious’ approach. He loved circus, dada, and equated the absence of humor with a lack of intelligence. I mention Kantor, specifically, because he dealt with similar material but from inside the Polish landscape, where oftentimes humor was the only tool available to calibrate the human disasters (plural) of the country.

You are an American poet and thus are not building your Polish historical scenes from direct personal experience, but from conveyed memories. Nonetheless, the Absurdism is very much the same. Why the madmen? The Trickster? Is the Yiddish language, and Yiddish folklore one of the keys here?

JR:

The question of course brings me back to things that I’ve already touched on (at least that part of it concerning Yiddish) but put in the context of Kantor and others like him, opens it in other directions. For me the “mystics, thieves and madmen” were a shorthand for what was missing in the normative *Yiddishkeit* with which I was also familiar, so I made those things & others (political, social, sexual) the targets of my explorations in *Poland/1931*. For that I was grateful to the Poylish/Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer, whom I met briefly along the way and whose writings opened up a world for me, with the idea that my writing here wanted a fullness of words and images, with no holds barred, to make it more inclusive, even in some ways to overturn stereotypes (both negative and positive) by adopting or adapting them.

So, the absurdism which you also mention signaled me from a whole range of sources, an image of the world I shared with many and that came to me newly as I was exploring Poland/Poyln. In the duration and aftermath of the wars and holocausts of the last century, it opened for many of us as a way – not the only way but a way – to view human existence and the unreachable and mindless universe as a whole. For myself it permeated all my work and thoughts in the 1970s, whether Dada, Seneca Indian, or Jewish/Poylish – more overtly with the Dada artists and the Indian tricksters and sacred clowns, less so with the mystics, thieves and madmen I was hoping to discover

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or create in *Poland/1931*. All of these connections are there when I look back at them, like that of “Yiddish Dada in the street” as it comes to me in “The Holy Words of Tristan Tzara” or the play between Jews and Indians in “Cokboy” – absurdist and real.

6.

DC:

the lines from “The Fish”:

“& so we live without associations
in the past we live
nourishing incredible polands”

... among many other fragments scattered throughout *Poland / 1931* project the tenderness, maybe even love felt toward the old country. The photographs saved from the family album picture the grandmothers, young mothers, the tables set in the garden. ... The sweeter the description, the larger the loss. Czeslaw Milosz once said that in the early days a large portion of his American audience was made of Polish Jews. The Jewish intelligentsia came to his readings wanting to hear the cultural news from Warsaw.

Growing up in New York, did you have any sense of this (complex & conflicted) yearning in your parents’ generation?

JR:

So much of this is in the past, so that it’s hard to reconstruct it. That it’s complex and complicated seems obvious to me, and that it has to do with the sharp divisions that existed for them between Poland and Poyln. That generation of course is gone now, and I find that I’m far older today than my parents were when I knew them. So, it’s always *my* construction that counts here and whatever incredible Polands I can pull together from a range of written/spoken sources, wherever found. So, looking back, the tenderness comes through most strongly in the language they spoke and nurtured, which was how I could observe it then on a day-by-day basis. And it’s why, when I finally turned to “holocaust” after my first visit to Poland in the late 1980s, I used the Yiddish word “khurbn” instead of Holocaust or Shoah. The short opening poem of that sequence is all about that:

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in the dark word Khurbn
all their lights went out

and again:

that ancient & dark word
those who spoke it in the old days
now held their tongues

Still, there's a lot of irony to get past before you land on it ... and a lot of fantasy as well. The tenderness here, if that's the right word, may have some of both.

7.

DC:

In April 1943 Milosz wrote a poem titled "Campo dei Fiori". Easter Sunday, happy people in love, on a merry-go-round. In the background behind the wall, the Warsaw ghetto is on fire: "At times wind from the burning / Would drift dark kites along." It is an important poem because an early testimony to the ongoing tragedy. However, from the point of view of the people who were fighting/and dying on the other side of the wall it seems oddly detached. Without once mentioning the Jews, it veers into universal humanism, the classics.

In "Murder Inc. Sutra" in the scene of the funeral of a young thug you describe "a choir like the Warsaw Synagogue / "led by Sirota..."

So, Gershon Sirota, who died about that time in 1943, could've been a dark kite from Milosz's lines.

Can we propose that *Poland / 1931* fills some of the blanks left in Polish poetry? And that by putting the names to the lives as they were lived (before being lost) there, even if only through the anecdotal stories and memories of others who made it to the New World, some of the Polish Jewishness can be reclaimed? Even by simply repeating the words "Jew", "Jewish" over and over, inside a poem.

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JR:

If so, my intention was first to fill the blanks left in Yiddish/Poylish poetry, with the further hope that what you're doing here may start to fill the Polish blanks as well. For that I need a plausible Polish voice to begin the project of its integration, hoping to make Poland richer, not poorer, in so doing – “nourishing incredible Polands,” as in the other poem of mine you mentioned earlier. And along with that, the repetition of the words “Jew” and “Jewish” reverberates for me as well – as it did for our friend Edmond Jabès, coming out of the depths, where it had lain hidden, as I wrote about it, for most of our lifetimes. Or my fellow American and diaspora poet David Meltzer: “The Jew in me is the ghost in me, hiding under the stairways.” Something of that also in *Poland/1931*: the poem called “A Connoisseur of Jews,” again with the irony forward. And that reflects of course the excitement and thrill of discovery I felt throughout the writing.

So: *Poland/1931*, *Poyln/1931*, *Polska/1931* – all for me are necessary, and translation is the key to their interweaving and unlocking. And that I cry out the word “Poland” ten times in the opening poem might also be noted.

8.

DC:

I believe that *Poland/1931* successfully carries the lore of the Jewish traditions between the Old & the New World also by portraying the daily excesses of life, its secret, or not so secret transgressions. We read about the ancestral scenes that may include pots in which fish and pork are made into one stew, sausages are dropped into the Shabbat cholent, or the wild nights spent in the gentiles' brothels. Greedy rich men practice black magic. Famous Rabbis fornicate with willing shikhas. The sexual prowess of a certain Zadik is legendary, so is the size of his genitals. The killers from “The Murder Incorporated” carry the pictures of rabbis with big cocks... The language too combines the biblical with the vulgar, sometimes in the same poem.

Can we risk musing that a culture must be intensely alive to play with its own demons?

JR:

If the instances you mention are those of “demons,” the culture in which I place them was hostile as a whole to their display. For me of course one of the dominant ideas was to play with the demons I

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could find or invent, at a time when that kind of transgression was just starting to open up around us. In “The Student’s Testimony,” as an obvious instance, I let it rip or call it forth as best I can:

he was the last demon of ostrov
come back to visit & play
on my mind blowing delicious
bubbles of red soap into
the corners of the room
a furry singing little
demon with bulging eyes big
bulging balls & all
animal twisted into shapes
like rubber

And again:

“I love my demon” I would sing
& we would share the backroom of
the synagogue guzzling
the gentiles’ beer &
snapping paperclips
against the rabbi’s silks reliving
the poland of old friendships pork & fish
boiling & stinking in a single
pot we would dip our hands
into & make our bellies
shine

If that was transgressive, vulgar and blasphemous by turns – or all together – that was of course how I wanted it.

9.

DC:

A query from my colleague, Jacek Dziubiński, who is translating “Cokboy”. He thought the Polish reader would be most intrigued by the continuous mixing of the different mystical traditions, in this case the Hasidic Judaism with Native American shamanism. We may add, both being endangered, marginalized traditions. We could ask if in some sense *Poland / 1931* was not informed by your work in the field of ethnopoetics ? (with particular regard to the anthology *Technicians of the Sacred*.)

JR:

It was while composing *Technicians of the Sacred* and launching a field like ethnopoetics that I began to bring something like Poyln to surface in my work. By 1968 – a magical year for poets like me – I was setting it down in one of a number of short manifestos I had written during the 1950s and 60s:

A Third Manifesto 1968

I think of myself as making poems that other poets haven’t provided for me & for the existence of which I feel a deep need.

I look for new forms & possibilities, but also for ways of presenting in my own language the oldest possibilities of poetry going back to the primitive & archaic cultures that have been opening up to us over the last hundred years.

I have most recently been translating American Indian poetry (including the “meaningless” syllables, word distortions & music) & have been exploring ancestral sources of my own in the world of Jewish mystics, thieves & madmen.

I believe that everything is possible in poetry & that our earlier “western” attempts at definition represent a failure of perception we no longer have to endure.

For me, then, the work in *Technicians* and again in *Shaking the Pumpkin* and *A Seneca Journal* was contiguous with *Poland/1931* and *A Big Jewish Book* – an absurd ambition to bring all things together while honoring the differences. And it’s my sense of the need to do this – and the dangers of not

On Poland/1931 & the Pathways of Translation

doing it – that drives the absurdist and angry narrative of “Cokboy,” in which I cast myself as “a jew among the Indians” and bring together or tear asunder whatever is in my reach.

And certainly – but in *A Big Jewish Book* especially – I give the mystic and beautiful as much space as the ugly and demonic.

10.

DC:

With *Kburbn* you decided to speak directly about what is most often referred to as the Holocaust. Along with Piotr Rypson’s translation of the poem, we include here what you wrote about your 1987 trip to Poland, the experience of seeing what’s left of ulica Miodowa and hearing the voices of the dead, the dybbuks.

I want to connect it with the coda of the “Student’s Testimony” (from “Poland /1931”) the lines that seem to allude to the tragic fate of your family and specifically your uncle who took his own life:

his own shadow
was more than he could bear the war
came & he ran from it
back in the cellar drinking
too much he grew thin
the great encounter ended it
in flames the candelabrum rose did it become
a heart
that broke into sparks & letters
a shower of ruined cities from which
my demon
vanished fled from the light when I was born

This moment, December 12, 1931, happened 90 years ago.

Dorota Czermer & Jerome Rothenberg

Dare I ask you if, despite the darkness gathering on the political horizon today, in Poland and elsewhere, we can still hope that one poet who is born “to write his mother’s name in light” has some power to send the demons away?

JR:

Despite and despite, I move like many others between light and darkness, hope and despair, and aware too, at this late point in my life, that the future remains as unknown at the end as it was at the beginning. The demon, sadly, hasn’t yet been banished or, better yet, tamed or integrated, and may never be; and the times we live in, as I wrote in a poem to and for Diane, “are never right.” So, it remains a struggle between light and darkness, where the darkness leaves us blind to start with and the light, if left unquestioned, maybe even more so. And I realize, looking back, that something like that play of light and darkness has remained the very center of my work:

Whether it was true or not.

Acknowledgments

This conversation was conducted in December 2021/January 2022 to accompany the publication of Dorota Czermer’s translations into Polish of Jerome Rothenberg’s poems from Poland/1931, to be published in the Jewish magazine “Chiduszy” (2/2022, Wrocław, Poland).

A selected fragment appeared with the current title “On Poland/1931 & the Pathways of Translation” on Jerome Rothenberg’s blog POEMS and POETICS (February 8/2022), and Jacket2 (February 11/2022).

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The Foxing of Memory

*“That History should have copied History was already sufficiently astonishing;
that History should copy literature was inconceivable...”*

from ‘Theme of the Traitor and Hero’, Jorge Luis Borges

Did I first hear it on the upper deck of a red London bus, or whispered across a pale blue and cream Parisian *métro* carriage? Long ago and far away, in the fall of 1957, by the Irish Sea, we are advised to stop drinking milk. In news reports, that spring of 1986, by the side of the Mediterranean Sea, we are advised to stop eating tomatoes. The ashes fall that week over Belarus, Poland, and the Baltic. Ochre flakes. The Swedes eventually sound the alarum, when their lab technicians’ photosensitive badges fog over.

Here comes Stalker, gliding slowly through the abandoned spaces of the city. The rusted yellow Ferris wheel, pegged into position by rapid growth pines. The crops these first seasons freakishly tall; the apples dead on the branch, so thoroughly irradiated they hang there for three years, undisturbed, undecayed. The photograph:



Russell Craig Richardson

What I hear: well-heeled journalists and their entourages have ventured back for photographs and film footage, come up with scary storylines involving ragged vagabonds who gain entry to the contaminated buildings and smuggle out souvenirs. Unique objects that fetch a good price. Dangerous objects; poisons glowing in their hearts invisible. The innocence of the honest, working machine – a valve mechanism, switch unit, pump assembly, light fitting. Functional components untimely ripped. Ghosts and rumors of ghosts; drunken campfire tales of revenants and tainted wishing wells. A whole town vaporized. Fifty thousand people. Behind a chain-link fence, undermanned by lo-tech security guards; sullen, alert for the bribe, ready to bludgeon the attempted corrupter, sporadic razor-wire and CCTV gantries. Trigger-happy cops vs. bad boys; the magnificently named Zone of Alienation, an irregular cordon twenty-five miles across, the size of a displaced London. Madness signaled. Here Be Monsters. At thine own risk and peril. No-one could desire to enter, supposedly. But desire and enter, they do.

A Russian crew in 1977 captures moving images of the aftermath of a catastrophe which doesn't occur until almost a decade later. Shot in an identical landscape - Estonia for Ukraine; man-made disaster for extra-terrestrial visitation - overlapping two pasts, so that one explains and exploits the other. *Stalker* made as a horror homage to Chernobyl. My only guarantee of falsity or certainty being that I happened to be present in that time-continuum. Our current chronology a rusted fiction, or worse; a malicious in(ter)vention. The *symbolique* remains the same. Images and events entwined: a manifestation of dormant disquiet. Starting with the *omerta* following the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

None of this the fault of *Stalker*, as it manages to pre-figure Chernobyl to such an alarmingly precise degree that some people, foxed by hindsight, are certain the film is an elegiac commentary after the incident.

Andrei Tarkovsky's film is an adaptation of an earlier novella, *Roadside Picnic*, published in 1972 by the Russian brothers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky.

Tarkovsky stated that the only things he took from the book were the two words 'Stalker' and 'Zone'. He reduces the sprawling *dramatis personae* to three essentially symbolic characters, while the generational timescale of the novella focuses on one single short incursion. Yet within that

The Foxing of Memory

condensation, Tarkovsky keeps all of the strangeness and profundity of the Zone – the weird distortions of time, space, lighting effects and gravitational anomalies; the invisible, deadly mazes looping back on themselves, that can only be navigated by observing the concrete behavior of the metallic hexagonal nuts the Stalker throws to test the solidity of the ground beneath their feet.

And then there are the mutations:



Stalker's daughter, Monkey, covered in downy fur in the book, becomes a mute paraplegic in the film. While the mythical wishing machine of the book – a large golden sphere - becomes an abandoned off-screen hangar; the manifestation of an extra-dimensional intrusion of something unimaginably other, the place where all your dreams threaten to come true. Maybe.

The real-world geographical administrative Zone of Alienation is clearly based on Tarkovsky's Zone, though to the Russian ear, away from cinema or science-fiction, the word immediately conjures prison camps. Gulag. That kind of Zone.

Or, intriguingly, H.P. Lovecraft's story *The Color Out of Space* (1927), dealing with a meteorite which crashes on a 'blasted heath' near a remote farm, contaminating and mutating everything it comes

Russell Craig Richardson

into contact with, causing madness, deformity and death. The cause of this is eventually determined to be an unknown color, which may or may not be a sentient - and malevolent - being.

Stanislas Lem's *Solaris* (1961) is probably the most high profile attempt to portray the problem of contact with an abstract intelligence, though Arthur C. Clarke's *The Sentinel* (1951) – the origin of Kubrick's *2001: a Space Odyssey* - evades the question by concentrating on the single alien artefact: a beacon which may or may not send a signal 'home'. All of these science fiction stories form part of the mulch for *Roadside Picnic*, alongside the huge mycelial network of film culture, where segments from various origins (shots? sequences?) link together outside of their parent films. Thus, elements of Tarkovsky's 1972 *Solaris* adaptation fold into *Stalker*, and therefore also into Chernobyl lore. In particular, the revenants of *Roadside Picnic* owe a lot to Lem's 'gifts' as presented as gifts to the space station scientists by the Ocean of Solaris; exactly as offered by the wishing room/golden sphere of the stories. With this caveat: you might not get what you literally ask for; rather what you secretly (shamefully?) truly desire.



Facing the deadzone of the reactor sarcophagus, this sculpture of the fourth Annunciating Angel of Revelations 8:10-11 is designated by its English name: Wormwood.

By 2011, radiation levels in much of the exclusion area have fallen low enough for the Zone to become an official tourist destination, where you can take excursions to the edge of the reactors with professional guides in chartered mini-buses. Geiger counter soundtrack.

The Foxing of Memory

Alongside this grotesque irruption of entrepreneurial narcissism, something altogether different is occurring: The book is reasserting its primacy. Adolescents born and raised in the newly resettled surrounding area of exclusion begin sneaking back inside the Zone illegally; going deeper, staying longer than the sanctioned tours dare permit; taking foolish risks with their eyes wide open, or willfully closed: drinking from slurry ponds; eating long-abandoned canned foods; sleeping in derelict housing complexes; burning up floorboards and insulating themselves from the snowdrift cold with army surplus sleeping bags and vodka. Then, between sex, cigarettes and epiphany, smuggling out their numinous souvenirs and salvageable materials. Most of the Zone, most of the time, has little or no human presence, as Markiyán Kamysh's remarkable autobiographical book 'Stalking the Atomic City' testifies.

Despite hair-depleting radiation levels in certain sectors, a one-thousand-square-mile nature preserve¹ has been inadvertently created, which – after forty years of total neglect – has re-wilded with wolves, deer, even one near-extinct Siberian horse species, grazing alongside the bands of disaffected youth: boyfriends, girlfriends, guides, or the occasional lucrative thrill-seeker from the city; camping out, scavenging, seeking refuge, continually drawn into a world that possesses its own paradoxical securities and freedoms. Real-life stalkers, who bear greater resemblance to the street punks and parkour adepts of the old eastern bloc, or certain marginal western lo-fi youth subcultures, than Tarkovsky's lonely, existentially tortured middle-aged men searching for meaning; or the Strugatskys' allegorical Mickey Spillane-inspired gangster-pirates.

It might have seemed that Chernobyl could present a pure and exemplary Temporary Autonomous Zone (T.A.Z.) without necessarily being hamstrung by its temporary character.

Still, the one thing conspicuously absent (apart from the ill-considered video game zombies...) is adversarial gunplay. Otherwise put, the Zone, for all its dangers and defects, is nevertheless not an actual first person shoot-em-up; not in fact a war zone.

In March 2022, this last element of creative irresponsibility duly manifests itself: the moebius strip of reality and fiction given its half-twist and spliced when Russian forces push their military front down from Minsk, through the Pripyat marshes, and take over the Zone of Alienation as a staging post to

Russell Craig Richardson

their attack on K'yiv. We have no information whether the majority of young conscripts in the Russian forces are aware of their location, or the history of Chernobyl/Chornobyl, or of Tarkovsky's film, or the confusing hybrid video games, or the HBO/Sky TV mini-series, or any of the source books. We only know that they plough up dust in the Red Forest that has been settling for forty years, and begin coming down with respiratory complaints.

It's just ЗОНА : The Zone; and they are now in it.

Now, finally, we discover the source of the melted tanks and half-tracks bogged down in the meadow from the beginning of *Stalker*; the carbonized soldiers left unburied.

The layers of the palimpsest can fold over each other in peace. Perhaps in future times, a proper mythological chronology will establish itself; perhaps the function of the fences, barriers and armed guards will pivot from confining the poison inside the Zone, to keeping the poisons of the outside world from leaching in, preserving the Zone's paradoxical purity: the scarcity of people, the absence of authority; its silence, stillness and calm. The birdsong returned. A place where your deepest wishes might have already come true.



Joe Richman & David Sachs The Unmarked Graveyard: Noah Creshevsky

Joe Richman (NPR): Noah Creshevsky was a composer who wrote experimental electronic music. He called it hyperrealism. He died a few years ago at the age of 75. But before he died, he made a surprising decision: His husband, David Sachs, tells the story.

My name is David Sachs. I was the husband of the late Noah Creshevsky. We lived together for 42 years.

He was always lighthearted and interested in everything. And we agreed with so much. We found the same movies funny. We read the same books. It was just a remarkably satisfying relationship. So I was lucky and I'm so glad that I have his music.

When I first knew him, he was doing what we call field recordings. He would go out with a tape recorder and tape sounds and so on.

He takes sounds that we have all heard and all known and plays with them a little bit. Stretches them, integrates them with other sounds. He loved walking down the street in Manhattan and where you could hear languages. Not only that you didn't speak, but that you didn't even recognize.

The idea of a sound, you couldn't quite identify, squint and, squint your ears, you know what I'm saying?

As he got older, the music became a little bit more serious. In other words, a little bit less playful. The way life becomes a little bit less playful as you get older. You become more and more aware of the inevitable termination that will await us all. So this was the last piece that Noah completed. I think just before he knew he was sick. [The piece 'Sleeping Awake' plays]

No one knew he was going to die for several months. He had bladder cancer and he declined to have his bladder removed. He was 75, and he thought this was the beginning of a slope, and he didn't want to go down it. And I remember the surgeon was stunned because no one had ever declined. Everyone wanted to grapple for every minute of life.

So anyway, we knew for a while that he was going to die. But we didn't know at that time whether he would live three more weeks, three more months, three more days, three more hours. We didn't know.

We tried not to talk too much about death because he didn't want to, um, see me crying or see me upset. And so I had to, um, put on a happy face. Everything is hunky dory.

But we did talk about what he wanted to happen to his remains after he died. The options are always the traditional burial, I mean, the way one's parents had a family plot. Nothing seemed to him more vulgar than fetishizing death with real estate. You know, a stone, a marker, a mausoleum. He just didn't want a part of it.

And then, as we were looking at various options, I guess we first learned about Hart Island during the pandemic. So the idea of being buried collectively in what they used to call 'a pauper's grave' seemed very meaningful to him.

And the more we talked about it, the more it seemed appealing, you know, the simplicity, the anonymity, the humility, and it was on the water, which he loved for someone who was such an egalitarian who believed genuinely in everyone's equality. It was the right decision for him.

David Sachs & Joe Richman

We didn't tell anyone we didn't discuss it with anyone I remember when the hospice nurse - who was wonderful - was very upset when she learned he was going to be buried in Hart Island, she had this idea that it was not decent.

It was just like a garbage dump for only the unknown who no one cared about, but she came to realize the meaningfulness of his decision. A lot of people, I think, look at death as a kind of way to extend your ego, either your monument or the way in which you're buried, and ego stops with death.

At one point, Noah thought he would try to accelerate the process of dying, and he invited me to come with him on that last voyage, and we would do it together. It was a serious offer, and I seriously considered it, because we had been such a unity, that I couldn't imagine going from the we to the I. But the more I thought about it, the more I decided to not do something to myself.

I was more interested in continuing, and we had a wonderful time: three more months, and then he got too weak. He became delirious, and not the kind of delirium like when you're high or drunk, you know, festive and funny, but the sad kind, where you don't know who you are. It was hard, man, it was hard.

[sigh]

At the very end, I had been up several nights with him. I was tired. We went to sleep together, kissed him goodnight, told him I loved him, as I did every day for the previous 42 years, and . . . in the morning he was dead. You know when someone is dead. It's not only that you poke them and they don't get up, but you know, you have the feeling that that person is dead.

And it was quiet for a long time, and then I was left alone in the apartment, and...
That was how it ended.

I still find it very difficult, even though it's been two years, I find it difficult.

You know, I wake up sometimes, and I see he's not in bed with me, and my first instinct is to call to him, assuming he's in the other room. And then I realize, more or less quickly, that no, he's not there. And that hits you sometimes like a ton of bricks. He's not in the other room, or in another city. He's not anywhere. And then, almost immediately, a more calming realization sinks in. Well, he's... Everywhere.

The preceding text is the transcript of an NPR radio broadcast interview between Joe Richman and David Sachs, about the composer Noah Creshevsky, as broadcast on Radio Diaries: the Unmarked Graveyard: Hart Island – Noah Creshevsky. The full interview, along with the podcast recording featuring excerpts of Noah's music, can be found at:

<https://www.radiodiaris.org/noah-creshevsky-transcript>

Portrait of Noah Creshevsky on facing page, (2013) by Michael Hafftk



Noah Creshevsky (1945 - 2020)

Dorota Czermer & Noah Creshevsky

Sleeping Awake

A handful of verselets. Let out of the captivity of their first paper-set shapes, the words spin off tossed into a fresh eddy by our shared desire to create a new work.

Like the white skirts of Aldo Mondino's *Dervisci*, which lent the mood to my poetic images, each verse, each shaving of a miniscule sound-node quivers, occurs, recurs, refuses to stay still, to behave in the night cove, and as itself, as other, within the *other*, gains momentum.

The timespan and space sense: a blizzard. It came on cue while we recorded the voice.

I had hoped that Noah would approach my reading essentially in its innate state as music; and embraced, beforehand, the deconstructing and reconstructing which would be part of his composing process. To make my intention more palpable, if at risk of steering myself into depths dangerously unknown, I offered multiple and sometimes extreme 'musical' articulations while going from one patch to the next: single-syllable staccato drops, whispers, hums, slurred lines...

"When one listens with an ear to what IS, and also to what CAN BE, hearing music (essentially passive) becomes active." (NC)

What about languagemusic fused in one?

"Sleeping Awake" constantly recalls ripples of meaning sent through *a soft mirage of what I remember writing and reading*. It is as brilliant as it is elusive as it is alive.

Is it my poem? Nonsense.

To quote Brion Gysin, the inventor of the cut-up technique,

"Poets are meant to sing, make the words sing. Poets don't own the words. (...) Since when do words belong to anyone?"

Is it not my poem? Another nonsense.

Every word meant to be there, is there, *pensato*, though maybe too tender, or too close to the melting edge to resurface, to be voiced outside the listening, imagining ear.

--DC

I treated "Dervisci Rotanti" as I have characteristically treated preexisting music, sampling fragments of a larger whole. By selecting a limited number of samples, some words of the original poem disappeared completely; they are never sounded or heard.

It's possible and easy to say that the resulting poem is no longer the work of its original creator (Dorota), but the reduced and deconstructed poem could not exist without the original poem and its performance.

Sleeping Awake is dedicated to Dorota Zofia Czermer.

--NC

SLEEPING AWAKE (reduction by Noah Creshevsky)

Pleasure

Pain

Sleeping awake

Unaware

Unaware of love

To die sleeping

To die awake

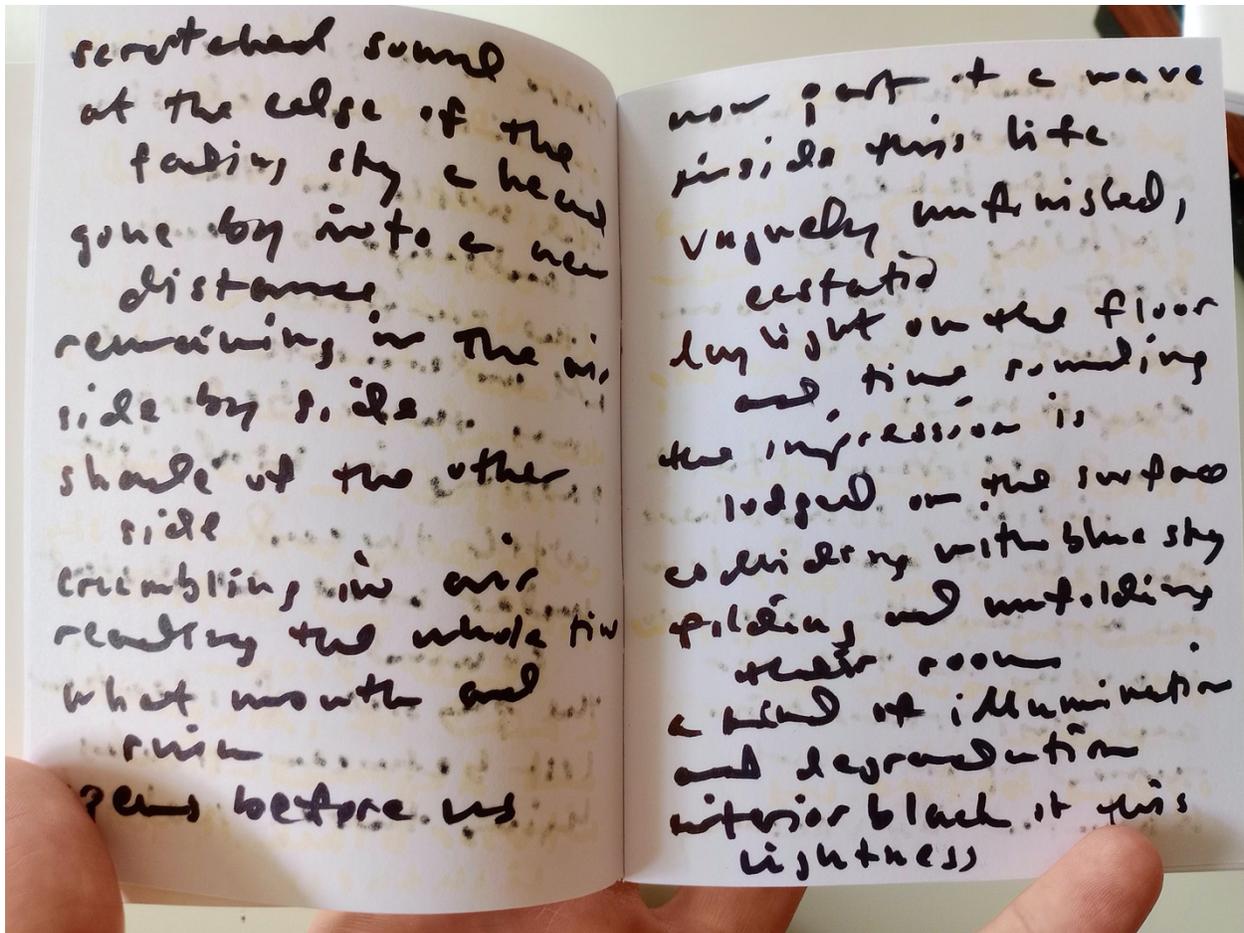
To die for love

We give

We give again

To be silent

sharing a space



sharing a space
darkly telling time
a few words must be said
spreading light
words, unlikeness
turned out
opaque
now among us
a little breathing
gypse
such fine grains
this tabula rasa
a break
between invisible air
to unravel
blackness, feeling
becoming now
the machinery of contact
Yesterday from the outside in
left over

part of the room
in labor of public works
inside, somewhere
over silent tracks
talking
a pleated old life in letters to live
reading or not
to hear in writing
common stock
falling words
undisguised part of the difference
a form of time
flowing into my hands
newly breaking
pages' song
some land
stretched threadbare with lack
heard through the dust
animales y plantas
crystalized
in certain conditions of temperature
of closeness, of intimacy
with mineral nature, inorganic
palabras
there is a picture here
opening and closing
the world in the landscape beneath the surface
all underneath what was there before
passing in hindsight
little thread
under wide and distant sounds
the physics of ideation
lost between tracks
lying there, a sheet
scratched sound
at the edge of the fading sky ahead
gone by into a new distance
remaining in the air
side by side
shade of the other side
crumbling in air
reading the whole time
what mouth and ruin
opens before us
now part of a wave
inside this life
vaguely unfinished, ecstatic
daylight on the floor and time sounding

sharing a space

the impression is lodged on the surface
colliding with blue sky
folding and unfolding their room
a kind of illumination
and degradation
interior black of this lightness
and handfuls of wind overheard
in blackness
talking tones
part of the room
country, now
emptiness
and residual stuff inside, somewhere
the pile of dated flow
in my mouth here, too
waving in the air
and this transition
turned open slowly
haunted by vacancy
and a little bit of something floats off
another part unwinding
the tapestry of interconnection
always open
one thing after another
the most exposed inwardness
to turn over in hands that touch all I say
now, instruments are of various sorts
and not by mere accident
the word in the midst of writing
heard back
and made of this
time advancing
in points along the frontier between the two worlds
you found and opened on this day
drifting over the track one minute, invisible the next
malcontent
here in the wind
lost between tracks
to begin the music that will bring back the world in spells
along the ranks of silence
death and afterlife
there is no sacredness
at the edge
following into the part
found voice
reading the whole time
markings that coiled lazily in the middle of the air
ecstatic

mark so

this time
beneath the surface
all underneath what was there before, new for you
found and opened on this day
such time as I noticed
the moment before under wide and distant sounds
whole afternoons just sitting there
breath and feeling
right here in this town
scratched
over the side
depressed through everything
in bursts of abundance
remaining in
a chain cut like a row
talking it over
I accept everything
listening again to the distant clamor
intermingling sensations
inside this life
to continually open with connection
the impression
leaking through the sweaty day
in a quiet room
few choices to make
in the narrow roads
carrying on the state of letters
and handfuls of wind
overheard
neither a staging ground of history nor a human domicile
like dolphins
but a human
neither rising or falling
like breathing
stroke on stroke
wild words
before this pause
a break in recording

9-10 vi 2023
marfa book co. / maintenant marfa
written in concert with manfred werder

presented in memory of elaine barkin (1932-2923)

mark so

DEATH-SPIRAL 9, 1
MARFA, TEXAS 2023

Fred E. Maus

Truth in Musicology

January 2022

I wrote the following comments with reference to a specific time. In summer 2019, I and many others watched in horror as Trump rushed to finish his absurd border wall and, in various ways, tightened the screws on immigrants. Environmental destruction and authoritarian regimes seemed to flourish worldwide. It was a frightening time. It seemed very possible that Trump might be re-elected.

I wrote with the thought that my text might be published quickly, like an Op-Ed, though I knew enough about academic publishing to see that it would not happen. As we moved through 2020, with Democrat successes in the November elections, I wondered if my thoughts would become irrelevant. Maybe a lot of the horrors were over? Unfortunately, it wasn't true. Trump has not become irrelevant, but continues to exert power over the Republican party in many ways. When I wrote, Trump had placed two Supreme Court Justices, and Trump's term ended with three new Justices in place, a nightmare. I wrote before Covid emerged, giving new opportunity for dangerous lies and disrespect for expertise. Trump's astonishing and, so far, influential lies about his election loss pushed his followers' and allies' credulity and/or mendacity to extraordinary new extremes. I think the present is more terrifying than the recent past in which I wrote.

At the same time, in the field of musicology that I discussed, along with ethnomusicology and even music theory, politically engaged scholarship and questioning of disciplinary assumptions have swiftly become common, perhaps the norm. This is comforting—with the cold comfort of not knowing in what ways this could change anything consequential outside of scholarship.

I wrote, not so much to say something new, but out of a desire to clarify my own thinking. My writing did help me in that way, and so maybe it can be useful to others in our, alas, untransformed world.

August 2019

If someone asked me what my research projects are at the moment, I would have several answers (I am writing again about music and narrative for a reference work; I am writing again about music and sexuality for a special issue of a journal; I am continuing my study of psychoanalysis as a way of understanding musical experience). But records of my internet usage would suggest that much of my energy goes into researching current political events.

I've kept up with the news for years, but this is different. Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, I go to internet news sites again and again, all day, with trepidation every time, wondering what new and harrowing stories I will find. For me, and for other political liberals

who live in the Charlottesville area, a special heightening of political anxiety (already staggeringly high) came with the 2017 “Unite the Right” events—an unannounced Friday night torch-lit march with anti-Semitic and Nazi slogans on the central grounds of the University of Virginia, and a Saturday right-wing rally and anti-racist counter-protest in downtown Charlottesville, leading to shocking violence when white supremacist James Alex Fields, Jr. drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring many others.¹

One big part of the overall stressful situation is the shamelessness with which Donald Trump and his associates tell lies. His staff and political allies typically back him up on false statements, as does the popular right-wing channel Fox News. The segregation of news audiences between Fox (normally loyal to Trump) and other news sources such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and CNN (often critical of Trump) means that people in the U.S. essentially live in two different worlds, each constituted by attitudes and beliefs incompatible with those of the other world. This is the situation people sometimes refer to as “post-truth.” Right-wing political actors have agreed, through use of media and other political speech, to maintain an alternative world-view to which many lies are central. Closely related to the lying is the administration’s contempt for expertise, shared by Trump’s base. That is, well-informed experts—people who have a commitment to finding and sharing truths of various kinds, as the result of significant training and experience—are not recognized or consulted in Trump’s alternative world. This disdain for truth and expertise is a direct personal affront to people like me who have devoted much of our lives to research and teaching. It contradicts the values that have motivated us.

Every day, the computer at my desk juxtaposes the flood of bad political news with my work as a music scholar. And I find myself wondering whether life as a music researcher and teacher is adequate to the world we live in. Why should anyone care about my way of describing fictional agency in classical instrumental music (about which I have been writing again in the last few weeks), when the Amazon rainforest is on fire and migrant children are in cages? Shouldn’t I spend my time in a way that is more responsive to my sense of political crisis?

I want to share two models of how to deal with such situations, models that haunt me. The first concerns the British scholar Michael Dummett (1924-2011), one of the most influential philosophers of the late 20th century. Apart from his philosophical work, Dummett was also committed to anti-racist activism. Here is a passage from the introduction to his important book *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (1973):

In the autumn of 1964, most of the book, which was then to have been in one volume, was in a finished state, and it needed only a few months’ work to complete it. That I did

¹ For insightful reflections on sound and music in the August 2017 events, along with historical context, see Bonnie Gordon, “On Listening,” in *Charlottesville 2017: The Legacy of Race and Inequity*, ed. Louis P. Nelson and Claudrena N. Harold (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), 146-159.

Truth in Musicology

not finish it in early 1965 was due to a conscious choice. I conceived it my duty to involve myself actively in opposition to the racism which was becoming more and more manifest in English life. For four full years, this work occupied virtually the whole of my spare time. As a result, I had to abandon hope, for the time that this involvement lasted, of completing my book. I make no apology for this decision, nor do I regret it.

Dummett continues, drawing on Bertrand Russell and reaching a forceful conclusion:

Bertrand Russell, in a television interview given shortly before his death, was asked whether he thought that the political work on which he was engaged at the end of his life was of more importance than the philosophical and mathematical work he had done earlier. He replied, “It depends how successful the political work is: if it succeeds, it is of much more importance than the other; but, if it does not, it is just silly.” One may, all the same, have to undertake something knowing there is only a small chance of success: if someone is faced by a great and manifest evil to the elimination of which he has some chance of making a contribution, the countervailing reasons must be strong to justify his refusing to make it.²

Dummett outlines an argument, in the style of decision theory: sometimes the positive value of a good outcome is so great, compared to the bad outcome, that even with a small probability of success, it is rational to work for the good outcome. Though Dummett is describing his own process of reasoning, the argument yields a challenge for anyone: what reasons could you give for the ways you do *not* participate in activism against significant evil? At the same time, his argument does not spell out important contextual factors. Dummett held a secure, prestigious job, which he retained through the period of activism he describes, and people in other life situations may reach different conclusions about the acceptable relation between job or career and activism.

As Dummett understood it, the political work he needed to do was incompatible with full-time philosophical work. For much of his life, these were separate projects, competing with each other, though he eventually published a philosophical book about immigration and refugees.³ The career of U.S. poet Carolyn Forché offers a different model. Here I turn to her extraordinary book *What You Have Heard is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance*.⁴ It recounts a decisive period of change for Forché in the late 1970s. She had already published a first, award-winning book of personal poetry. She had also worked on translations of Salvadoran poet Claribel Alegría. Through her work with Alegría, she came to the attention of Leonel Gómez Vides, a Salvadoran activist with many complex and often secretive connections in El Salvador. Gómez invited her to live in El Salvador for a time. He told Forché, correctly, that

² Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), x.

³ Michael Dummett, *On Immigration and Refugees* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁴ Carolyn Forché, *What You Have Heard is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019).

there would soon be war in El Salvador, and he wanted her to learn about the country before the war came. His intention was to give a remarkable U.S. writer experience of his country, so that she could return to the U.S. and share her knowledge. Forché agreed, and with Gómez as her guide, experienced first-hand the intricate social and political life of the country, learning of death squads, torture, pervasive fear, and stubborn resistance. Gómez succeeded in changing Forché's life. She began to write what she calls "poetry of witness"—not political poetry in the sense of direct advocacy for specific actions, but representation of politically-relevant realities that needed to be widely known. She has also engaged extensively in other forms of activism.

Dummett and Forché are both, for me, moral beacons, outstanding models of lives well-lived. I hope that everyone has models like these in their world—real people who set unforgettable standards of goodness. Forché, unlike Dummett, found that her central professional work was transformed by the change in her political sensibility; she became a different kind of poet. Thus, the two figures offer different challenges, for instance to musicologists or other scholars. With Dummett, we can ask how to justify a particular balance between political engagement and professional work. With Forché, we can ask, instead, to what extent our ongoing professional work can be infused with ethical and political values.

The first question, of balance, is starkly clear, if by no means easy to answer. In the rest of this essay, I ponder issues that come out of (for example) Forché's trajectory. How can our work as musicologists express our experience of contemporary political life? And what are the consequences—to what extent can musicology constitute effective political action?

Political engagements of various kinds have been conspicuous in Anglophone music scholarship, especially since the arrival of New Musicology/Critical Musicology in the late 20th century, continuing robustly to the present in relation to music and sound. It is not surprising to find politically engaged projects in ethnomusicology or popular music studies, fields that have always emphasized relations between music and culture and which have often been able to evade the inhibitions of professionalized research. But I want to turn to historical musicology, traditionally the most conservative form of music scholarship, also the one that has claimed the most power in academia. I will describe three effective projects that use careful empirical research, along with thoughtful interpretation, to engage significant political issues. In the first two, a politically significant topic takes the authors beyond the norms of traditional musicological research. The third deals directly with the history of musicology in the U.S., identifying politically troubling limitations in the beginning of our institutionalized musicology and arguing in general that we need something different from what that history has given us.

Between 2006 and 2008, Suzanne G. Cusick published several essays on the use of music in U.S. interrogation programs—music used as torture.⁵ Conceived during George W. Bush's presidency, these essays dealt with issues that were of intense present-moment political concern.

⁵ Suzanne G. Cusick, "Music as Torture/Music as Weapon," *TRANS* 10 (2006), unpaginated; "'You are in a place that is out of this world . . .': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror,'" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2/1 (2008), 1-26; "Musicology, Torture, Repair," *Radical Musicology* 3 (2008), unpaginated.

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Playing music, typically Anglophone pop music, at high volumes was one method of tormenting detainees, in an attempt to distress and disorient them and elicit cooperation with interrogation. An important part of Cusick's work is simply to document these practices. She also asks what concepts of music are at work in the use of music as torture, and what relation they have to other concepts of music in our contemporary U.S.

For instance, she finds an affinity with ideas and practices, widespread from the 1960s on, that blur the distinction between music and sound, and that ascribe to music the ability to break down subjectivity.⁶ She observes that assault with loud music, and also the captors' frequent assaults on culturally-shaped gender norms, differ from other kinds of torture in their creation of psychic pain rather than primarily physical pain.⁷ She notes that in the Middle East, the use of oil to generate electricity, necessary for sound playback, instantiates the U.S. appropriation of local natural resources to exert power over local populations.⁸ There are many more interpretive suggestions in these rich essays.

Cusick asks how this inquiry relates to musicology, as normally practiced, and suggests that the topic could change some aspects of musicology:

In my view, the fact that the United States has theorized and deployed music as a weapon of interrogation is a fact to be faced. It is a fact with the potential to shift radically the way we who are participants in and scholars of US musical culture understand ourselves and our subject.⁹

In "Musicology, Torture, Repair," she notes a common reaction to her research on music as torture—"Yes, but is this musicology?" and replies: "The acoustical practices in detention camps so challenge our discipline's beliefs about music that my work might *not* be musicology after all."¹⁰ Obviously this can be a position from which to question the adequacy of "our discipline's beliefs about music." Cusick concludes that consideration of musical torture shatters the positive images of music that musicologists and others have held, challenging us to repair this damage by developing new, and newly informed, kinds of musical love.

Cusick's essays show a politicized form of "truth in musicology". They use archival research, the method at the core of traditional historical musicology (though here with very different forms of archive), to uncover truths bearing on music and on a current political situation. Responding to a criticism that music scholars' concern with music as torture is a form of moralistic self-indulgence, rather than a serious political intervention, Cusick acknowledges a narcissistic aspect of her outrage at these practices: the music she loves has become a part of

⁶ Cusick, "Music as Torture".

⁷ Cusick, "'You are in a place'", 17.

⁸ Cusick, "'You are in a place,'" 18.

⁹ Cusick, "'You are in a place,'" 4.

¹⁰ Cusick, "Musicology, Torture, Repair."

herself, and practices of musical torture feel like an attack on the goodness of music, and thus on herself as well as the detainees. Nonetheless, she states that research like hers is not purely personal; it has “political consequences, albeit limited ones. Every word spoken or written about this practice enhances public awareness about late modernity’s newest forms of torture, and every word increases the size of the group who vehemently object.”¹¹

Bonnie Gordon’s essay “What Mr. Jefferson Didn’t Hear” takes up the topic of Thomas Jefferson’s relation to music, familiar in sentimentalized depictions as an aspect of Jefferson’s multifaceted greatness.¹² Gordon notes that Jefferson’s music collections and activities have little to offer to conventional musicology or ethnomusicology. But “Jefferson’s archive provides an ideal case for examining the entanglement of music and sound with power structures in a racist chattel slavery society.”¹³

Gordon identifies Jefferson’s engagement with exclusively white music—cultivated music and European folk song—as part of the creation of a new identity:

As the settler population took on the task of nation building in the early Republic, they did so in part by marking themselves as metropolitan and cultivated, in opposition to the subordinated, enslaved, black, and mixed-race populations.¹⁴

The owner of a large number of enslaved people, Jefferson must have been familiar with Black music and other Black sounds, but they played almost no role in his music collecting and his writing about music and sound. Black sound, Gordon suggests, was noise for Jefferson, disagreeable and threatening to societal order. Gordon identifies the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 as a context for Jefferson’s pattern of disregarding Black music and sound. The Haitian Revolution, a revolt against enslavement and French colonization, was frightening to U.S. slaveholders as an example of a successful uprising and a potential model for their own enslaved people. The Revolution was also commonly described by white authors in terms of sound—drums and incantation. It was frightening to white enslavers to hear or imagine the sounds of Black rebellion. Jefferson’s silencing of Black music and sound was a way of preserving the felt security of white life. Gordon notes that the Haitian Revolution itself was long “silenced” by historians—left out of accounts of the other revolutions of its time, partly because of the lack of

¹¹ Cusick, “Musicology, Torture, Repair.”

¹² Bonnie Gordon, “What Mr. Jefferson Didn’t Hear,” in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 108-132.

¹³ Gordon, “What Mr. Jefferson Didn’t Hear,” 110.

¹⁴ Gordon, “What Mr. Jefferson Didn’t Hear,” 109.

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written archival materials, partly because of the politically-determined limits of historical imagination.¹⁵

Gordon's essay is part of the larger project of reimagining antebellum southern life with full recognition of the presence of enslaved people and the morally compromised roles of white enslavers. Such work has been undertaken by many scholars and implemented in museum settings such as Jefferson's home Monticello, which now offers guided tours of Mulberry Row where enslaved people lived. Another part of this rethinking is the widespread recent resistance to public statues honoring Confederate military and political figures. "What Mr. Jefferson Didn't Hear" brings research and conceptualization about music and sound to bear on these current political issues. There has been a long tradition in Virginia and the United States (and certainly at the University of Virginia, founded by Jefferson, where Gordon and I teach) of uncritical adulation of Jefferson, and sweet images of his musicality are part of this. Gordon's work is a strong intervention toward changing these habits of thought.

In "The Musicological Elite", Tamara Levitz gives a history of the early institutionalization of musicology in the United States from 1929 to 1939.¹⁶ In particular, she explores the creation of the American Musicological Society (AMS) and its shifting relations to several other entities—the Committee on Musicology of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the short-lived American Society for Comparative Musicology (ASCM), the Music Teachers' National Association (MTNA), and European musicological organizations. The story is too intricate to summarize briefly, but here are some important parts. Both the ACLS Committee and AMS (and its predecessor the New York Musicological Society) were formed by existing groups of friends. Programming at early AMS conferences was by invitation. "Conferences remained insular and focused on the work of executive members and their friends for some time." Both entities valued an ideal of international cooperation, similar to that of the League of Nations, in practice an ideal of collaboration with musicology in European nations. Interestingly, for many years AMS intentionally encompassed a range of topics and approaches, including systematic musicology and comparative musicology, though historical musicology increasingly dominated the organization. For years AMS met jointly with MTNA, a larger and better-funded organization, which created an incentive to clarify the distinctive intellectual goals of AMS, and thus a push toward elitism and away from pedagogical concerns. Long denied membership in the ACLS (which finally came only in 1951), AMS worked to establish credibility by developing exclusive criteria for AMS membership, which emphasized quantifiable accomplishments and recommendations from existing members of AMS, rather than qualitative evaluation of scholarship.

¹⁵ Gordon directs us to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). Since Gordon's time of writing, the book has appeared in a second edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Tamara Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," *Current Musicology* 102 (Spring 2018), 9-80.

By the end of the 1930s, the executive board's personalized procedures for selecting members had led to a majority white, male membership. Some women were active in the society in these years, but giving papers rather than serving on the board or as officers.¹⁷

Levitz concludes that “the quest for professional status compromised scholarship in the AMS and prevented it from becoming a meritocracy.”¹⁸

Levitz identifies several important ways that the present-day AMS retains features from its origins. The early concept of international collaboration, actually collaboration with Europe that ignores many parts of the world, is still dominant in AMS. An early self-image of AMS as inclusive in its range of topics and approaches persists, even when AMS has become mostly an organization for historical musicology. “Fewer people would find the AMS so central to academic music studies if it admitted to its limited research methods and repertoire.”¹⁹

More broadly, the early professionalization of U.S. musicology was driven by the need to secure funding, establish itself in powerful institutions such as prestigious universities, and demonstrate its exclusivity, which led to a predominantly white male organization.²⁰ Musicology remains vulnerable to criticism of the academic institutions that house it; thus, for example, revision of the music curriculum at Harvard will not change the élite social position of most of the students to whom that curriculum is offered. Finally, Levitz notes that musicology formed itself in accord with mid-20th-century ACLS norms of professionalization, with conceptions of funding, organization of archives, assessment, and career that now seem problematic.

Levitz's insights into the limits of professional musicology are deep and troubling. She concludes: “The main goal now should be to reinvent it.”²¹ In terms of methods and subject matter, the essays by Cusick and Gordon could form part of such a reinvention; but that is not all that Levitz wants. She is critical of many current practices, including peer review, the training of PhD students for an unwelcoming job market, and the housing of music departments in exclusive schools. I welcome her radicalism, but it leaves important questions unanswered. Regardless of the historical context and critique of present-day institutions that Levitz has offered, I will meet shortly with the students I presently have, and write in the immediate future for the professional audience that presently exists: how should I do those things? What can be most helpful, given the political world we live in? Levitz is unsatisfied, it seems, by politically committed scholarship, curricular reform, and other initiatives within existing frameworks. I would say, rather, that it is important to be aware of the potential contributions, as well as the distinct limitations, of activist work within existing institutions—the “political consequences, albeit limited ones,” as Cusick puts it.

¹⁷ Levitz, “Musicological Elite,” 41.

¹⁸ Levitz, “Musicological Elite,” 43.

¹⁹ Levitz, “Musicological Elite,” 44.

²⁰ Levitz, “Musicological Elite,” 44.

²¹ Levitz, “Musicological Elite”, 49.

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With reference to teaching about music and torture, Cusick writes that

moral and political distress . . . has . . . slowly spread and fuelled the smouldering flames of outrage. Those fires now burn in many a classroom, and therefore spread to many a dorm room, apartment, or hangout. They burn on many a website . . . They cannot help but produce political awareness, and, eventually, they will produce political effects.²²

To put the same point differently, college teachers shape the beliefs and values of many young people, who will continue their lives to some significant extent as their educators have formed them, and some of whom will come to hold significant power of various kinds. The ability to influence students is itself a form of political power, slow in its action and finite in its range, but nonetheless real. Levitz's essay is helpful in identifying origins for persisting political problems with much musicology—its orientation to Europe, both in repertory and in its conception of the international; its past and present of white male privilege; its atmosphere of exclusivity. These are worth contesting within our present situations, whatever those situations might be.

Having identified some resources for thinking about musicology, truth, and politics, I turn now to the question what such models mean for musicologists in general. One answer is that we might all take on political research projects. But there are many good ways to think about music, and politically-oriented writing will suit some scholars, others not so much; we all look for projects to which our skills and passions are appropriate. For some people, the most productive professional expression might be, for instance, detailed technical analysis. There's no real gain if someone undertakes a politically relevant project and executes it badly, due to a poor fit with the configuration of their abilities and interests.

For people who hold teaching positions, it is possible to benefit from the work of other scholars in bringing political awareness into course syllabi. I think this should be a high priority for all music teachers. And we should be alert to political dimensions in our other professional relations—for instance, as editors, readers of manuscripts for journals, members of program committees, members of faculty hiring committees, and so on.

Teaching is an opportunity for demonstrating the nature of research and the value of expertise, whether or not the subject matter is explicitly political. Guiding students to understand the serious use of data and argumentation is, in itself, a protest against the lying that pervades right-wing political discourse. All the better if students not only study professional research, but undertake research projects themselves, beginning to understand from the inside what it is like to become well-informed—the labor and the satisfactions. Another way to think of this is that our classrooms can become an important alternative to the discursive worlds of social media, in

²² Cusick, "Musicology, Torture, Repair."

which our students are typically immersed and which have so much potential for political harm. Siva Vaidhyanathan has argued, in detail, that Facebook is a poor platform for truth and deliberation.²³ It does not distinguish truthful and false content; its algorithms promote stories that arouse strong feelings, rather than rewarding other kinds of value; it identifies content that individual users prefer and sends more content of the same kind their way, purposefully narrowing the range of content and thus reducing the diversity of perspectives that are available to each user.²⁴ Our teaching can show epistemological alternatives to such problematic media.

I have mostly emphasized the contribution of archive-based work in politically valuable research. That means I have left out another aspect of musicology, one with which I have been closely associated in my own writing. From the 1980s on, musicological initiatives under the rubrics of “music criticism” and “new musicology” have made a significant space for subjectivity, for the inclusion of personal experience in writing about music. Similar concerns have shaped some work in music theory and ethnomusicology. This might seem like a turn away from truth and toward an irresponsible self-indulgence, and thus, in a political climate where truth is under attack, a dangerous or at best irrelevant undertaking. I disagree, but my response depends on a particular way of interpreting such subjective discourse about music. As I understand it, the late-20th-century critique of positivist musicology was not an attack on truth, but a diagnosis of a false objectivity, a semblance of truth. Music, the argument went, cannot be understood apart from musical experience. Subjective experience is part of the truth of music; hence the turn to one’s own experiences. That turn could, indeed, become self-indulgent if the process does not continue to an interest in the subjectivity of others, in music as experience, not just object, in everyone’s life. Crucial personal texts—for instance Cusick’s “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music,” Philip Brett’s “Piano Four Hands,” the work of music theorist Marion A. Guck, well-exemplified in “Analysis as Interpretation,” Michelle Kisliuk’s reflexive ethnography—may be read, not as self-indulgence but as invitations to the reader to explore another person’s relation to music.²⁵ They also invite readers to turn to their own experiences, and at best they would incite a broad general curiosity about ways that different people interact with music. Thus personal writing about music can contribute to a practice of empathy. In

²³ Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁴ Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media*, 5-7.

²⁵ Cusick, “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight,” in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 67–83; Philip Brett, “Piano Four-hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire,” *19th-Century Music* 21/2 (Autumn 1997), 149–76; Marion A. Guck, “Analysis as Interpretation: Interaction, Intentionality, Invention,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 28/2 (Fall 2006), 191–209; Michelle Robin Kisliuk, *Seize the Dance! BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

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professional musicological writing and in teaching, a subjective turn can resist the grotesque lack of empathy that is another part of our Trump-afflicted world.

I am not suggesting that musicologists, when we teach responsible research practices and encourage empathetic attention to musical lives, are somehow doing “enough” in our present political predicament. But we are often doing something relevant, in the ways I described. What would be “enough”? In the U.S. context, we need (along with much else) whatever would get the present version of the Republican Party out of power as soon as possible. Unfortunately, no one is sure how to do that, as we see from the current squabbling about “electability” in the Democratic Party nomination process; and musicology is not likely to play a big role.

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Barry Wiener

Ursula Mamlok's Path to the New Music

Recent discussions of Ursula Mamlok's music have focused on her use of serial matrices, pc invariants, and tonal references in works of the 1980s,¹ theorizing these procedures as normative in her music. A study of Mamlok's early works presents a more complex picture of her style and technique, however. In this article, I outline Mamlok's early studies and her adoption of serialism in the early 1960s while studying with the non-serial composers Stefan Wolpe and Ralph Shapey. I draw on Mamlok's private papers, now housed at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, discussing selected works together with associated sketches, pre-compositional charts, and self-analyses. My investigation helps to elucidate the nature of Mamlok's unique synthesis of serial techniques and the compositional methods she learned during her studies with Wolpe and Shapey in 1960–64.

Early Studies

Mamlok was born in Berlin in 1923. In her early teens, she studied piano and composition in Berlin with Gustav Ernest [Gustav Ernst Seeligsohn] (1858–1941), a distinguished composer, conductor, pianist, and musicologist who died in the Holocaust after fleeing to the Netherlands. Throughout her life, Mamlok cherished her well-worn copy of Ernest's book *Johannes Brahms: Persönlichkeit, Leben und Schaffen* (1930).² Ernest provided Mamlok with a rigorous traditional musical training that served as a solid basis for her later excursions into more advanced idioms. In February 1939, Mamlok fled with her parents from Nazi Germany to Guayaquil, Ecuador. In the following year, she came to the United States in order to enroll at the Mannes School of Music. Mamlok studied composition at the Mannes School with George Szell from 1940 to 1943,³ along with only two other students, George Rochberg (1918–2005) and the young Martin Boykan (1931–2021).⁴ Like Ernest, Szell was a musical conservative who gave Mamlok a rigorous traditional grounding but avoided all current musical developments.⁵ In her final semester at the Mannes School, Mamlok studied composition with the neoclassical composer (and co-inventor of Kodachrome film) Leopold Mannes (1899–1964).

In 1944, Mamlok attended the Black Mountain College Summer Music Institute, which was devoted to the celebration of Arnold Schoenberg's seventieth birthday. There were many distinguished participants, including the pianist Eduard Steuermann, the violinist Rudolf Kolisch, and the composers Roger Sessions and Ernst Krenek.⁶ The festival concentrated on Schoenberg's tonal and freely atonal works, rather than his serial music. There were two main offerings: the D minor String Quartet, op. 7, and a two-piano arrangement of the Second Chamber Symphony, op. 38. Steuermann also performed the Piano Pieces, opp. 11 and 23.⁷ At Black Mountain College, Mamlok took a two-week introductory class with Krenek. She later testified in response to repeated

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queries that she gained little from the experience. The mimeographed handout for the course consists of simple definitions of musical concepts. Mamlok did not make a careful study of the music of Schoenberg and his followers until much later, after she completed her formal studies at the Manhattan School of Music in 1958.

Searching for Compositional Solutions: 1944–60

After the conclusion of the 1944 BMC Summer Music Institute, Mamlok studied privately with Roger Sessions on an intermittent basis between 1944 and 1947. Sessions had not yet embraced serialism, and he did not provide Mamlok with any information about Schoenberg's compositional techniques. Mamlok later complained that Sessions didn't provide sufficient guidance to student composers. At the time, "she couldn't function without a system, and she felt like a blind man drowning."⁸ In the following decade, Mamlok studied composition with the neoclassicist Jerzy Fitelberg (1903–1951)⁹ and the twelve-tone composer Erich Itor Kahn (1905–1956). She also studied piano with Edward Steuermann,¹⁰ and took at least one composition lesson with Steuermann as well. During her studies with Fitelberg, Mamlok completed her Concerto for String Orchestra (1950), an accomplished piece in which she imitated Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. In 1960, Dimitri Mitropoulos took an interest in Mamlok's Concerto for Orchestra, but he died soon after writing her a letter praising the work.¹¹

In an email, Mamlok wrote, "Kahn had me write a tonal chor[al] piece, a mishmash of bad Mendelssohn, then a free atonal piano piece. Nothing about twelve-tone, no analysis of Schoenberg. . . . Kahn . . . wrote a Schoenbergian music, which, like Steuermann's, I did not understand, so cannot judge. . . . I was recommended to Kahn by Steuermann. . . . Neither Steuermann . . . nor Kahn taught me anything by having me write these nineteenth-century style pieces. I really then found the little Krenek book¹² and taught myself [about serialism]. There were no classes in serialism at that time."¹³ Mamlok's comments serve as evidence of her incomprehension of the music of the Second Viennese School during the 1950s.

In 1958, Mamlok obtained an M.A. in music composition at the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with the neoclassicist Vittorio Giannini. The best known of her pieces from this period is the neoclassical Woodwind Quintet (1956) (see Ex. 1).

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Example 1 Ursula Mamlok, *Woodwind Quintet* (1956), I, mm. 8–21. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock, Berlin.

The image displays a musical score for a woodwind quintet, consisting of five staves. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 8 through 14, and the second system covers measures 15 through 21. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/8 time signature. The notation includes various dynamics such as *p*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. The woodwinds are represented by flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and contrabassoon.

In a 1963 letter to Otto Luening (1900–96), Mamlok described her music of the 1950s as “mostly influenced by composers like Bartók, Hindemith, and Stravinsky.”¹⁴

Wolpe and Shapey: Unordered Pitch-Class Sets and Basic Serial Operations

At the end of 1959, Mamlok felt that she had exhausted the possibilities of her style, and that she needed to explore other techniques. When Milton Babbitt interviewed her on WKCR-FM¹⁵ in 1970, she recalled, “I saw that for myself there would be a dead end. I enjoyed very much the music of Schoenberg and Webern, which perhaps—at the time I wrote the more Bartókian music—it was too early for me to break away into this. So I broke away into this style rather late in the game for me. It had been done at that time for thirty years but I could not make it my own until I really felt the necessity as a musical language, which happened at around 1960–61. That’s really the explanation. I didn’t do it because some other people were doing it, but simply as a need to fulfill a certain expression in my musical language.”¹⁶ Mamlok’s words echo Pierre Boulez’s assertions during the 1950s about the “necessity of the dodecaphonic language,”¹⁷ and negate scholarly assertions that she adopted serialism due to professional pressures.¹⁸

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Mamlok studied with Stefan Wolpe from the autumn of 1960 to the end of January 1961. Her exercises and compositions from this period show her attempting to master serial procedures as well as Wolpe's compositional methods. Among his key tenets were the circulation of the twelve-tone collection by means of unordered pitch-class sets; the variation of the pace at which the twelve pcs are introduced within a piece, a technique that Wolpe labeled the "tempo of chromatic circulation";¹⁹ the creation of focal points to generate non-tonal pitch centricity; and the use of all registers of the pitch continuum. Under Wolpe's tutelage, Mamlok wrote brief twelve-tone exercises for several weeks, focusing on variety in the use of rhythm and register, rather than on the inventive use of serial procedures. Mamlok then composed several short movements for violin and piano. In 2003, I discovered the four surviving movements among her manuscripts and arranged them as a set, entitled the Suite for Violin and Piano, with her permission.²⁰ In the Suite, Mamlok merges Wolpe's gestural language and technical procedures with serialism. There are also reminiscences of Webern, particularly in the last movement.

Mamlok worked tentatively with serial technique in the Suite, avoiding transposition of the series. In the manuscript of the final movement, she labeled all of the series forms as well as the order number of each pitch. These notations reveal that Mamlok was not strict in her application of serial procedures. Pitch classes are sometimes presented out of their series order, reflecting Wolpe's influence. The Suite is primarily important as a demonstration that Mamlok had quickly learned to exploit the parameters of pitch, register, dynamics, and rhythm in a way that echoes the musical vocabulary of the serial and post-serial composers of the late 1950s (see Ex. 2).

Example 2 Ursula Mamlok, Suite for Violin and Piano (1960), I, mm. 1–4. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock, Berlin. Aufführungsrechte vorbehalten. Reproduktion des Notenbildes verboten. Eigentum für alle Länder: Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Printed in Germany. ISMN 979-0-2025-3284-3.

Violin

Piano

Grave ♩ = 50

f *pp* 5 *f* *pp* 3

fp 3 *pp* *ff* *f* *p*

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After completing the music for violin and piano, Mamlok wrote two movements for flute. The first, a brief fantasia-like work now known as *Arabesque*, reflects the influence of Varèse's *Density 21.5*. Like *Density*, *Arabesque* begins with a chromatic turn figure and concludes with a rising tritone (ic6), although Mamlok presents these intervals in pitch-class space rather than pitch space. She repeats motivic figures insistently within regions delimited by segments of the twelve-tone collection, in a manner that also echoes Varèse's practice (see Ex. 3).

Example 3 Trichordal sets, in Ursula Mamlok, *Arabesque* for Flute (1960), mm. 1–9. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock, Berlin. Aufführungsrechte vorbehalten. Reproduktion des Notenbildes verboten. Eigentum für alle Länder: Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Printed in Germany. ISMN 979-0-2025-3269-0.

The image shows a musical score for a flute piece. It is in 8/8 time and marked 'Fast' with a quarter note equal to 70. The score consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 9. The second staff contains measures 6 through 9. The music features a chromatic turn figure. Trichordal sets are labeled: 'X' for {B, C, C#} and 'Y' for {G, G#, A}. Dynamics include f, sf, p, and pp. The score is annotated with circled 'X' labels and a circled 'Y' label.

Mamlok's use of pc sets facilitates her application of Wolpe's concept of the "tempo of chromatic circulation." In Ex. 3, I identify instances of two trichordal sets. I label {B, C, C#} as "X," and {G, G#, A} as "Y."

Arabesque may have originally been conceived as a prelude to Mamlok's next work, *Variations for Solo Flute*, which became the first acknowledged composition in her new style. Mamlok dated the manuscript January 19, 1961.²¹ Unlike *Arabesque*, *Variations for Solo Flute* is a serial work. All of the pitch material is derived from the series, and series forms are carefully notated in the manuscript.²² Mamlok employs all of the basic serial operations including transposition,²³ and she rotates the series as well. As in the *Suite for Violin and Piano*, she uses the series as a loose template for her procedures, occasionally omitting pcs or rearranging their order. The theme is palindromic, as are variations 1, 2, and 12. Variation 3 is palindromic with regard to pitch, although not to register or rhythm.

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Wolpe taught his pupils to create “focal points” in order to establish pitch centricity within segments of the aggregate. He may have derived the concept of a “focal point” from Schoenberg’s discussion of the tonic as a “fulcrum” between forces that pull downward and upward.²⁴ In the ninth variation, Mamlok creates a “focal point” by repeatedly approaching first F6, then D \flat 5, from above and below (see Exx. 4a and 4b).

Example 4a Creation of “focal point,” in Ursula Mamlok, Variations for Solo Flute (1961), working manuscript of variation 9. Note Mamlok’s notation, “Focal point approached from both sides by row.” Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.



Example 4b Use of F6 and D \flat 5 as focal points, in Ursula Mamlok, Variations for Solo Flute (1961), Variation 9. © 1998 McGinnis & Marx. Used by kind permission. All rights reserved.

Variation 9
♩ = 116



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Example 5 Ursula Mamlok, *Variations for Solo Flute* (1961), Var. 5, mm. 1–4. Mamlok repeatedly presents a four-pc subset of one of the two transpositions of the whole-tone hexachord (E–G#–C–D), derived from R₀. © 1998 McGinnis & Marx. Used by kind permission. All rights reserved.

The image shows a musical score for Flute, labeled "Dance-like". The music is in 7/16 time and consists of four measures. The first measure starts with a *pp* dynamic. The second and third measures are circled, highlighting a four-pc subset of a whole-tone hexachord. The fourth measure is also circled and features a *p* dynamic with an accent (>) and a *pp* dynamic with an accent (>). The notation includes various note values and rests, with a 6/16 time signature change in the final measure.

Subsets of both transpositions of the whole-tone hexachord are embedded in the series that Mamlok employs in the *Variations*: C#–D#–D–C–G#–E–F#–G–F–B–A–B♭. Order nos. 2–6 of the series comprise a five-pc subset of one of the transpositions of the whole-tone hexachord: D–C–G#–E–F#. Order nos. 7–10 of the series comprise a four-pc subset of the other transposition: G–F–B–A. While Mamlok often highlights chromatic relationships within the series, her use of palindromes and her repetition of motives employing the whole-tone subsets give the music a somewhat modal character. For example, the opening measures of Variation 5 emphasize the whole-tone subset G#–C–D–E. In Ex. 5, I have circled each instance of the subset (see Ex. 5).

After Mamlok left Wolpe at the end of January 1961, she worked with Gunther Schuller (1925–2015) for approximately a month, in April 1961. While studying with Schuller, Mamlok analyzed his serial *String Quartet No. 1* (1957) and composed two short movements for string quartet, now known as the *Bagatelles* for String Quartet.²⁵ In these brief sketches, Mamlok used the same series that she had employed in the final movement of the *Suite for Violin and Piano*, but transposed upward by a fourth. As in the *Variations for Flute*, she rotated the series, and used the operations of inversion, retrograde, and transposition. Despite her interest in exploring the possibilities of serialism, Mamlok focused on texture rather than pitch in the *Bagatelles*. In the first movement, she created slow-moving sound masses, contrasting the sustained cluster chords (in pc space) of the opening measures with the dramatic oscillating arpeggios and tremolos of the climax (see Ex. 6).

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Example 6 Ursula Mamlok, *Bagatelles for String Quartet* (1961), I, mm. 16–21. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock, Berlin. Aufführungsrechte vorbehalten. Reproduktion des Notenbildes verboten. Eigentum für alle Länder: Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Printed in Germany. ISMN 979-0-2025-3282-9.

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The score is divided into two systems, measures 16-18 and 19-21. The first system (measures 16-18) shows a complex texture with various dynamics including *mf*, *ff*, *mp*, and *p*, and markings for *cresc.* and *ff*. The second system (measures 19-21) features a prominent sixteenth-note figure in the first violin part, with dynamics ranging from *ff* to *p*, and a *gliss.* marking in the cello/bass part. The score includes numerous articulations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

In the second movement, instrumental lines weave around a ticking clockwork. The rhythmic regularity of the music gives it a neoclassical cast that belies its static textures.

Mamlok did not undertake any other compositional projects until the following year. During this period, independently of her formal studies, Mamlok wrote out twelve-tone series in her notebooks and attempted to write short sketches with them. As models, she wrote out the series forms of Webern's *Variations for Piano*, op. 27, and Stravinsky's *Threni* (1958). She also wrote out the series of Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, op. 36, as well as the prime and inverted forms of the series of his *Fourth String Quartet*, op. 37. In addition, Mamlok noted the principle of combinatoriality. The opening pages of these notebooks are dated in early 1960, but the pages devoted to Mamlok's twelve-tone studies are undated. In the spring 1961 issue of the *Journal of Music Theory*,²⁶ however, Milton Babbitt published his article, "Set Structure as a Compositional Determinant," in which he discussed Schoenberg's use of combinatoriality in the *Fourth String Quartet*. I would consequently suggest that Mamlok's notes about the use of combinatoriality in that work can tentatively be dated to spring 1961, around the time that she studied with Schuller and examined the serial structure of his own *First String Quartet*.

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During the 1961–62 concert season, Mamlok attended a series of lectures on contemporary music given by Schoenberg's son-in-law Felix Greissle at The New School. Greissle presented live performances of music by Roger Sessions, Ralph Shapey, George Perle, and Charles Wuorinen, among others.²⁷ When Ralph Shapey spoke about his work at the end of 1961, Mamlok asked to become his pupil. Shapey was one of Wolpe's most important students. Originally a violinist, he had become both a prominent composer and an important conductor of new music. Wolpe and Schoenberg heavily influenced his early works, but in the mid-1950s he began to employ texture, timbre, and static blocks of sound in a manner that reflected his interest in the music of Varèse, which he championed as a conductor.

Mamlok began her studies with Shapey at the beginning of 1962. In contrast to what she perceived as Wolpe's highly conceptual and confusing teaching methods,²⁸ Shapey provided practical exercises to guide his students in mastering avant-garde techniques. Shapey did not teach, and rarely used, serial procedures. Like Wolpe, he employed unordered tetrachords and hexachords to circulate the aggregate, and he taught his students to do likewise. Mamlok's notebooks show that Shapey began with exercises in the creation of rhythmically varied single lines and rhythmic counterpoint, both without pitches. Together with his rhythmic exercises, Shapey taught Mamlok about the construction of varied melodic shapes, showing her how to create contrasts of rhythm, register, and motivic directionality. In addition, Shapey asked Mamlok to arrange a dissonant chord in a multitude of different superpositions. This exercise illustrated the harmonic differences between chords with the same pc content, but with different spacings and different orderings.

The first piece that Mamlok composed while studying with Shapey was *Designs* for Violin and Piano (1962). *Designs* reflects Shapey's systematic instruction about pitch organization, register, rhythm, and counterpoint. Shapey used the term "design" in his teaching, defining it as a modification or development of a "motif."²⁹ Although *Designs* was ultimately published with bar lines and time signatures, the work is unbarred in the autograph score. Mamlok follows Shapey's example by indicating rhythmic divisions by a grid of sixteenth-note units above each line.³⁰ The music displays a rhythmic fluidity and gestural freedom new to Mamlok's music, as well as an extensive reliance on instrumental virtuosity.

From the perspective of Mamlok's development as a serial composer, *Designs* is a deliberate step backwards. The first movement is not serial. According to Mamlok, "it was written very quickly, more like an improvisation."³¹ Mamlok employs the twelve pcs as a loosely knit collection that she presents in innumerable arrangements, with constant rhythmic, textural, and registral variation. She establishes a clearly perceptible harmonic

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vocabulary by giving prominence to several dyads and trichords, generating harmonic dynamism by employing Wolpe's concept of the "tempo of chromatic circulation." Like his teacher Wolpe, Shapey stressed that a composer should employ the entire pitch continuum. In the first movement of *Designs*, the violin and piano oscillate between their high and low registers, leading to a *fff* climax (mm. 13–30). At the end of the movement, there are faint echoes of this oscillation between registers before the music fades away into silence.

The second movement is serial. Mamlok uses the four basic series forms without transposition. She partitions the series into self-complementary hexachords of set class 6–5 (012367); the second hexachord is the transposed retrograde inversion of the first.³² Within this context, Mamlok's technique of pitch manipulation is similar to her method in the opening movement. Mamlok often states series segments as dramatic thematic gestures and repeats them in rapid succession.³³ She occasionally omits pcs, and does not always preserve their order in the series. At the beginning of the movement, Mamlok employs both the prime and inverted forms of the series, permitting the music to converge on a "focal point," the pc F, in a subtler manner than in the *Variations for Solo Flute* (not shown). While the use of a focal point is not immediately obvious, Mamlok creates a bell-like pedal point on the piano's F1 when she reintroduces the prime form of the series toward the end of the movement (see Ex. 7).³⁴



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Example 7 Convergence on a focal point, in Ursula Mamlok, *Designs* for Violin and Piano (1962), II, mm. 11–16. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock GmbH, Berlin. Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten. Reproduktion des Notenbildes verboten. Eigentum für alle Länder: Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Printed in Germany. ISMN 979-0-2025-3257-7.

The image displays a musical score for measures 11 through 16 of the second movement of Ursula Mamlok's *Designs* for Violin and Piano. The score is written for violin and piano.

Measure 11: The violin part begins with a pizzicato (pizz.) chord, followed by an arco (arco) section. The piano part features a sustained chord with a dynamic marking of *f* and a fermata. The violin part includes dynamic markings of *f*, *mf*, and *p*.

Measure 13: The violin part features a sul pont. (sul pont.) section, a nor. (normal) section, and a pizz. (pizz.) section. The piano part includes dynamic markings of *pp* and *f*.

Measure 15: The violin part starts with a pizz. (pizz.) chord and ends with an arco (arco) section. The piano part includes dynamic markings of *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *ppp*, and *pp*. A first ending bracket labeled "8va₁" is present in the piano part.

After completing *Designs*, Mamlok returned to the score and added a coda to the second movement that draws on the opening and closing measures of the first. This creates a type of structural symmetry that she employed frequently in subsequent works.

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String Quartet No. 1 (1962/63)

The second piece that Mamlok wrote under Shapey's tutelage was the three-movement String Quartet No. 1 (1962/63). In this work, Mamlok refined her use of the musical techniques that she had first employed in *Designs*. In the autograph score, the music is unbarred. As in the score of *Designs*, rhythmic coordination between the parts is indicated by dotted lines instead of bar lines, and by a sixteenth-note grid above the music.

The first movement of Mamlok's Quartet exhibits a modified palindromic design. As the second half of the palindrome unfolds, Mamlok changes the polyphonic relationship between the parts, modifying note values, rhythms, textures, and, occasionally, pcs. She rarely alters the register of the pitches of the palindrome's opening half, however, facilitating its recognition by the listener. At the end of the Quartet's third movement, Mamlok added a coda that draws on the music of the work's beginning, just as she had done in the second movement of *Designs*.

Texture, timbre, and gesture play as important a role in the music as pitch. Mamlok contrasts the frenetic ensemble passages and virtuoso cadenzas of the first two movements with the last movement's "timeless" music. The rhythms of the parts are highly differentiated. String articulations are employed in a kaleidoscopic manner. Mamlok's pitch organization is certainly rigorous, but the work's "sonic structure" is just as important. The eruptive, leaping gestures at the Quartet's beginning recall Shapey's String Quartet No. 5 (1958), which was performed in New York on April 27, 1962,³⁵ just as Mamlok was beginning to compose her piece.

Mamlok's use of the series in String Quartet No. 1 is indeed confusing. In 1970, she explained that in her early serial works, "I would allow myself perhaps backtracking and ideas like that to creep in more than I did lately. . . . What I did is more hidden [than in my more recent works], and I'm perhaps not as consistent with my initial idea about using the set."³⁶

Mamlok employs both a primary and a secondary series in the Quartet. She alternately uses two variants of the primary series that differ only in the position of pc E within the series order. In the Quartet's opening measures, Mamlok uses a different series, created by reshuffling the primary series, which I label as the "secondary series." In the secondary series, order nos. 0–2 and 11 of the primary series are unchanged.

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Table 1 Ursula Mamlok, String Quartet No. 1 (1962–63): Series Structure. In the secondary series, order nos. 0–2 of the primary series are unchanged. Invariants are bracketed. Whole-tone collections and tritones are marked in ***BOLD ITALIC***.

Original form of the primary series:

P ₁₁	[B	B ^b	C]	[C [#]	A]	D [#]	F [#]	G	D	E	A ^b	F
ic:	1	2	1	4	6	3	1	5	2	4	3	

Revised version of the primary series:

P ₁₁	[B	B ^b	C]	[C [#]	A]	D [#]	F [#]	G	D	A ^b	F	E
ic:	1	2	1	4	6	3	1	5	6	3	1	

Secondary series:

P ₁₁	[B	<i>B^b</i>	C]	<i>D</i>	<i>F[#]</i>	<i>G[#]</i>	G	D [#]	E	[C [#]	A]	<i>F</i>
ic:	1	2	2	4	2	1	4	1	3	4	4	

The secondary series plays an important role in the first movement, but is employed only sparingly in the second and third movements. Mamlok's dramatic presentation of the secondary series at the Quartet's beginning makes it central both to the structure and the profile of the entire work, however.

Mamlok constructed both series with great attention to their intervallic relationships. The highly chromatic primary series includes examples of each ic. In both versions of the primary series, the two trichords of the first hexachord present a succession of interval classes of gradually increasing size: B–B^b–C (ics 1 and 2)/C[#]–A–D[#] (ics 4 and 6). Each of the hexachords of the revised version of the primary series includes one tritone (ic6).

In contrast to the primary series, the secondary series has properties that relate it more strongly to the diatonic and whole-tone collections. Like the series that Mamlok employs in the Variations for Solo Flute, it includes a segment (order nos. 1–5) that comprises a five-pc subset of one of the two transpositions of the whole-tone hexachord, B^b–C–D–F[#]–G[#], which I have marked in ***BOLD ITALIC*** in Table 1. The series concludes with consecutive major thirds, C[#]–A–F, that outline the other transposition of the whole-tone hexachord. In Ex. 8, I label Mamlok's use of series forms in mm. 1–15 of the first movement, including P₁₁, R₁₁, I₁₁, RI₂ and I₀.

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Example 8 Series forms in Ursula Mamlok, String Quartet No. 1 (1962–63), I, mm. 1–15. (O) = Original; (R) = Revised; (S) = Secondary Series. © 2011 Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock, Berlin. Aufführungsrechte vorbehalten. Reproduktion des Notenbildes verboten. Eigentum für alle Länder: Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Printed in Germany. ISMN 979-0-2025-3281-2.

to Milton Babbitt

STRING QUARTET No. 1

Ursula Mamlok

With intensity ♩ = 48

The score is for a string quartet in 3/4 time, marked "With intensity" and "♩ = 48". It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is annotated with various performance instructions and series forms:

- Violin I:** Starts with *f* dynamics. Annotations include *RI2(O): 6-10* (circled) and *P11(S): 0-4* (boxed).
- Violin II:** Starts with *f* dynamics. Annotations include *P11(S): 0-7* (boxed) and *IO(O): 0-5* (circled).
- Viola:** Starts with *p* dynamics. Annotations include *P11(O): 2-5, 0-2* (circled) and *R11(R): 0-1* (boxed).
- Violoncello:** Starts with *p* dynamics. Annotations include *P11(O): 3-10* (boxed), *P11(R): 4-5, 7-11* (boxed), and *f11(O): 0-4, 6-7* (circled).

Performance instructions include *sul pont.*, *arco*, *ord.*, *pizz.*, *sf*, *ff*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *pp*, *ppp*, *espr.*, and *v* (vibrato). The score is divided into measures 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, and 13-15.

corr. 02/04 Copyright © 1962 by Ursula Mamlok

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Mamllok exploits common elements in different series forms. The dialogue between the viola and the cello in mm. 5–7 serves as an example. The viola plays B–A#–D–G#. The dyads B–A# and D–G# are order nos. 0–1 and 8–9 in the revised version of the primary series (P11[R]). They are adjacencies in a transposed and inverted form of the series (I0[R]): C–D \flat –~~B–A#~~/~~B \flat –D–G#~~/~~A \flat –F–E–A–E \flat –F#–G~~. The viola line in mm. 5–7 combines with the cello’s C, F#, and G to present pcs 0–6 of the secondary series (P11[S]): B–A#–~~C–D–F#–G#–G~~.

In addition to her manipulation of series forms, Mamllok subdivides the secondary series between the parts, creating analogies with the primary series. For example, the opening two measures present order nos. 0–6 of the prime form (P₁₁) of the secondary series: violin I presents order nos. 0, 1, 3, 4 and 5 (B, B \flat , D, F#, and G#), while violin II presents order nos. 2 and 6 (C and G). By dividing the pcs between the parts, Mamllok generates ics 5 and 6, the dyads C–G and C–F#. These ics are present in the primary series, but absent in the secondary series. In m. 2, Mamllok simultaneously states these two ics, the ic6 D5–G#3 in violin I, and the ic5 C5–G3 in violin II.

Mamllok singles out the trichord B \flat /A#–D–F#, which she had created by subdividing the pcs of the secondary series between the parts. She states it either complete (Vn. I, mm. 1–2; Vn. II, mm. 2–3; Va. and Cello, mm. 5–6) or in truncated form as the dyad {F#–A#} [Vn. 1, mm. 6–7]. The trichord serves as a major structural signpost in the first movement, and as the concluding gesture of both the first and the final movements of the Quartet.

By the end of 1962, Mamllok had completed four substantial works in her new style. On January 14, 1963, Joel Krosnick gave Mamllok’s first official New York performance at a concert by the Group for Contemporary Music, performing her *Composition for Cello* (1962). The *String Quartet* was premiered at the Bennington Composers’ Conference on August 18, 1962, with Shapey conducting.³⁷ It received its first New York performance at an ISCM concert at Carnegie Recital Hall on March 22, 1963. Mamllok revised the work in the autumn of 1963, and the Franklin Quartet performed the new version at Donnell Library in New York on December 18.

In the summer of 1963, Mamllok drew close to her old friend and fellow Szell student George Rochberg. They had corresponded intermittently through the years, as Rochberg’s career had advanced while Mamllok’s career had stalled. With the sudden evolution of Mamllok’s style and her professional progress, Rochberg began to take a great interest in her music. That summer, Rochberg and Mamllok were in close contact, sending each other their work. On June 7, 1963, Rochberg wrote to Mamllok, critiquing

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her new pieces. His analytical comments summed up her progress as a composer in the previous two and a half years:

I was most drawn to the quartet. It is for me the best of the group with the possible exception of the flute music. . . . Practically all the time I hear a true line which emerges from the ensemble as a total aggregate melodic structure. . . . Your sense of shape is well-developed, your phrases are clearly defined, and when you juxtapose different phrase shapes as you often do in the first two movements a real internal intensity emerges. . . .

The flute music is charming and full of graceful ideas. At the same time its retrograde devices work to the complete benefit of the music and give the fineness of expression a tight structural definition – a hard combination to come by. The violin–piano music strikes me as very sensitive, a fine introspective mood. . . . May I make a suggestion? Try to find a way to combine the structural organization of your flute music (not the specific devices necessarily) with the freedom and rhapsodic quality you are searching for in the other pieces. The big problem today is almost precisely that: most composers who want “freedom” forget that structure really guarantees freedom.³⁸

Shortly before the premiere of the revised version of her String Quartet in December 1963, Mamlok wrote to Milton Babbitt, requesting his permission for her to dedicate the score to him. A few days after the performance, Edgard Varèse, a close friend of Shapey, called to praise the work. A letter from Mamlok's close friend Joan Franks Williams responded to this news in a jocular manner:

Thank you for your most recent letters and the note just received about the Varèse call! . . . It certainly is a tribute to you that he called and that he took the time to speak so long to you. However, you are on the way to immortality and he probably knows it, so he is getting in early.³⁹

When Ralph Shapey left New York to take up a position at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1964, Mamlok's protracted compositional studies came to an end. In the following years, she followed George Rochberg's prescription to balance compositional control and fantasy. She applied serial techniques to pitch organization in increasingly subtle ways, and serialized rhythm as well as pitch.

In this article, I have attempted to describe how Ursula Mamlok embarked on a musical journey of discovery. Although she was already a mature composer, she wanted to set aside the knowledge and mastery that she had gained, and to start anew. She was motivated by a desire to learn a new technique, which would permit her to achieve a new means of expression. When she began this journey, she did not know her goal, and every step was fraught with uncertainty. Finally, after three years of work, she began to master a new way of thinking about music, so that she would be able to express herself in the “new world of sound” of the 1960s.

¹ See Joseph N. Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Straus, “Ursula Mamlok, *Panta Rhei*, Third Movement (1981),” in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music from 1960-2000*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 18–31; Adam Shanley. “Exploring New Paths Through the Matrix in Ursula Mamlok’s Five Intermezzi for Guitar Solo,” in *Form and Process in Music, 1300-2014: An Analytic Sampler*, ed. Jack Boss, Heather Holmquest, Russell Knight, Inés Thiebaut, and Brent Yorgason (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 197–223.

² Gustave Ernest, *Johannes Brahms: Persönlichkeit, Leben und Schaffen* (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft m.b.H., 1930).

³ Mamlok applied to the Mannes School of Music in order to study composition with Hans Weisse, who died in February 1940. The Mannes School examined Mamlok’s application after Weisse’s death, and notified her of her acceptance in May 1940. When Mamlok arrived in New York for the fall 1940 semester, she discovered that Mannes had engaged Szell to take Weisse’s place. Correspondence between Mamlok and the Mannes School of Music, 1940. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

⁴ See Michael Charry, *George Szell: A Life of Music* (University of Illinois Press, 2011), 58–59.

⁵ Charry, 58–59.

⁶ Jonathan Hiam, “Music at Black Mountain College: The European Years, 1939-46” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005), 18.

⁷ For the concert programs, see Hiam, 78.

⁸ David Sills, “Three Sides of the Coin”: An Appreciation,” *ILWC* [International Leagues of Women Composers] *Journal* (October 1993), 7.

⁹ Martin Boykan’s mother recommended to Mamlok that she study with Fitelberg. Conversation with Ursula Mamlok, May 5, 2011.

¹⁰ Mamlok also studied piano with Wolfgang Rosé (1907–77), the nephew of both Gustav Mahler and Arnold Rosé. Telephone conversation with Ursula Mamlok, February 12, 2012. Rosé’s father, the cellist Eduard Rosé, died at Terezin in 1943.

¹¹ Dimitri Mitropoulos, letter to Ursula Mamlok, 1960. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

¹² Ernst Krenek, *Studies in Counterpoint: Based on the Twelve-Tone Technique* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1940).

¹³ Ursula Mamlok, email to Barry Wiener, April 9, 2007.

¹⁴ Ursula Mamlok, letter to Otto Luening, November 19, 1963. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

¹⁵ WKCR-FM is the radio station of Columbia University.

¹⁶ “Radio–Today’s Leading Events,” *The New York Times*, 26 April 1970: D25. Interview on WKCR Composers Forum, hosted by Jeffrey Kaufman, with guest Milton Babbitt.

¹⁷ See Jonathan Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez: Writings and Compositions* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32.

¹⁸ See Roxane Lise Prevost, “A Woman Composer Among Men: A Theoretical Study of Ursula Mamlok’s Serial Works” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2003), 16–38.

¹⁹ See Stefan Wolpe, “Thinking twice . . .” in Stefan Wolpe, *Das Ganze Überdenken: Vorträge über Musik 1935–1962*, ed. Thomas Phleps (Saarbrücken: Pfau Verlag, 2002), 167–97. On March 2, 1964, after Mamlok had begun to gain recognition in New York, Wolpe wrote, “I am pleased that some of my thinkings made you productive and alight.” Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

Ursula Mamlok's Path to the New Music

²⁰ Recorded on Bridge 9293 by David Bowlin, violin, and Jacob Greenberg, piano.

²¹ The second half of Var. 5 is missing in the manuscript.

²² Mamlok's manuscript notations about her use of serial procedures in the Variations for Flute contradict Roxane Prevost's assertion that "not all the variations appear to derive from this series or to use the usual serial operations." See Prevost, 41.

²³ In her annotations to the manuscript of Variations for Flute, Mamlok noted the use of transposition in variation 8.

²⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 23. Quoted in Robert W. Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory from Albrechtsberger to Schenker and Schoenberg* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1985), 136. See also David Lewin, "Inversional Balance as an Organizing Force in Schoenberg's Music and Thought," *Perspectives of New Music* 6, no. 1 (1967): 3.

²⁵ The Bagatelles are published by Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. They were recorded by the Daedalus Quartet on Bridge 9293.

²⁶ Milton Babbitt, "Set Structure as a Compositional Determinant," *Journal of Music Theory* 5, no. 1: 72–94. Reprinted in *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt*, ed. Stephen Peles, Stephen Demski, Andrew Mead, and Joseph N. Straus (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 86–108. See also Silvina Milstein, *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²⁷ Alan P. Rich, "Music World: Class in Listening," *The New York Times*, August 20, 1961: X7.

²⁸ Wolpe often employed visual images that may have been confusing to new students. Nevertheless, his teaching methods were highly systematic and formed the basis of Shapey's pedagogy. See Carol K. Baron, "Shapey in His Own Voice," *Contemporary Music Review* 27, nos. 4/5 (2008): 407–32.

²⁹ Shapey employs the term "Tails-Designs-Links." See Chapter 6, in Ralph Shapey, *A Basic Course in Music Composition* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser, 2001), 21–22.

³⁰ *Designs* is published by Boosey & Hawkes • Bote & Bock. Violinist David Bowlin and pianist Jacob Greenberg recorded the work on Bridge 9291.

³¹ Telephone conversation with Ursula Mamlok, June 16, 2003.

³² P₇: G–G#–C#–A–C–F#/F–B–D–Bb–Eb–E. See Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 95.

³³ Violin, mm. 5, 13; piano, followed by the violin, mm. 4, 6.

³⁴ Mamlok, *Designs* for Violin and Piano (1962), II, mm. 12–13, 15–16.

³⁵ See Raymond Ericson, "U. S. Section of Music Society offers 4 Works at New School," *The New York Times*, April 28, 1962: 14; Paul Henry Lang, "Music: Contemporary Works," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 28, 1962: 6.

³⁶ Mamlok, interview with Jeffrey Kaufman on Composer's Forum, WKCR-FM, New York, April 26, 1970, with the participation of Milton Babbitt. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

³⁷ Seventeenth Annual Bennington Composers' Conference and Chamber Music Center, Carriage Barn, Bennington, VT, Saturday, August 18, 1962.

³⁸ George Rochberg, letter to Ursula Mamlok, June 7, 1963. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

³⁹ Joan Franks Williams, letter to Ursula Mamlok, December 26, 1963. Ursula Mamlok Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

Benjamin Boretz

You should listen to Jim Randall's GAP7.

To be one with a one that is music

To be one with a music that is after music

That has been is being is becoming music

But never actually is

Or is beyond is

Or was

Is after being

Is after and is being music

Is just before and just after music

Is elapsing from getting-to-be to having-been

Music or not just or not quite

Is it Being or Time

Or a refutation of their distinctness

Or of either or both

Accumulating an unaccumulate presence

A disintegrate wholeness

A present restated

Residual of some present that was

But still is

Or still just past beyond what it is or where

Not going where it gets

On JKR's GAP 7

To Is in almost-is enwrapping

Being something within but intangible to the touch if you touch

Because being time does not touch

It is what touches as it passes

Making being be time

Is time in the form of being

Refigures figuration as utterance almost unuttered

But not quite

Give it time, it takes time to be time

Much time, more time than you thought you had

But you have it now

And you almost think you can be time

As your being

In this Gap

You can

Can be

In this huge space with its tinyhuge unfathomable time-beings

With that immeasurable being who is itself music

Emanates music is music's emanation

In tiny shreds of an unmeasurable nontotality, neither accumulating nor disintegrating, but
shred by shred manifesting, every shred a manifestation of a totality, a shred of itself

Shreds of being becoming sometime having been

And always a new shred of imperturbably a perturbation of music to come

Benjamin Boretz

Being to come is becoming to be time

As it detaches and accumulates indistinguishably

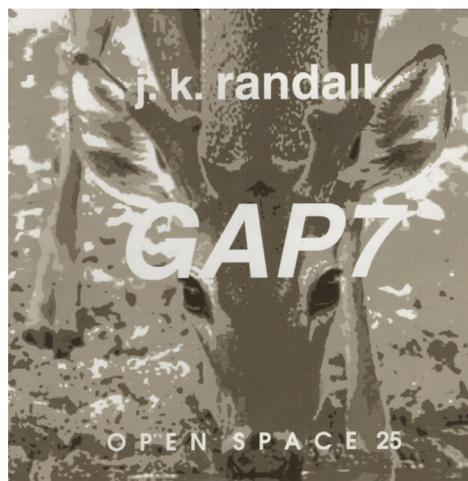
Is and was always together

To become music

As it is and was already

Because the time it is and was in is and was already music

The being in the music was the time that the music is in



J K Randall (score)

nothing fancy
GAP7
nothing free

: an Enquiry :

♩ = 60

Piano

(tre corde)

M(: mp/mf)

No pedal.

5 ♩ = 100

pp *dolcissimo*

p

pp (*dolc.*)

cantabile

11

p

(*cant.*)

16

pp

brutale ^

f

p

pp

22

p

pp

28

p

pp

Benjamin Boretz

On Playing *CONVERGE*

Skin to skin with sound, emerging in the act of utterance, inceiving a genuine, a genuinely desired conversation with fellow soundmakers, givers of sound to ourselves for ourselves as one does in real not-staged conversations, conversations cumulating temperatures and colors and sensibilities by way of their ostensible subjects and stories and attitudes and opinions, all evolving in the language under immediate construction, its own self-language, saying untranslatably what it is that that language says, can say, finds to say, is the only language in which those things are ever said. That is what happened when, sometimes, it truly happened; habits are hardwired; they usurp the ground of authenticity, masquerade as reality, obtrude between you and your perhaps contaminated hope to achieve transparency with your partners, all of you separately struggling with the same impediments to being actually together, sensing that too much effort to get there imposes the dreaded conscious-of-selfness, but that it takes far more effort than that to tunnel in past the inevitable ennui-boundary at which nothing more is possible but whose surpassing is the moment when everything might possibly become possible. And, then, if it rises, it speaks, becomes the it that speaks, within whose speaking we absorb, not knowing that it is us, us the listeners, us the speakers.



Craig Pepples

What is the size of this space?
What weather?
How many people here?
Are conversations audible or inaudible?

If inside, what floor plan?
What furniture?
What landscape outside?

If there is a painting, what colors and textures?
What kind of brushwork?
What subject?
What style?

What food is on the table?
Raw? Simple? Elaborate?
Sweet? Savory? Salty?

Is wine red, white, still, sparkling?

What tea or coffee?
Espresso? Cold brew?
Earl Gray? Oolong? Darjeeling?

Or just a glass of mineral water?



Craig Pepples

How much are music questions
really questions about feeling?



A Question, A Rose is music for uncrowded places, a large space with an audience of one, or none.

Introducing an improvisation workshop concert, Ben had said “we are not here to create listening experiences for other people”, to suggest what else the players might be doing.

(...as if we overhear someone’s personal meditation...)

But it doesn’t arrive all in one go. This music needs to be traveled toward.

Taking a train up the Hudson Valley on a cold March day; outside the window under gray skies, a bird feeder with one velvety warbler...

The conversation was unhurried, thoughtful, yet not without a deeply felt word or two, including the most radical music manifesto I ever heard: not “Schoenberg is dead” or “Stockhausen serves imperialism” but “I want people who hear my music to become my friends” – Ben’s hope that Open Space might be such a society of friends, not a faceless public waiting to be impressed.

Ben’s music is pure, like a painting with clean washes of color, abstract but intensely human, and self-evident.

My pieces here don’t seem very modern.

Preparing for this recording, we also worked on David Hicks’ string trio (a forthcoming Open Space release): music that points aggressively to a wall calendar showing today’s date as September 1922.

David responded with a quote from Jim Randall:

The only thing that History ever did for me was put me in the middle of it. For this favor I owe it nothing in particular. I’m happy to cherish, or deplore, or ignore its leavings, and I enthusiastically do: but we call our own shots.

– JKR “To Astonish The Roses”



Being anachronistically off the beaten path is nothing new.

Cocteau called fashion “beautiful things that become ugly over time”, with art being the reverse. But that still suggests, as Jim wrote (in disagreement) that “History is going Somewhere (...) and that we should create for, and in response to, our location (...) in that drift.”

Open Space can be more circular: a place apart for speculative fiction about a parallel world; a place to forget, erase, rewrite, renew; a place for honesty.



When you start working, everybody is in your studio – the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas (...). But as you continue

Craig Pepples

painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you're lucky, even you leave.

– Philip Guston (attributed to Cage)

What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing (...) necessary for its creation, a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration.

– Elizabeth Bishop

Paradoxically, the people who try for that kind of self-erasure (cf. Josef Hauer throwing the I Ching in 1920s Vienna) are often the ones whose art is the most personal.



In a November 2015 talk for the Milton Babbitt Centenary, Ben said about his own work (by contrast):

My music was always very purposefully and intentionally cumulative. Like post-modernists, I reacted against the non-cumulative time qualities that I was hearing. I composed pieces where even the pre-compositional thinking was about cumulative rhythm, in the classical sense. Things that connected recursively, and kept adding on to each successive thing. So that I have been concerned with macro just as much as minimalists are, but with a different aesthetic, and without losing particulate intensity.

Reflecting on that talk and related topics, David wrote:

...what moves me in music is precisely that it makes me **feel**. How or why I don't know. It does make me **think** as well. But the one without the other is not particularly satisfying.



About my quartets: I hope listeners find things here to enjoy. Proportion and propulsion might be key words for the 2014 piece. Musty corners of the *Cabinet of Curiosities* display dried specimens (insects?), and the cabinet itself doesn't seem to have many right angles.



I want to thank the players of the Mivos quartet for their work, and also Ryan Streber of Oktaven Studio. It is a great pleasure and an honor to be involved with Open Space, and a dream come true for my pieces to share a disc with Ben's beautiful violin solo.

Craig Pepples



Benjamin Boretz

for Craig's quartets

If you're looking for Craig in person in his music there's not going to be any *him* there. Not anyway in the Mahlerian way of any bipolarity of love/hate to twist your psyche on. But you will come to know him better than you think if you let yourself be open to the *its* of his music, the flashed images of things and beings and actions and utterances and postures and implications and sheer suddennesses, plays of quirkydeep modes of sentience, cognitions from corners of spacesound you didn't know were there, forces of energy that are their own generative origins, points of cognition materializing out of nowhere, elapsing to somewhere ungraspable, like an analog experientialization of a specious present – Craig's intimate un-ingazing music-surrealism, a landscape of altered alternative intuitivity, a world of uncanny self-created naturalism that gets you to the point where Caligari can lay a simple octave on you as if he'd just invented Phlogiston and you never doubt the simple reality of his miracle. Then Craig in person, himself, *is* totally there, to be discovered not behind the curtain fucking with your mind, but right there on the receiving end with you, not as wizard but as listening companion co-contemplating the projections of his own curiosity, and digging all those wondrous Curiosities that he's also finding there anew. It's all there: just listen.

There is perhaps a little less perfection of outerness in the shadowy folds of Craig's First Quartet. Immediately on inception the temperature has risen and the texture has softened and flexed. Aftertraces of exhalation, adumbrations of inbreath, paths of wandering gaze gently lighting upon something gently desired, a telling of being that hardly ruffles your tranquility but leaves you somehow feeling that something moving has happened, and left you, somehow, recolored. The sounds of the Mivos Quartet, saying this, seem like organic embodiments of these perturbations.

for Scot Moore and A Question, A Rose

Scot Moore met me at the Taste Budds coffee shop in Red Hook because I asked him to help me with this problematic piece I was trying to compose for solo violin; I had a burr under my saddle since Christine Pryn invited me to get involved in a project for American composers to write pieces for her (Danish) Nordlys Ensemble. The bug that lingered after I realized I wasn't going to do Christine's project was the idea of writing a piece for her alone – we'd talked about her playing my violin concerto (which unfortunately also involves an orchestra, so that wasn't likely). I'd just been listening to Bob Morris's Gary Snyder music ("This Bubble of a Heart") and those AITs were swirling in my mental stereo field – and they began to form themselves into configurations floating on the sound of a solo violin. But those configurations were obviously going to be performance-resistant (passages of over-under multiple voices evolving out of the unfolding AIT textures); so I asked Scot to tell me if they were unplayable. Scot was a stellar string player (violin and viola) in the Bard Music Conservatory community, a friend and collaborator in a number of Open Space recording sessions (along with our genius friend recording engineer Ian Turner, another Bard music graduate). And no matter how far this piece was leading me into violinist nightmare territory, Scot always thought he could find how it could be playable, all the way through. So, working around a short hospital stay, I finally ontologized a whole piece, which by that time had picked up 1. a dedication to my longlongtime friend John Rahn for his Perspectives of New Music Festschrift, and 2. a title that contained a subterranean echo of the lingering presence of my late best friend Jim Randall. We (Scot, Ian and my Open Space partner Dorota Czerner) recorded it in the Bard Chapel of the Holy Innocents, whose resonances, both spatial and spiritual, suffuse the sound of Scot's marvelous performance.

Benjamin Boretz

Joshua Banks Mailman

Both works on this CD are interesting to discuss in terms of long-range form, that is, regarding how they curate our attention over a relatively long duration, especially through the use of strategic pregnant prolonged silences and conspicuous “marking” of time. Therefore I’ll diverge from the more usual practice of beginning with a discussion of the topic of Forshee’s *Apokatastasis*, and instead begin with just what is heard, and how we as listeners might think through the duration of that listening experience, as a basis for referencing its apocalyptic topic secondarily. With Boretz’s *Downtime* (which follows on the CD) there is no obvious declared topic so perhaps this initially atypical approach provides a good starting point overall.

Although we hear slight debts to Lutoslawski, to Spectralists (Saariaho, Grisey, Murail), to Asian musical traditions, possibly to Paul Lansky, and of course Schoenberg, the overwhelming impact of Forshee’s *Apokatastasis* arises from its almost Mahlerian breadth: its ambition to encompass seemingly everything from within itself. Just as with a Mahler’s symphony—although much briefer—when *Apokatastasis* is over, we are left wondering how so many sonic-cultural allusions were packed into that one continuous piece, how our consciousness was led to traverse that worldly expanse, and come out on the other end, somehow transformed. These are the ideas—and emotions!—that come to mind upon hearing it.

Here are some events to listen for, so you don’t miss them:

A percussive chord quickly repeated, a pregnant silence; the chord again, quickly repeated; another silence, and then again. The voicing drifts deeper each time.

A brief cello solo interacts with this chord eventually, seemingly opening the door for the rest of the ensemble to expressively stretch out the isolated chords into rapid-fire repetitions and flurries.

Eventually we can hear the chord as a kind of refrain, seemingly giving birth to a frenetic build-up by the ensemble, which ultimately, at about two minutes in, peels apart like flaming curtains to reveal a miraculous electronic whistling rising halo, which itself introduces a timbral call-and-response initially between flute and clarinet.

This timbral back-and-forth, that is, see-sawing back and forth between instruments on the same pitch becomes a sort of ostinato onto which a frenetic drum solo climbs.

In the fourth minute, a jumpy jaunty gymnastic clarinet solo supported by ominous swelling chords and from-under-the-earth “breathing” eventually summons the horn and trombone into a brief dancing episode before the five-minute mark.

Maracas then mark time and seem to welcome the “dreamtime” through a fleeting didgeridoo-like drone, smoothly gliding up and down the overtone spectrum while on a single fundamental pitch. So many memorable connected diverse events already!—and we’re not even a quarter of the way into this haunting composition.

This maracas-based episode (in the fifth minute) combines the timbral and chordal sophistication and nuance of Spectralist music with the less teleological rhythmic sensibility of *Farben* from Schoenberg’s Five Orchestral Pieces Op. 16. Here the idea of a chordal-timbral see-sawing pervades. That is, we hear a chord articulated by one group of instruments gently taper off and blend into a different chord played by other instruments and they rock back and forth this way, while slowly adjusting and evolving. It’s the most effective example of this process one will ever find. We get the impression of a group of individual souls each breathing at its own unique pace so that we hear these gasps overlap and intertwine.

After a soulful descent, there arises a fleeting rebirth of the repeated chord refrain.

Ghostly glissandos enter for the first time, near the end of the sixth minute. They become the upper glaze over a circulation of urgent chordal respiration.

Joshua Banks Mailman

At this point, deep sustained chimes mark time underneath another iteration of the repeated chord motif, which this time brings to mind Stravinsky's biblically themed *Flood*.

The sonorous euphonious chord that emerges out of this, in the eighth minute, is as startling as it is stunning. It breaks down into a brittle sparkle of piano and percussion—the perfect contrast to the smoothness we just heard.

In the ninth minute, ghostly glissandos meander eerily up, down, and sideways, among also up-down oscillations, leading to a brilliant sparkle of piano and percussion. Unlike a lot of Spectral music, which can seem harmonically (chordally) stagnant, instead harmonic (chordal) contrasts abound here, and so do both within and between timbral-textural distinctions.

Within the eleventh minute, an entirely new sonic world emerges: one of a chattering synthesized-voice choir layered into a harmonium-like chordal sustain.

In the continuation of this, within the twelfth minute, we notice that the didgeridoo-like overtone sweep we heard earlier is actually an allusion to Tuvan throat singing (a type of overtone singing practiced by Tuvans, Mongolians, and Siberians) and simultaneously alludes to the low-pass filter operation of wah-wah pedals as well as the other-worldly *talk-box*.¹

In the thirteenth minute I sense the ghost of Grisey's highly influential *Partiels*, with its grumbling overtone-rich repeated contrabass gesture.

Yet here that is just a phase that takes us to a surprising duet of piano and percussion in the sixteenth minute.

The seventeenth minute introduces us to a new world of an elegant gently trilled chord which initially seems static but gradually breaks up and fractures into a tense stream that leaves room for the deep chiming of “the upside down” to resurface with the maracas marking of time again. This seems to accelerate and gain urgency until it expires in its own birth, by echoing the repeated chords that began the work.

Although some aspects of my description might suggest an episodic quality to this piece, that is not the case. Rather what I experience is a continued focus holding together a journey through a wide range of experiences.

In as much I put forth this description of Forshee's *Apokatastis*, I might also claim that it is in some ways superseded by Forshee's own forthcoming essay.² As Forshee summarizes it:

This essay is concerned with disclosing ways in which apocalypticism inspires, informs, and explicates a modern music composition. The conceptual framework of this text launches from a consideration of apocalyptic time, apocalyptic literary structure, and the doctrine of apokatastasis, or restoration. The ultimate focus of this article is the original electro-acoustic composition *APOKATASTASIS*. The text summarizes how the composition engages the rubric of apocalyptic ideas elaborated earlier, facilitating a singular listening experience informed by a theological doctrine of early Christianity. The text concludes with a proposal of the listening experience as an allegory of psychic transformation and “personal apocalypse”.

Forshee's discussion ranges over issues of music-temporal phenomenology, including Heidegger's theory of time, the verbal pattern of *chiasmus* in biblical sources (compared to palindrome), and D.H. Lawrence's musings on cyclical time.

Besides diagramming the stage setup and the spatialization of the computer part in relation to this, Forshee's essay also offers that “[*APOKATASTASIS*] is designed as an

¹ The *talk-box* is a sound-modification device popularized by Peter Frampton and Joe Walsh in the 1970s, in which an electric guitar sound is channeled into the guitarist's mouth which he opens and closes in speech-like motions captured by a microphone, thus filtering the guitar's overtones and therefore controlling its timbre through the mouth.

² Forshee, Jon, “Apocalyptic Time and the time of *APOKATASTASIS*.” *Dies Irae, Dies Illa: Music in the Apocalyptic Mode*, Lorenzo Ditommaso and Colin McAllister, eds

extended chiasmus, ABCDED'C'B'A', the composition unfolds a procession of musical gestures which expand towards and into a passage of digitized models of human utterance and vowel sounds." The reader-listener is welcomed to attempt to match up my account with the assertion of this structure. Right off the bat we can say that wide-ranging diversity experienced arises—structurally and therefore in this case through the apocalyptic reference—from the need to have so many both distinguishable and also recognizable sections. The cyclical quality of returning to the repeated chords at the end of piece is there in the A...A outer shell of the chiasmic structure. And the central section E being most enigmatically that chattering-voices episode I pointed out, a singular moment when, perhaps, all souls that have ever and will ever exist momentarily talk to each other.

Boretz's *Downtime* makes for an unexpected but intriguing pairing with Forshee's composition here. I suppose every great or very good musical work—at least of the modern era—has its own particular conceptual hook on which hangs the distinctive quality of our experience of hearing it. To put one's finger on it, to verbally articulate what that is? Always the devil's in the details. With Boretz's *Downtime*, if I had to pick a place to start trying to articulate what this hook is, I would say it is the idea of slowly expanding space. It is initially in the realm of pitch: the particular sense of space delineated by observed distinctions of pitch distributed as they are. Yet ultimately, by the end of the piece the sense of spatial expansion has transferred to the realm of time and rhythm. This is only natural. At its outset, *Downtime* doesn't have much time under its belt—it takes time to "own" substantial durations of time, to make time to earn time, to make it your domain. Whereas projecting spatializations of pitch succeeds immediately, at first grasp. I'm not sure when the end begins or when the beginning ends, as what happens in between is more mysterious. But afterward I feel this piece is Heraclitean, in that its end does not remind me of its beginning. It is not rounded or cyclical in any obvious way. It doesn't circle back on itself. In this regard rather than delineating a circumscribed trajectory, it instead opens up space in the realm of long-range form as well.

The idea of slowly expanding space (with regard to pitch) is very boldly etched at the start. Without preliminaries, it suddenly hits you with a jolt. The very loud extreme high and extreme low pitches leaving a gaping space in between, which aches to be filled in—Gestalt psychology says we're primed to yearn that the gap is filled. But no! Instead, the articulation in the piano's low register conspicuously descends further, widening the already capacious chasm: An assault on expectations that is immediately escalated.

The end of the piece leaves us in a very different place. First of all it's more restful in terms of mood. Especially as compared to the fraught opening, the ending has a satisfying quality of a denouement afterglow.

What's distinct about the ending temporally is how it now moves at a relatively methodical steady pulse that, because of what has happened in the interim (since the beginning), seems to affiliate with (bring to mind) both much faster micro-pulses and much sparser spacious episodes, both heard earlier but not occurring within this section. This finale (or coda) in this way serves a kind of framing function, providing opportunity for reflection, priming, or prompting that reflection to focus specifically on the question of pacing. It conjures the idea of literal pacing (walking) and reminds us of all the kinds and speeds of pacing we've experienced—all connected to one another rather than free floating—over the previous quarter of an hour. It has taken the time needed to build up this sense of multi-temporality and setting the stage to contemplate it through suggestion alone. These medium-paced pulses, which earlier were coordinated co-presently with either faster-paced or slower-paced pulses, now use the power of absence as their mode of suggestion. The sparse quality of the medium-paced material at the end allows us room to conjure in our minds what earlier had accompanied these.

Joshua Banks Mailman

These associations involving presence and absence work for pitch as well as temporality, thus extending the relevance of our spatial concepts of inner versus outer across these domains. At the beginning of *Downtime*, the absence of inner (intermediate) pitch registers was conspicuous: a conspicuous *outer* yearning for *inner*. The end of *Downtime* presents a sort of inside-out cross-domain inversion of this, where in the temporal domain, the presence of the *inner* (medium pacing) recalls the earlier *outer* (slower and faster pacing) through their absence, that is by presenting a texture at this point that is spare enough to leave us room to imagine what we're not literally hearing at that moment.³

Now here's what I think happens in between:

When percussion enters, because of its timbre and its noncoincident rhythms in relation to the piano, the two do not blend. Therefore this entrance establishes yet another kind of wide space. The timbre space is left open, unfilled.

Nevertheless, the piano and percussion together accumulate into a leisurely somewhat steady gate. The piece is beginning to count time, and thereby to “earn” and “own” time, longer and longer time spans, which can now be a basis of reference later on, as I mentioned above.

When the piano temporarily drops out less than two minutes in, while the percussion continues, with its deliberate slow tolling, I feel I have witnessed a large wave, now subsiding: a section ended.

With the piano gone, we can hear very distinctly the ambient echoing and reverberation of the drum, which delineates a large physical space previously unreferenced. Not only that but the dry woodblock sounds very up-close, so that we not only experience presence of a large space but also the distinction between far (remote) and near (proximate) within that large space.

Significantly, the rhythms are steady, never accelerating or decelerating. We sense that time is being counted, even when it is being marked out sparsely, at a slow pace.

At this, point, less than three minutes in, something happens that could not have its effect if it had happened earlier. The huge gap in pitch space—presented in a turbulent, almost stressful way at the beginning, is now addressed with a delayed response, the filling in of this gap, as the piano re-enters, in the middle register, now presenting what seems to be the motivic-thematic heart or meat of *Downtime*.

In terms of chords, harmony, pitch-class sets, this placid thematic episode uses Boretz's signature chromatically inflected quartal harmony, which I previously wrote about in relation to his *Qixingshan* String Quartet⁴ and which is forecasted by Boretz's groundbreaking analysis of Webern's Op. 5, no. 4 in his own *Meta-Variations* (1972).⁵ In this particular instance, within my involuntary habit of music-intertextual free association, the gentle rocking back and forth of these types of harmonies and melodic formations actually reminds me of John Cage's music of the late 1940s (*The Seasons* and the *String Quartet in Four Parts*) although one would never confuse these different musics.

After this piano solo, when percussion takes over again, it introduces its own new *micro*-counting of time. After this, when the piano joins in again (more than 5 minutes in) the timbral

³ I suppose it's not coincidental that I focus on this idea of inside, outside, inside-out, outside-in, since I recently contemplated these in my afterward to Boretz's book of collected writings entitled *Inside In – Outside Out* (2020).

⁴ Mailman, Joshua Banks (2015–16) “The Time and Space of Boretz's String Quartet *Qixingshan*” *Open Space Magazine* 19–20.

⁵ Boretz, Benjamin (1972) “Meta-Variations, Part 4: Analytic Fallout.” *Perspectives of New Music* 11: 217–23. While I'm at it, I can mention that this portion of *Meta-Variations* was as influential to me as a college student as anything else (Wittgenstein, Quine, Frege, Russell, Husserl, Kuhn, Foucault, Freud, Marx, Kant, etc.) I was assigned to read at that time. It spoke to—and still does—and informed the sense I already had this Webern work (and others) is full of mysterious but comprehensible expression, that accumulates meaning by being discussed in intense focused detail and imagination.

Joshua Banks Mailman

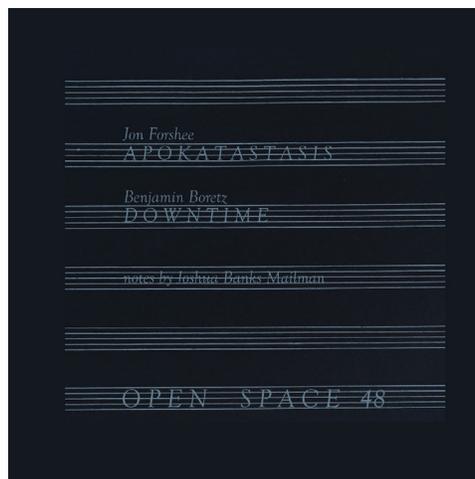
abyss I mentioned earlier begins to fill in. The piano chords are percussive and the percussion is more sonorous, with bell-like chimes. These timbres are rubbing elbows with each other, filling in what was before an abysmal gap between piano and percussion timbres.

Once the micro-counting has been established, without a decisive break following it, we feel the sparse episode that occurs next to be part of continuity in which the micro-counting perhaps continues silently (in our heads) between the seldom attacks of percussion. And this is also true of the extended sparse piano solo that follows through the central core of *Downtime*. Now, again, I am enjoying this the way John Cage has helped me learn to—to savor the silences! Open spaces, empty spaces, can be pregnant with our memories and anticipations if and when we want them to be. Time standing still might still be counted if our memories of earlier counting still stand through the continuity of persistent consciousness.

We could easily hear the more energetic piano solo (more than 12 minutes in) is a disruption, but I'm hearing it as a new inflection of the continuity we've been gaining, that we've been elongating, that *Downtime* has been "earning." The quiet quick metronomic maraca (micro)pulses that enter (13-and-a-half minutes in) tend to support this reading, as they lead directly to sparser spacing that we heard earlier.

The slow tolling of a bass drum and bell remind us again that time is counting, even when it doesn't say so. And the slow pacing marimba solo that follows bears this out. The pitch repetitions of its much slower moving lower voice seem to forecast an ending in the offing. These lead to some chromatic motion in the lower register, which goes even further than before in traversing the timbral gap, by having the piano's low register slow pacing usurp the marimba's low register slow pacing. And now we've arrived at the end, the piano and marimba, though spread-out in low and medium registers, have converged to fill in another space I didn't yet mention, *pitch-class space*, as they arrive on a seemingly agreed-upon tonic we never knew was possible. We've arrived somewhere, when arriving anywhere perhaps wasn't what we expected. The space that we're in has itself changed by our experience of traversing it. But what else could happen if time is an aspect of that space (or how we experience it) and time has had to take its own time to accrue?

Joshua Banks Mailman
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Craig Pepples

In Memoriam David Hicks
(Nov. 28, 1949 – Nov. 6, 2021)

With David, music was not incidental.

How to listen fully, how nothing is more human or universal than listening to the 2nd movement of Beethoven's quartet Op.127 – how to listen specifically as if nothing else exists; or as if it and the world are one; and to listen without reference to labels, jargon or theory – these things David taught by example.

Raising the stakes for music like that, treating it as something necessary and important, opens a door: that instead of sticking to narrow pedagogy, we can listen to music the way Husserl psychoanalyzes his copper ashtray:

["The ashtray stands before us in the perception as an enduring physical being. (...) What is perceived is also something meant: the act of meaning 'lives' in the act of perceiving..."]

But David stopped teaching music at Yale in the mid-80s, shortly after I graduated. (Music department authorities disliked his using Jimi Hendrix and The Beatles to illustrate compositional principles.)

Afterwards, he moved to a career in software design, from which he only retired in 2020.

Early on, when illness interrupted his ability to play keyboards, he designed a suite of algorithmic music software to continue composing. He sent me a copy as I was just starting out a business career in Hong Kong.

My pieces from those days (early '90s) employ various aspects of his software: note streams inflected by Brownian motion ("Batik"), parabolic curves translated into pitch bends ("Midnight"), "roll-your-own" instrument makers for a Yamaha synth box, plus note streams with fractal fills ("Junkyard"). In appearing here, they honor David as teacher but also act as palate cleansers, preparing the way for his large and complex pieces in a collection that celebrates his musical life.

*

Movements not included on this album are the source of material in David's "Derivative Music: Games", but what struck me first were the astonishing (and funny) string hockets about 3.5 minutes in. I wrote him:

I feel I open a door onto a very strange back room (a train station described by Kafka? ...where the train

... on David Hicks

conductors are off work picking their noses?...) and then around 4'30" another trap door opens and we fall into the coal bin, although gently...

My other listening notes: "Music that seems intent on erasing all history post-1922. David's trademark gimlet ear, intense focus, manic tightness. Virtuoso orchestration and strange musical grammar; a language that loves reduplicated endings. The ghost of Varese making an entrance from stage left. Some big moments of arrival with fountains that douse the audience in cool sparkling water."

But thinking of Varese or Berg, I missed David's main musical model. He wrote me that:

Shostakovich makes the case for music that can be mod and yet not turn its back on all these other more familiar sonority-worlds that are rich and evocative...

And one discovers that it only takes one odd pitch to make a familiar collection sound strange. ('The Nose' lays claim to plenty of tonal-ish moments and stretches.)

Another way of putting it: 'tonal' is a system, not a collection. And it seems to me now, looking back at the 'revolution', that the shunning of collection X or Y

[meaning Schoenberg's proscription against triads or octaves] is a perverse and self-abnegating banishment.

He also said, about orchestrating this piece using virtual instruments from the Vienna Symphonic Library:

... what Rimsky and Mahler got to do via orchestra rehearsals we now have means to do in our virtual orchestras in a box... (I seem to be embracing it in radical fashion.)

Not only has such virtual orchestration changed my sense of 'orchestration' but more to the point it has changed my sense of 'composition.'

I've tried to recolor pitch groupings, to recast music heard in one context into another, in ways that are not SOP. Do they work? Not totally sure yet. But the freedom to go there, the freedom to try, and the lubricating of the imagination required to try, those are what I am taking away from the experiment.

*

Craig Pepples

With “SightLightning”, instead of 1922, we find ourselves in 2122. This is incendiary music, a piece of scrimshaw with intricate, honed geometry only manageable by machines. Yet human memories of “Petrushka” (1 minute in) and Mussorgsky’s “Pictures” (e.g. at 5’27”) still waft by, and those evocations are paradoxically original and loving.

David and I often likened algorithmic track generation to monkeys typing infinitely on a computer keyboard. I wondered if the Petrushka reference might be like moldy bread, on whose surface people suddenly perceive sacred images.

David answered (in 2011):

That particular motive emerged from furiously-typing monkey’s paws. The first time I heard it from this furry source, I may well have marked it as ‘Petrushkan’ in my brain, though that’s conjecture, I don’t remember that. Were you to see the score, you would know it’s neither a ‘quote’ in the sense that literal words or notes-in-sequence are planted, by a benefactor-interloper, in another field entirely than the ground from which originally they sprang, nor truly a sequence of intervals identical to such a sequence in Petrushka. It’s more a lucky coincidental sorta-soundalike.

I do hear a vaguely Shrovetide Fair sensibility around 3’20”. More a mangled recollection than any notes as such. It’s a jumble of close notes in SightLightning, a chattering [as opposed to] a more picturesque jumble, a bustling city square, in Stravinsky’s wonderful work. The Pictures reference I can stretch to hear, though I’m not as steeped in that as I am in Petrushka, which I own up to as one of my founding block works, along with Wozzeck, both of which I was listening to every day for months on end in early college time.

Furthermore, your hearing echoes of Messiaen, Debussy, Xenakis, that’s a slam-dunk. Xenakis (...) was behind a lot of the desire to write such an algorithmic program (...); Messiaen was direct, in the sense that I listened to and looked at scores of his music with wonderment and joy.

There is unfortunately precious little that the monkey plays back at me that I jump for joy over that doesn’t sound something like something else I’ve heard. In SightLightning, I think the most original music starts around 6’30” and goes more or less to the end. It still made me THINK of Xenakis’ sieve-concept for

... on David Hicks

pitches chosen from a filtering process, though it doesn't sound at all like any Xenakis I know.

But I have come to love the non-referential referentiality of the way I play with Genie [track generator software]: after all, contrary to your notion that I quoted Petrushka, any and all resemblances are truly like the bread mold. They emerged, in this case, from a ZigZag [one of the software operations]. The track's born name is TRFILZG2, so there was Filling [another operation] in there as well. A Fill here, a ZigZag there, and Stravinsky popped out, for you. For me, something that sounded good, sounded usable, and yes probably reminded me of music I love dearly, popped out. Mind you, most of the work involved was the drudgery of removing all that granite that was covering up the usable licks.

Finally, I do get down to the micro-level (...). If I don't like the monkey's pitch-licks, I cut them. (He doesn't seem to care.) If I like them, I am free to tweak them at the speck-level, and do, though such tweaks are mostly rhythmic and dynamic. (The monkey seems happy with goof-ball rhythms that just feel like bad timing to me.)

The remaining question: is the monkey actually producing better music, but I'm unable to hear it as such, because I haven't heard it (in some comfort-creating sense) before, and I'm throwing away the truly original because I'm so mired in the 20th century's modernism?

About that last, I wrote him:

The monkey does occasionally pull back curtains to reveal Horrors Never Before Imagined. Some of these are intriguing. (...) I have sometimes thought, maybe in 100 years some of those horrors will have become the familiar.

...An aphorism from historical linguistics: yesterday's abominations become today's rule.

And the great heroes who moved us forward knew exactly how far to lean out of the familiar and into the future unknown. Not too far, or else they get dismissed as loonies and forgotten.

*

Craig Pepples

The third of David's pieces here surprised me. "Experimental Rhythms" emerged from his work with a new favorite software toy (Reaktor, a commercially available product mostly used in popular music). In first showing me the piece, he carefully called it "an experiment" because, unlike his usual intensely purposeful work method, this music is generated by mathematical rules (a clock mechanism creating 'Gates' in various 'time signatures'). The piece then weaves itself together on the fly.

I asked if he was ready to release this on a recording, and he said yes, though he planned to give it a different title.

As a software engineer, David's relationship to sound technology was very different from mine. I want my synthesized sounds to arrive like cookies on a silver tray, served by a white-gloved waiter. David always preferred synthesizing sounds in the garage like an oil-stained mechanic endlessly tinkering with the car engine.

"Tightwire" is music on a big canvas: physical reality of human instruments playing inside a rich imaginary garden of electronic sound, where the two stay in tight relation – and where at any moment a distant vibraphone harmonic may become an apparently unrelated electronics chord – and balance stays precarious, like a tightrope walker weaving to and fro to keep from falling.

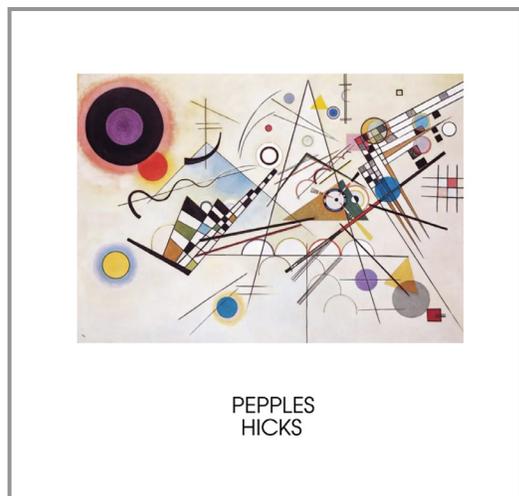
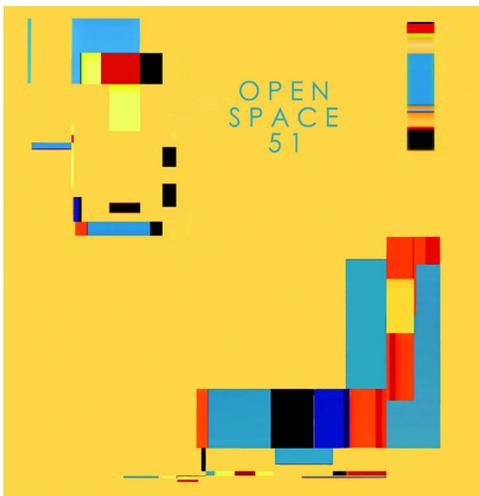
David hoped a live performance might feature different lighting, colors and projected images to articulate the various musical sections. For that purpose he chose images made by longtime friend and fellow Princeton student Arthur Margolin. A few of these appear in these notes.

For me, David was far more than college composition teacher. He was a mentor and lifelong friend. And his influence went far beyond any single subject.

I could list the many pieces of music and books he introduced, how – aggressively unconstrained by fashion – his conversation would touch on the novels of Knut Hamsun, Henry James or Jim Thompson, then the critical essays of Hugh Kenner, and finally the earth mover's distance formula and how it relates to computer image search and midi tempo induction. I could happily recall his stories from Princeton in the late '70s (with Jim Randall, Ben Boretz, Ed Cone, Milton Babbitt) of unstructured sessions that started at lunch and ended at midnight, on topics from astronomy, philosophy, history, music, painting, literature -- anything of current interest to those attending. Or I could talk more about the music software he designed, which has given me endless hours of enjoyment in my own composing. But what stands taller than all that: his integrity, his Spartan discipline in the face of a long illness, his generosity, his big embracing heart...

Craig Pepples

... on David Hicks



Craig Pepples

The painter Kandinsky, stuck for weeks, unable to move on a work in progress, decides to go for a walk. His cleaning lady, while dusting, inadvertently puts the problem painting on its side. Returning from his walk, the painter falls to his knees with a great shout, because the painting is now perfect... on its side.

Surprise sheds new light like that. Some months after David Hicks passed away, while cleaning a closet I found an old computer (Windows 98!). On it was a recording of one of David's early electronic pieces – "7 Sequences" – which he had sent me in the '90s on cassette. Hearing it again was a revelation.

I remembered the delicate third movement. I remember telling David it reminded me of what one hears on the chair in the dentist's office. I remembered the sixth movement with microtonal "flutes" (16-tone octave, I think he said). But it was the whole constellation of seven that hit me now, the experimental energy and intensity of focus. He was in the first flush of excitement, playing with software he wrote to run Korg M-1 and Yamaha TG77.

About my "Nocturne": Sometimes symmetrical, sometimes with displacements, phrases are laid out like tiles in a pattern. The tiling is not regular or periodic, and there are cadences, weak and strong. Yuji Takahashi premiered the piece in Tokyo in 2018, and kindly recorded it there in 2019. In this album, his recording seems to have found its congenial home.

The last track is the last piece David completed. He sent it with a dedication to me, which I was very pleased to receive. But I had to ask what he meant by "After Composition VIII". He told me, and I wrote back:

I had forgotten that Kandinsky used those names for paintings, and of course I recognize the painting as your desktop screen saver. It is absolutely a map of your piece, down to starting with the big dark circles upper left that my eye goes to first. So for what it's worth I think After Composition VIII is its name. (If you put the painting on a cd cover, all will become clear.)

In the end, instead of a full reproduction, this album uses image manipulations of "Composition VIII" as derived by David's friend Arthur Margolin.

The piece sounds to me the way the painting feels (and reminds me of visits to David's house, when he would play remarkable work in progress, while I stared at his computer desktop). I wrote him in December 2019:

This isn't normal music narrative yet might make sense as fluid thermodynamics: things changing into and out of gases, solids, liquids. They all flow weirdly but are somehow recognizably the same substance. Or otherwise, at the seashore, gentle waves bringing in different odd flotsam with each surge.

What keeps our interest – as opposed to wearing us down – objects are unpredictably foreshortened or cut off, as in the painting, so the listener wants to find out "what happens next" in a way that isn't possible in, say, Boulez.

David wrote back:

The great benefit of MIDI and Logic-type applications is you get to hear things 'as they are' and, guided by the very human capacities you zero in on: attention, interest, focus: one moves things around to create *for oneself* these attention-raising attributes, to hook oneself, to tell the story to oneself such that it keeps us following the flow/narrative we are in the process of making up as we go. (= composing!)

He was unable to finish scoring the piece. In January of 2021 he said he was puttering around with various old and some new logic projects that had been left hanging. "Though most days have been too painful for me to do real work composing, I will have some files for you to listen to quite soon." Regrettably illness intervened.

- Craig Pepples

Benjamin Boretz

Jim Randall in 1961 was thinking intensely within the precincts of music-compositional systems as proposed in and bounded by the words and sounds of Paul Hindemith, Joseph Schillinger, and Milton Babbitt. When I first heard of Jim in 1957 it was in the form of a score in the possession of my officemate at UCLA, the ethnomusicologist Bill Malm – a group of “demonstration” pieces composed according to the precepts of *The Craft of Musical Composition*. To me they sounded a whole lot better than what Hindemith had composed under this dispensation (not counting his sensational pre-theory-controlled music of the 1920s). Sometime around 1959 Milton Babbitt propounded his 12-timepoint system, with the idea of integrating a serialization of durational structure to interact with the serial pitch structures in his music. Milton’s thinking was in counter-response to the compositional practices developed (and described in various articles in *Die Reihe* magazine) mainly by Karlheinz Stockhausen, but also by other European composers associated with the Darmstadt group. (There had been earlier experiments in durational serialism of one kind and degree and another in prewar American and European music, but these were the most rigorously and fully developed such systems, and the most significantly implemented in compositional practice). Milton’s critique of the Darmstadt mode of time structure was that it structured *durations* additively in a way that was in no way isomorphic with the cyclic structure of the pitch domain. His time point system projected a cyclic “measure” internally articulated by a structure of temporal intervals, as the pitch domain was articulated by pitch-space intervals. Jim’s expansion and refinement of Milton’s system is presented in his monograph “Pitch-Time Correlation” and extensively discussed in Robert Morris’ “Companion to *Pitch-Time Correlation*”, published together in 2017 by Open Space. What Jim was formulating was a fully integrated system in which the structures of transformations within the total pitch-time evolution of a composition would be complexly and integrally inter-derived.

How these meta-musical visions (they were beyond “techniques”) enlivened Jim’s compositional imagination can be glimpsed, in rather miniature form, in his “Pitch-Derived Rhythm: Six Demonstrations”. It is so evident to me as an almost lifelong listener to and lover of Jim’s music how his intense engagement with the critical interconception of sophisticated structural formalisms and deep musical understanding alchemized at a remarkably high voltage to unfold into these six hermetically transcendent musical timesound voyages. And the young musicians who came to the Bard College studio to record this music for OPEN SPACE seemed clearly to be singing with the angels.

Tildy Bayar

After you listen to these cds, and if you are an improviser or if your musical history includes participation in the scoreless music-making activity that, in 1979, Jim Randall and Ben Boretz named “sessions” (“...to distinguish them from anything else – especially ‘performances’; sessions are like discussions, or seances. Deformalizing was probably a main motivation.”¹), you might have a sense, perhaps similar to mine, of how special these particular recordings are.

When I hit the Bard College scene in 1985 sessions were already an established practice, with students, faculty and community members from diverse musical backgrounds regularly meeting up to play music without a score. In 1982-3, though, when composers Randall and Boretz were getting together every two weeks to play sessions on piano and Crumar Orchestrator, they were still finding out what this musical activity was about, and what it might be for. They began by “playing with whoever walked through the door” in whatever configuration and on whatever instruments were at hand, without a preconceived musical structure, with as little reference as possible to musical conventions or habits, and with the aim of keeping the proceedings conversational and exploratory.

(According to Ben, the Crumar synthesizer was Jim’s discovery. Jim “went around stores looking for a keyboard synthesizer, and he concluded that this Italian Crumar thing was probably the most musically congenial to him. I thought so too, and so did Elaine [Barkin], so we all had Crumar Orchestrators with orchestral sounds based on the classical orchestra.” The solo session that became *Crumarsolo* (cd 55) was Ben’s first time playing the Crumar: “I got it out of the box, set it up and sat down to learn how to play it”. For Jim, some of Ben’s greatest Crumar moments didn’t involve extravagant timbres or fancy fingerwork but consisted of just a single attack-and-sustain: a music that “had nothing going for it except depth – and that’s sort of an illustration of what we were after”.)

In 2011² Jim described sessions as “a conversation in sound. We are not concerned with this being a meritorious music; standards for what’s acceptable music are already well-formed in ours and every other person’s head. The point ... was to explore what could come out untrammelled by any of that, so that there is, we hope, no preliminary sense of what would be ‘good improvisation’ or even rewarding – I think it seemed rewarding when you really felt you were into it as you were doing it, and when you felt that the role of the other person was somehow not destructive, and the other person was into it too.”

As Ben says, these duos constituted “a different project” from the hundreds³ of sessions both he and Jim did with the students, colleagues, friends and acquaintances who walked through their respective doors. And while their sessions may not have been aimed at producing excellent musical results, they certainly resulted in interesting music – as Ben describes it, “music neither of us was likely to produce on our own; music that was musically latent, that we hadn’t externalised musically”.

“For me,” Ben says, the sessions with Jim were “beyond anything else in that sequence of sessions that we did. They really stand out as musical adventures”.

¹ Unless noted otherwise, all quotes were taken from a March 2023 conversation with Ben about the sessions project.

² All quotes from Jim were taken from his video interview with Scott Burnham, NY Public Library, 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJdndMxl89g&list=PL0NnUbuMI8DDo7hMXLkBW_r_Nf3F9a6jld&ab_channel=OPENSOURCE.

³ Ben is in the process of digitizing his collection of over a thousand session tapes, with the aim of putting them online – watch this (Open) space. A series of 15 cassette recordings survives as an artifact of the Jim-and-Ben duo project.

Tildy Bayar

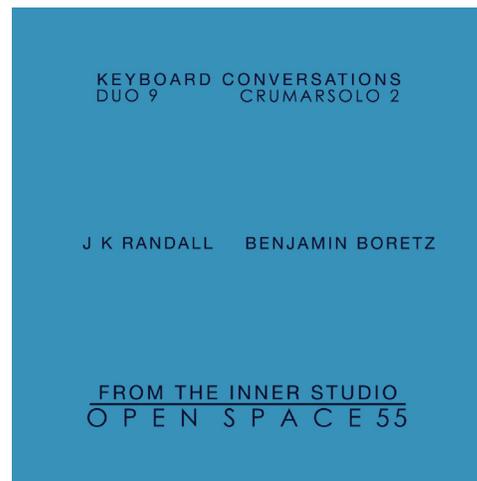
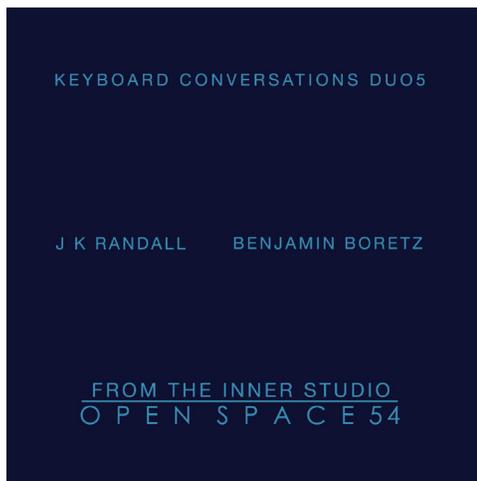
My informal title for *Duo 9* (cd 55) is [] : **discuss**. At first the piano authoritatively, the Crumar playfully. Piano staking out a series of resonant territories, establishing their boundaries; Crumar backfilling, chattering, teasing out the details. But this balance soon shifts, becoming fluid: a trading-off, a mutual proposing of topics and a back-and-forth between who opens up a space and who fills it – and even something like accompaniment. (Ben, listening: “It’s kind of amazing how we both knew what music it was in a very diverse texture. It never seems to be lost...”)

Right from the start in *Duo 5* (cd 54), the two players are playing the same music. If you are an improviser, you’ll know how unusual that is; it happens⁴, but almost never right from the beginning. For me this session is particularly a knockout because of how rare being “of one [musical] mind” is, even for people who have played together for years. I don’t know if he and Jim felt its significance at the time, but now Ben says *Duo 5* is “what we might have been aspiring to” with the entire project.

For me, in reflecting on all of us for whom sessions became a musical way of life for a time almost 35 years ago, the music on these cds – “something authentically new”⁵ – is a poignant exemplar of what can arise from the kind of exploratory ethos that briefly flourishes in many different societal structures and contexts, erupting from moments of collective stress and trauma or gestating undisturbed in peaceful backwaters and enclaves, in dialogue with a dominant paradigm or despite one – and then disappears, brief as flowers.

Dorset, United Kingdom

26 April 2023



⁴ For an example, see Ben’s liner notes for Open Space cd 41, ‘CONVERGE’.

⁵ “In our age, for our people, the requisite forms of these practices are in principle always unknown, their perpetual reconstruction the endless task of those whose compulsion – whose obligation to us to which we obligate them – it is to travel to the unknown, to seek and discover and unravel there the endlessly evaporating texts which enable and constitute, both, our life-giving, ineluctable struggle against the inevitable deficit. If we need public-functional musicworkers, it is these public functions for which their services are required. The person, the monument, which is larger than life, we no longer believe or trust or endorse. Nostalgia will not do our business. The cold metaphors of lockstep windup tin militias may chill our heart but I doubt they scourge our consciousness. Something authentically new is still always going to be needed. As it always has. (4/88)” – From “Interface, part V: On thinking about various issues induced by the problem of discovering that one is not a ‘composer’ and that the space which one inhabits musically is not ‘America’”, Ben in *Being About Music*, Open Space 2003, pp. 283-4.

Elizabeth Hoffman / Benjamin Boretz

...*twelve to seven*, written for Ben in 2015, takes its title from a 1947 novel by Malcolm Lowry called *Under the Volcano*. Though sadly I still have not yet read most of this semi-autographical novel I did dip into it enough to appreciate the magic of the author's imagery, and the novel's strong subjective pull. I had decided in 2015 to write a musical work for Ben that would respond to a piece of his that I liked very much (from 2013/14). It has a Lowry quote as its title, "...the sun poured molten glass on the fields...", and is a work which Ben wrote for Robert Morris. At the end of the PNM Festschrift for Robert Morris in which this piece appears, Morris in fact shares eloquently how affected he was to see ways in which his own work impacted others, "finding new resonance in another's voice." Through my many conversations with Ben over the years I have felt inundated sometimes by this sort of resonance effect; typically it has been an indirect and oblique feeling since I rarely grasp the full import of Ben's ideas, until years later maybe! My approach with this particular music composition ...*twelve to seven* (a miniature) was to let my own responses to Ben's composition affect me subliminally. This was thus a poetic intent that was also an experiment. I shut off my conscious analytic brain, and did not at any point analyze Ben's substantive work; I simply listened to his lovely and powerful composition, literally as I wrote a work for him. Like most composers I know, I find listening to music while writing music completely antithetical to the project at hand. But, in this case, the process was intriguing and easy. The result is, I'd like to suggest, my music with resonance of a particular sort and focus. Perhaps not entirely unlike Pauline Oliveros' and Stuart Dempster's sonic meditation technique of imagining performing to a favorite person (even if the person is not there). The "molten glass" (a very striking visual image) passage is situated in a paragraph in the novel about a walk. It was that image, too, that led me to think in new ways about rhythms and movements, and feelings conveyed by them and vice versa, in our bodies and our minds.
-eh 2023

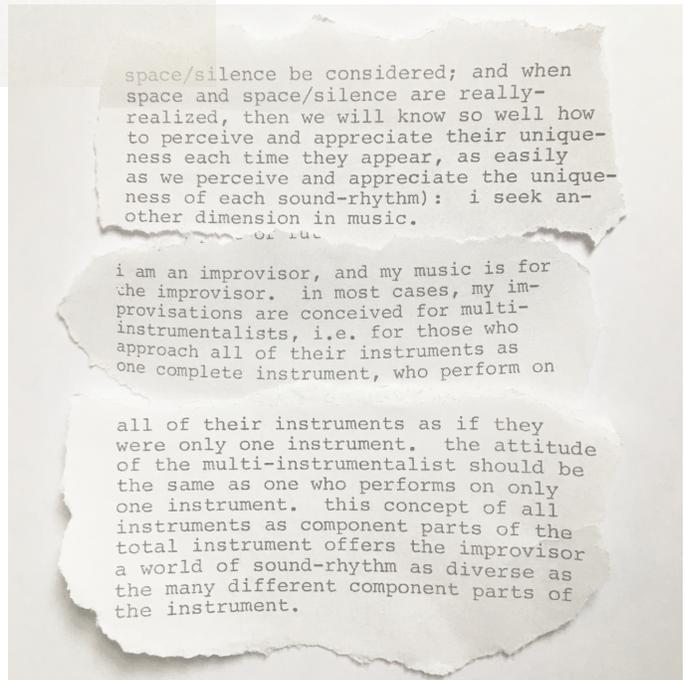
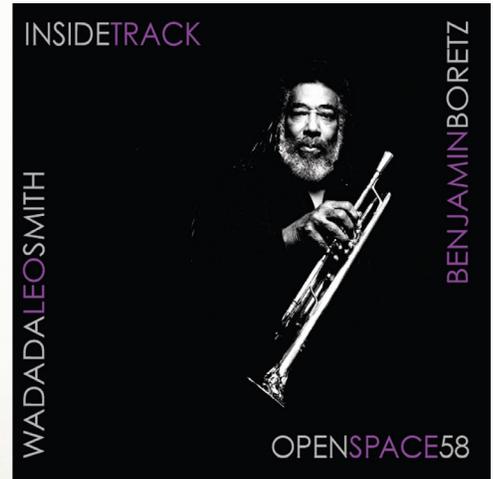
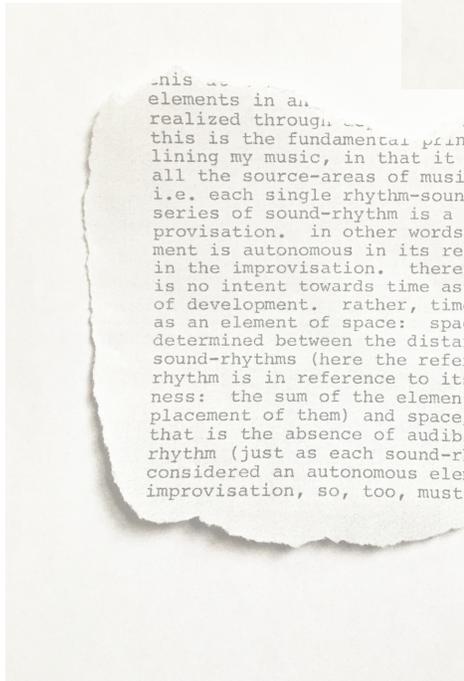
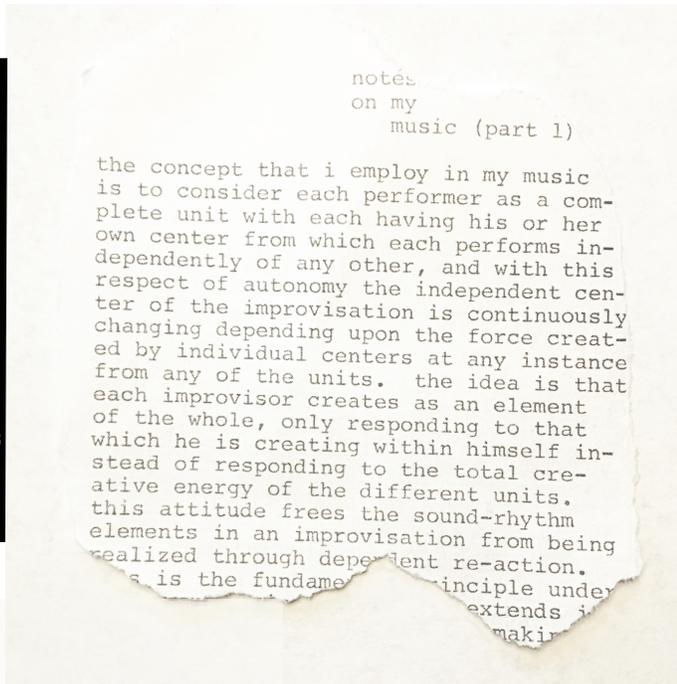
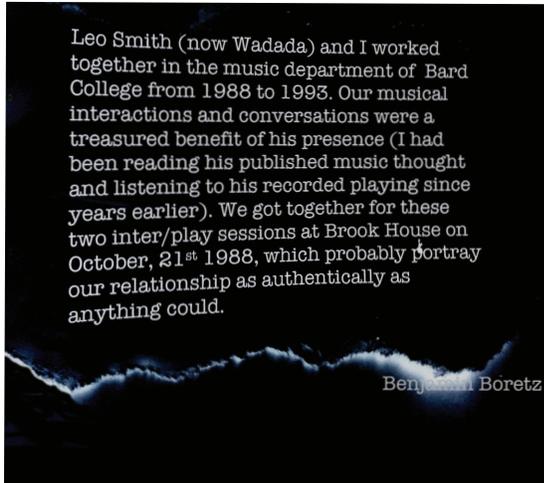
POEM for *Sixtext*

Uncannily, Elizabeth in her beautiful text for this album, invokes the Sonic Meditations of Stuart Dempster and Pauline Oliveros in which they "imagine performing to a favorite person (even if the person is not there)". Uncanny because my *Poem for Sixtext* is the last "sonic meditation" of a series of pairs of piano contemplations which I began in 1985 in the innermost studio of the inner studio – the lowest ground floor of my house, each consisting of a "text" (last thing at night) and a "commentary" (first thing the next morning after listening to the previous night's "text"). And each "text" centered a mental image of a cherished person as a score, whose output I played literally, completely, and exclusively, discovering in each one a time-sound being completely so-determined. Elaine Barkin, to whose loving memory this Open Space release is consecrated, was inevitably conspicuous among these images. The score for *Poem* was the image of *Sixtext*.



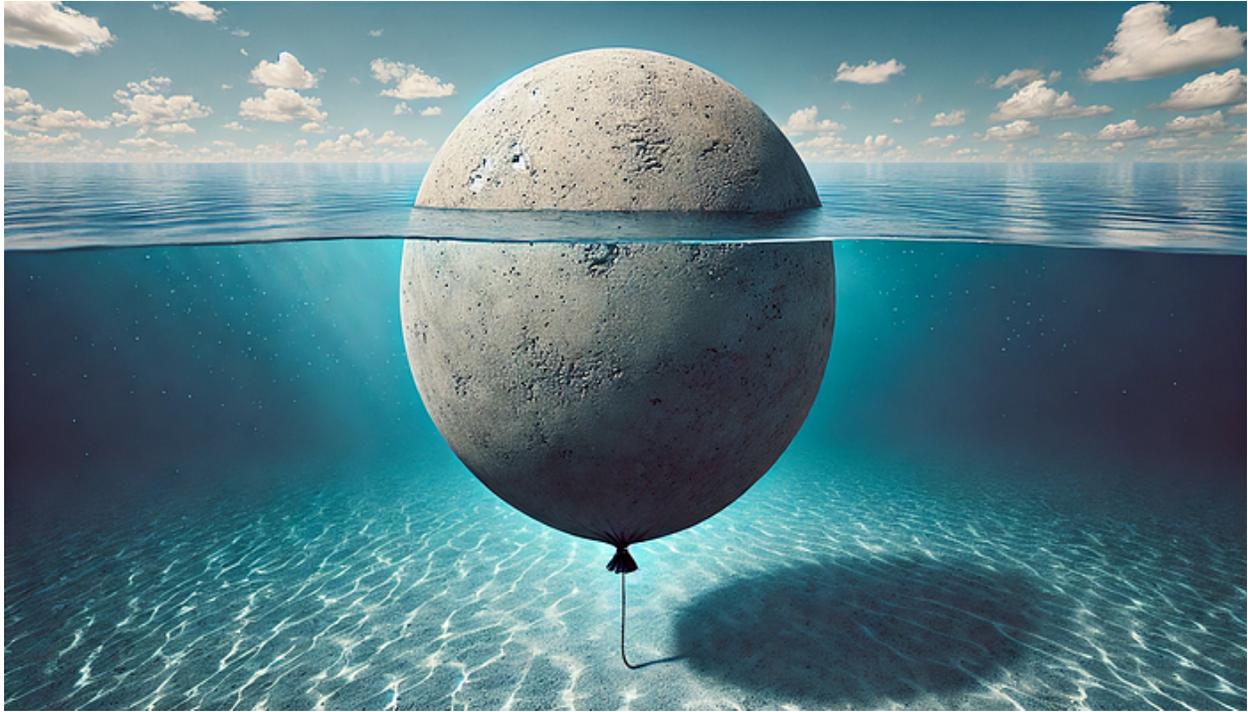
-Ben Boretz
Barrytown, 10/6/2023

Wadada Leo Smith / Benjamin Boretz



Joshua Banks Mailman

Counterfactuals in Language AI with open source language models and LLMs *



Generated by the author using DALL-E 3

The splash that ChatGPT was making last year brought with it the realization — surprise for many — that a putative AI could sometimes offer very wrong answers with utter conviction. The term for this is usually “hallucination” and the main remedy that’s developed over the last 18 months is to bring facts into the matter, usually through *retrieval augmented generation* (RAG), also sometimes called *relevant answer generation*, which basically reorients the GPT (*generative pretrained transformer* language model) to draw from contexts where known-to-be-relevant facts are found.

Yet hallucinations are not the only way a GPT can misstep. In some respects, other flavors of misstep are deeper and more interesting to consider— especially when prospects of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) are now often discussed. Specifically I’m thinking of what are known as *counterfactuals* (counterfactual reasoning) and the crucial role counterfactuality can play in decision making, particularly in regard to *causal inference*. Factuality therefore isn’t the only touchstone for effective LLM operation.

In this article I’ll reflect on how counterfactuals might help us think differently about the pitfalls and potentials of Generative AI. And I’ll demonstrate with some concrete examples using open source LMs (specifically Microsoft’s Phi). I’ll show how to set up Ollama locally (it can also be done in Databricks), without too much fuss (both with and without a Docker container), so you can try it out for yourself. I’ll also compare OpenAI’s LLM response to the same prompts.

* *Large Language Models* (see p 332)

Counterfactuals in Language AI

I suggest that if we want to even begin to think about the prospect of “intelligence” within, or exuded by, an artificial technology, we might need to think beyond the established ML paradigm, which assumes some pre-existing factual correctness to measure against. An intelligent behavior might instead be speculative, as yet lacking sufficient past evidence to obviously prove its value. Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, or your pet cat, could reason practically about the physical world they themselves inhabit, which is something that LLMs — because they are *disembodied* — don’t do. In a world where machines can write fluently, talk is cheaper than speculative practical reasoning.



Photo by [Florian Klauer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Counterfactuals

What is a counterfactual and why should we care? There’s certainly idle speculation, sometimes with a rhetorical twist: At an annual meeting, a shareholder asked what the

“...returns since 1888 would have been without the ‘arrogance and greed’ of directors and their bonuses.”¹

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...to which retired banker Charles Munn² replied:

*“That’s one question I won’t be answering. I’m a historian, I don’t deal in counterfactuals.”*¹

It’s *one* way to evade a question. Politicians have used it, no doubt. Despite emphasis on precedent, in legal matters, counterfactuality can be a legitimate consideration. As Robert N. Strassfeld puts it:

*“As in the rest of life, we indulge, indeed, require, many speculations on what might have been. Although such counterfactual thinking often remains disguised or implicit, we encounter it whenever we identify a cause, and quite often when we attempt to fashion a remedy... Yet, ... troublesome might-have-beens abound in legal disputes. We find ourselves stumbling over them in a variety of situations and responding to them in inconsistent ways ranging from brazen self-confidence to paralysis in the face of the task. When we recognize the exercise for what it is, however, our self confidence tends to erode, and we become discomforted, perplexed, and skeptical about the whole endeavor.”*³

He goes further in posing that

“...legal decision makers cannot avoid counterfactual questions. Because such questions are necessary, we should think carefully about when and how to pose them, and how to distinguish good answers from poor ones.”

Counterfactuals are not an “anything goes” affair — far from it.

The question pervades the discourse of responsible AI and explainable AI (which often become entwined). Consider the “right to explanation” in the EU General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”).⁴ Thanks in part to [Julia Stoyanovich’s efforts](#), [NY passed a law in 2021 requiring that job seekers rejected by an AI-infused hiring process have the right to learn the specific explanation for their rejection.](#)^{5 6 7}

If you’re a Data Scientist, the prospect of “explanations” (with respect to a model) probably brings to mind SHAP (or LIME). Basically, a SHapley Additive exPlanation (SHAP) is derived by taking each predictive feature (each column of data) one at a time, and scrambling the observations (rows) of that feature (column) to assess which features (columns) the scrambling of which changes the prediction the most. For the rejected job candidate it might say, for instance: The primary reason the algorithm rejected you is “years of experience” because when we randomly substitute (permute) other candidates’ “years of experience” it affects the algorithm’s rating of you more than when we do that substitution (permutation) with your other features (like gender, education, etc). It’s making a quantitative comparison to a “what if.” So what is a SHAPley other than a counterfactual? Counterfactuality is at the heart of the explanation, because it gives a glimpse into causality; and explanation is relied on for making AI responsible.

Counterfactuals in Language AI

Leaving responsibility and ethics to the side for the moment, causal explanation still has other uses in business. At least in some companies, Data Science and AI are expected to guide decision making, which in causal inference terms means *making an intervention*: adjusting price or targeting this versus that customer segment, and so forth. An intervention is an alteration to the status quo. The *fundamental problem of causal inference* is that we aren't able to observe what has never happened. So we can't observe the result of an intervention until we make that intervention. Where there's risk involved, we don't want to intervene without sufficiently anticipating the result. Thus we want to infer in advance that the result we desire can be caused by our intervention. That entails making inferences about the causal effects of events that aren't yet fact. Instead, such events are *counterfactual*, that is, contrary to fact. This is why counterfactuals have been couched, by Judea Pearl and others, as the

*fundamental problem of causal inference*⁸

So the idea of a “thought experiment”, which has been important especially in philosophy — and ever more so since Ludwig Wittgenstein popularized it — as a way to probe how we use language to construct our understanding of the world — isn't just a sentimental wish-upon-a-star.⁹ Quite to the contrary: counterfactuals are the crux of hard-headed decision making.

In this respect, what Eric Siegel suggests in his recent *AI Playbook* follows as corollary: Siegel suggests that *change management* be repositioned from afterthought to prerequisite of any Machine Learning project.¹⁰ If the conception of making a business change isn't built into the ML project from the get go, its deployment is likely doomed to remain fiction forever (eternally counterfactual). The antidote is to imagine the intervention in advance, and systematically work out its causal effects, so that you can almost taste them. If its potential benefits are anticipated — and maybe even consistently visualized — by all parties who stand to benefit, then the ML project stands a better chance of transitioning from fiction to fact.

As Aleksander Molak explains it in his recent *Causal Inference and Discovery in Python* (2023)

“Counterfactuals can be thought of as hypothetical or simulated interventions that assume a particular state of the world.”¹¹

The capacity for *rational imagination* is implicated in many philosophical definitions of rational agency.^{12 13}

“[P]sychological research shows that rational human agents do learn from the past and plan for the future engaging in counterfactual thinking. Many researchers in artificial intelligence have voiced similar ideas (Ginsberg 1985; Pearl 1995; Costello & McCarthy 1999)”^{13 14 15 16}

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As Molak demonstrates “we can compute counterfactuals when we meet certain assumptions” (33)¹¹. That means there are circumstances when we can judge reasoning on counterfactuals as either right or wrong, correct or incorrect. In this respect even what’s fiction (counter to fact) can, in a sense, be *true*.



Photo by [Hans Eiskonen](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Counterfactuals in Language AI

AI Beyond “Stochastic Parrots”

Verbal fluency seems to be the new bright shiny thing. But is it thought? If the prowess of IBM’s Deep Blue and DeepMind’s AlphaGo could be relegated to mere cold calculation, the flesh-and-blood aroma of ChatGPT’s verbal fluency since late 2022 seriously elevated—or at least reframed—the old question of whether an AI can really “think.” Or is the LLM inside ChatGPT merely a “stochastic parrot,” stitching together highly probable strings of words in infinitely new combinations? There are times though when it seems that putative human minds—some running for the highest office in the land—are doing no more than that. Will the real intelligence in the room please stand up?

In her brief article about Davos 2024, “[Raising Baby AI in 2024](#)”, Fiona McEvoy reported that Yann LeCun emphasized the need for AIs to learn from not just text but also video footage.¹⁷ Yet that’s still passive; it’s still an attempt to learn from video-documented “fact” (video footage that already exists); McEvoy reports that

“[Daphne] Koller contends that to go beyond mere associations and get to something that feels like the causal reasoning humans use, systems will need to interact with the real world in an embodied way—for example, gathering input from technologies that are ‘out in the wild’, like augmented reality and autonomous vehicles. She added that such systems would also need to be given the space to experiment with the world to learn, grow, and go beyond what a human can teach them.”¹⁷

Another way to say it this: AIs will have to interact with the world in an *embodied* way at least somewhat in order to hone their ability to engage in counterfactual reasoning. We’ve all seen the videos—or watched up close—a cat pushing an object off a counter, with apparently no purpose, except to annoy us. Human babies and toddlers do it too. Despite appearances, however, this isn’t just acting out. Rather, in a somewhat naïve incarnation, these are acts of *hypothesis testing*. Such acts are prompted by a curiosity: What would happen if I shoved this vase?

Please watch this [3-second animated gif](https://tinyurl.com/2uedv8tt) (visit <https://tinyurl.com/2uedv8tt>) displayed by [North Toronto Cat Rescue](#).¹⁸ In this brief cat video, there’s an additional detail which sheds more light: The cat is about to jump; but before jumping she realizes there’s an object immediately at hand which can be used to test the distance or surface in advance of jumping. Her jump was counterfactual (she hadn’t jumped yet). The fact that she had already almost jumped indicates that she hypothesized the jump was feasible; the cat had quickly simulated the jump in her mind; suddenly realizing that the bottle on the counter afforded the opportunity to make an intervention, to test out her hypothesis; this act was habitual.



Bad Kitty gif



Generated with DALL-E 3 and edited by the author

I have no doubt that her ability to assess the feasibility of such jumps arose from having physically acted out similar situations many times before. Would an AI, who doesn't have physical skin in the game, have done the same? And obviously humans do this on a scale far beyond what cats do. It's how scientific discovery and technological invention happen; but on a more mundane level this part of intelligence is how living organisms routinely operate, whether it's a cat jumping to the floor or a human making a business decision.

Abduction

Testing out counterfactuals by making interventions seems to hone our ability to do what Charles Sanders Peirce dubbed *abductive reasoning*.^{19 20} As distinct from *induction* (inferring a pattern from repeated cases) and *deduction* (deriving logical implications), abduction is the assertion of a hypothesis. Although Data Scientists often explore hypothetical scenarios in terms of feature engineering and hyperparameter tuning, abductive reasoning isn't really directly a part of applications of Machine Learning, because Machine Learning is usually optimizing on a pre-established space of possibilities based on fact, whereas as abductive reasoning is expanding the space of possibilities, beyond what is already fact. So perhaps Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) has a lot to catch up on.

Here's a hypothesis:

- Entities (biological or artificial) that lack the ability (or opportunity) to make interventions don't cultivate much counterfactual reasoning capability.

Counterfactuals in Language AI

Counterfactual reasoning, or abduction, is mainly worthwhile to the extent that one can subsequently try out the hypotheses through interventions. That's why it's relevant to an animal (or human). Absent eventual opportunities to intervene, causal reasoning (abduction, hypothesizing) is futile, and therefore not worth cultivating.

The capacity for abductive reasoning would not have evolved in humans (or cats), if it didn't provide some advantage. Such advantage can only pertain to making interventions since abduction (counterfactual reasoning) by definition does not articulate facts about the current state of the world. These observations are what prompt the hypothesis above about biological and artificial entities.



Photo by [Alice Alinari](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Large Language Models

As I mentioned above, RAG (retrieval augmented generation, also known as relevant answer generation) has become the de facto approach for guiding LLM-driven GenAI systems (chatbots) toward appropriate or even optimal responses. The premise of RAG is that if snippets of relevant truthful text are directly supplied to the generative LLM along with your question, then it's less likely to hallucinate, and in that sense provides better responses. "Hallucinating" is AI industry jargon for: *fabricating erroneous responses*.

As is well known, hallucinations arise because LLMs, though trained thoroughly and carefully on massive amounts of human-written text from the internet, are still not omniscient, but tend to issue responses in a rather uniformly confident tone. Surprising? Actually it shouldn't be. It makes sense, as the famous critique goes: LLMs are essentially parroting the text they've been trained on. Because LLMs are trained not on people's sometimes tentative or evolving inner thoughts, but rather on the verbalizations of those thoughts that reached an assuredness threshold sufficient for a person to post for all to read on the biggest ever public forum that is the internet. So perhaps it's understandable that LLMs skew toward overconfidence — they are what they eat.

In fact, I think it's fair to say that, unlike many honest humans, LLMs don't verbally signal their assuredness level at all; they don't modulate their tone to reflect their level of assuredness. Therefore the strategy for avoiding or reducing hallucinations is to set up the LLM for success by pushing the facts it needs right under its nose, so that it can't ignore them. This is feasible for situations where chatbots are usually deployed, which typically have a limited scope. Documents generally relevant to the scope are assembled in advance (in a vector store/database) so that particularly relevant snippets of text can be searched for on demand and supplied to the LLM along with the question being asked, so that the LLM is nudged to somehow exploit the snippets upon generating its response.

From RAGs to richer

Still there are various ways things can go awry. An entire ecosystem of configurable toolkits for addressing these has arisen. NVIDIA's open source NeMo-guardrails can filter out unsafe and inappropriate responses as well as help check for factuality. [John Snow Labs' LangTest](#) boasts "60+ Test Types for Comparing LLM & NLP Models on Accuracy, Bias, Fairness, Robustness & More." Two toolkits that focus most intensely on the veracity of responses are [Ragas](#) and [TruEra's TrueLens](#).

At the heart of TrueLens (and similarly Ragas) sits an elegant premise: There are three interconnected units of text involved in each call to a RAG pipeline: the *query*, the *retrieved context*, and the *response*, and the pipeline fails to the extent that there's a semantic gap between any of these. TruEra calls this the "RAG triad." In other words, for a RAG pipeline to work properly, three things have to happen successfully: (1) the context retrieved must be sufficiently relevant; (2) the generated response must be sufficiently grounded in the retrieved context; and (3) the generated response must also be sufficiently relevant to the original query. A weak link anywhere in this loop equates to weakness in that call to the RAG pipeline. For instance:

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Query: “Which country landed on the moon first?”

Retrieved context: “Neil Armstrong stepped foot on the moon in July 1969. Buzz Aldrin was the pilot.”

Generated response: “Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon in 1969.”

The generated response isn’t sufficiently relevant to the original query — the third link is broken.

There are many other nuances to RAG evaluation, some of which are discussed in [Adam Kamor’s series of articles on RAG evaluation](#).²¹

In so far as veracity is concerned, the RAG strategy is to avoid hallucination by deriving responses as much as possible from relevant trustworthy human-written preexisting text.

How RAG lags

Yet how does the RAG strategy square with the popular critique of language AI: that it is merely parroting the text it was trained on? Does it go beyond parroting, to handle counterfactuals? The RAG strategy basically tries to avoid hallucination by supplementing training text with additional text curated by humans, humans in the loop, who can attend to the scope of the chatbot’s particular use case. Thus humans-in-the-loop supplement the generative LLM’s training, by supplying a corpus of relevant factual texts to be drawn from.

Works of fiction are typically not included in the corpus that populates a RAG’s vector store. And even preexisting fictional prose doesn’t exhaust the theoretically infinite number of counterfactual propositions which might be deemed true, or correct, in some sense.

But intelligence includes the ability to assess such counterfactual propositions:

“My foot up to my ankle will get soaking wet if I step in that huge puddle.”

In this case, a GenAI system able to synthesize verbalizations previously issued by humans — whether from the LLM’s training set or from a context retrieved and supplied downstream — isn’t very impressive. Rather than original reasoning, it’s just parroting what someone already said. And parroting what’s already been said doesn’t serve the purpose at hand when counterfactuals are considered.

Here's a pair of proposals:

- **To the extent a GenAI is just parroting, it is bringing forth or synthesizing verbalizations it was trained on.**
- **To the extent a GenAI can surmount mere parroting and reason accurately, it can successfully handle counterfactuals.**

The crucial thing about **counterfactuals** that Molak explains is that they “can be thought of as hypothetical or simulated interventions that *assume a particular state of the world*” or as Pearl, Gilmour, and Jewell describe counterfactuals as a minimal modification to a system (Molak, 28).^{11 22} The point is that answering counterfactuals correctly — or even plausibly — requires more-than-anecdotal knowledge of the world. For LLMs, their corpus-based pretraining, and their prompting infused with retrieved factual documents pins their success to the power of anecdote. Whereas a human intelligence often doesn't need, and cannot rely on, anecdote to engage in counterfactual reasoning plausibly. That's why counterfactual reasoning is in some ways a better measure of LLMs capabilities than fidelity to factuality is.



Photo by [sutirta budiman](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Counterfactuals in Language AI

Running Open-source LLMs: Ollama

To explore a bit these issues of counterfactuality with respect to Large Language Models, let us consider them more concretely by running a generative model. To minimize impediments I will demonstrate it by downloading a model to run on one's own machine — so you don't need an api key. We'll do this using Ollama. (If you don't want to try this yourself, you can skip over the rest of this section.)

Ollama is a free tool that facilitates running open source LLMs on your local computer. It's also possible to run Ollama in DataBricks, and possibly other cloud platforms. For simplicity's sake, let's do it locally. (For such local setup I'm indebted to Iago Modesto Brandão's handy Building Open Source LLM based Chatbots using Llama Index²³ from which the following is adapted.)

The easiest way is to: download and install docker (the Docker app) then, within terminal, run a couple of commands to pull and run ollama as a server, which can be accessed from within a jupyter notebook (after installing two packages).

Here are the steps:

1. Download and install Docker <https://www.docker.com/products/docker-desktop/>
2. Launch Terminal and run these commands one after another:

```
docker pull ollama/ollama

docker run -d -v ollama:/root/.ollama -p 11434:11434 - name ollama ollama/ollama

pip install llama-index==0.8.59

pip install openai==0.28.1
```

3. Launch jupyter:

```
jupyter notebook
```

Joshua Banks Mailman

4. Within the jupyter notebook, import ollama and create an LLM object. For the sake of speed, we'll use a relatively smaller model: Microsoft's *phi*.

```
1 from llama_index.llms import Ollama
2
3 llm = Ollama(model="phi")
```

Now we're ready to use Phi via ollama to generate text in response to our prompt. For this we use the llm object's `complete()` method. It generates a response (might take a minute or so), which we'll print out.

Let's try out a counterfactual: : "Would a cement balloon float?"

```
1
2 resp = llm.complete("Would a cement balloon float? Explain your reasoning")
3 print(resp)
4
```



Photo by Haneen Krimly on Unsplash

Next let's examine the "reasoning" displayed in Phi's output.

Counterfactuals in Language AI

Interpreting LLM (GenAI) answers to counterfactual questions

Leaving aside, for the moment, that Microsoft's Phi is not a very powerful GPT (generative pretrained transformer), consider its response:

I don't have personal beliefs or opinions, but based on my knowledge of physics, i can tell you that a cement balloon would not be able to float in air due to its low density. air is lighter than most materials used for balloons, and the inflated rubber material of a typical balloon provides enough buoyancy to lift it into the sky. however, if you were to fill a cement balloon with helium gas or another lighter-than-air substance, it would likely float as long as the weight of the balloon itself is less than the upward force from the lifting gas.

This seems reasonable. If a regular balloon (one I've blown up directly with my mouth) wouldn't float in the air, then neither would one whose exterior is made from cement. If instead, however, the gas pumped inside is lighter than air, such as helium is, then a regular balloon would float up into the sky.

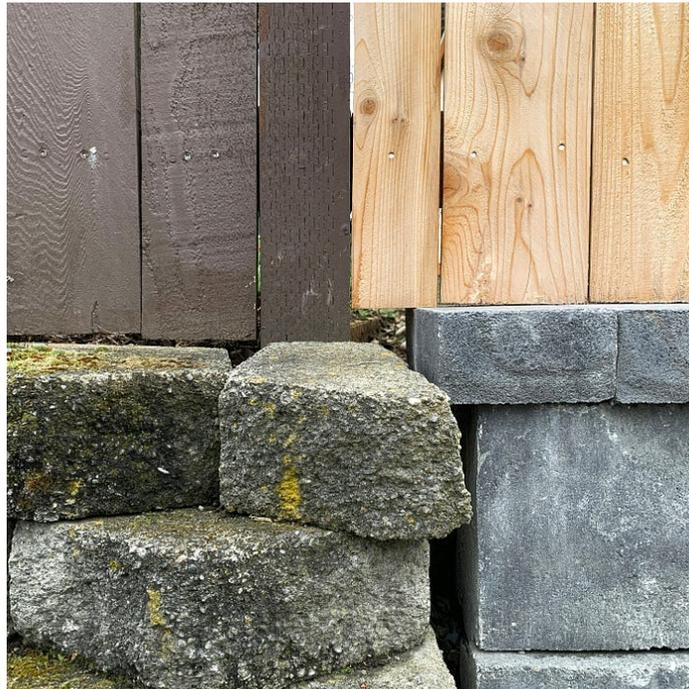


Photo by First Last @ rtisanyb on [Unsplash](#)

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The original question asked about floating, but not didn't specify the medium; apparently Phi assumed it to be air.

So now let's specify that in the question, but choose water instead, which was actually my original intention anyway.

```
1
2 resp = llm.complete("Would a cement balloon float in water? Explain your reasoning")
3 print(resp)
4
```

```
No, a cement balloon would not float in water. Cement is a very dense material and does not have much air trapped inside it, so it cannot create buoyancy like a regular balloon filled with helium or air. Additionally, the weight of the cement balloon combined with its density would make it sink to the bottom of the water rather than floating on the surface.
```

Interesting. Not only does it conclude that it would sink, but now it assumes that the medium is water instead of air. It reasons about the density of cement, as compared to air, but doesn't take into account the air inside the balloon. Or possibly it's reasoning about a solid cement ball; but, hmmm, that's not a balloon. Unless, by "cement balloon" it's thinking that this is analogous to a water balloon: a balloon filled with water.

Let's change the question again, this time specifying the medium is water.

```
1
2 resp = llm.complete("Would a cement balloon filled with helium float in water? \
3 Explain your reasoning")
4 print(resp)
5
```

```
No, a cement balloon filled with helium would not float on water. This is because helium is lighter than air and therefore lifts the balloon upwards when it is released into the air. However, cement is much denser than water and thus will sink to the bottom of the water. When you combine these two facts, the result is that the concrete balloon filled with helium would not float on water but instead sink to the bottom due to its weight.
```

```
In summary, while the helium in the balloon provides buoyancy to keep it afloat in air, the density of the cement itself makes it too heavy for the
```

Counterfactuals in Language AI

helium to lift and keep it afloat in water. Thus, a cement balloon filled with helium would not float on water but instead sink to the bottom due to its weight.

Hmm, that's odd. According to this latest response, the same object that would float up into the air, would sink in water, even though water is denser than air. Sure, this is a counterfactual situation — who's ever heard of a cement balloon? But let's try to visualize it: You are standing by a pool of water, or perhaps you are in a boat. You are holding this spherical object, say at waist level. You let go of it, and it starts to float up higher into the air, but you catch it before it's out of reach. Now you lower this same spherical object down to the surface of the water. And as it touches the water, you slowly and gently let go again. What do you think will happen?

Will this helium-filled cement balloon, which a moment earlier had started to float up into the sky, now suddenly be swallowed up by the water, pushed down to sink to the bottom? Does that ring true?

Keep in mind our own embodied knowledge, which might be relevant here: Our own flesh-and-blood bodies — which aren't even light enough to spontaneously float up into the air — when placed on water in fact don't sink, but rather float. That embodied knowledge suggests that an object that is light enough to float up into the air, and thus is lighter than ourselves, would also be light enough to float on whatever, if we (being heavier than that object) float on water. (Consult Lakoff & Johnson for an overview of embodied cognition.²⁴)

Granted, a GPT language model, such as Phi, is decidedly disembodied; it lacks embodied knowledge. In this case, perhaps that embodied knowledge, which Phi lacks, impinges on counterfactual reasoning ability.

Ok, but perhaps context and continuity are the issue here. What I've shown above is not a true conversation, as would happen with a chat-bot; I haven't passed the previous context back to Phi, but rather I'm asking isolated questions. So perhaps Phi is imagining different proportions of cement-to-helium in its responses to different questions. After all, if the cement were thick enough, or if the chamber of helium inside it were small enough, then the relative lightness of helium to air (or water) would insufficiently counteract the heaviness of the cement. So let's rephrase the question to clarify that detail.

```
1
2 resp = llm.complete("If a cement balloon, composed of a very thin layer of cement, and \
3         filled with helium, was big enough could it float in water? Explain \
4         your reasoning")
5 print(resp)
6
```

Joshua Banks Mailman

It is unlikely that a cement balloon would be able to float in water since cement is denser than water. The reason why the cement balloon might float in air is due to the helium gas inside, which has a lower density than both air and cement. In water, the buoyant force exerted by the water on the cement balloon will be much less than the weight of the balloon itself. Hence, the cement balloon would sink in water rather than float as it does in the air.

Ok, still something's wrong. Within the same response it's asserting that the cement balloon is light enough to float up into the air, but is too heavy to float in water. Doesn't this imply that water is lighter than air? Hmm, something about that smells fishy — and it isn't the water.

I'm not the first to suggest that GPT language models like Phi (models that gain their ability through training on massive corpuses of text) sometimes lack basic reasoning ability. In this case I'm suggesting how some of that reasoning ability emerges from implicit embodied knowledge — knowledge we gain through physical presence of our bodies within the material world (our physical bodies which don't float up into the air but do float on water). I'm also suggesting how counterfactual questions can help reveal this.

GPT models, such as Phi, primarily act associatively. It is the associative or connotative facets of language usage that GPTs and LLMs generally have mastered so well. In terms of connotation, arising from most common usage, the word 'cement' is associated with heaviness. It has this in common with the heavy metal lead — “Led Zeppelin” was originally a sarcastic barb precluding the New Yardbirds' prospects to soar. Although if enough air were pumped into it, cement could become light, that isn't an association that readily comes to mind. Rather it's a counterfactual, a thought experiment. Even though my previous phrasing of the question refers to “a very thin layer of cement, ... filled with helium”, the material itself, “cement,” too strongly associates with heaviness for Phi to imagine it as floating in water — no one has ever built a cement boat!

Counterfactuals in Language AI



Photo by [Tim Huyghe](#) on [Unsplash](#)

So let's switch out cement for a different substance with less leaden connotations. How about glass?

```
1
2 resp = llm.complete("If a glass balloon, composed of a very thin layer of glass, and \
3 filled with helium, was large enough, could it float in water? \
4 Explain your reasoning")
5 print(resp)
6
```

As an AI language model, I do not have personal opinions or beliefs, but based on scientific principles, a glass balloon filled with helium would indeed float in water. This is because the density of helium gas is much lower than that of water, causing it to rise and displace its weight in water. Additionally, glass is less dense than water, which means that it would also be buoyant enough to keep the balloon afloat on top of the water's surface. However, if the balloon were to be filled with a denser gas or a heavier object, such as sand, then it may sink or become too heavy to float.

Aha! Now with associative (connotative) obstacles brushed to the side, Phi is able to arrive at reasoning that is comparable to human reasoning, replete with implicit embodied knowledge, even though the latter isn't the source in this case. In this case Phi has uncovered the key point, that "the density of helium gas is much lower than that of water" even though it has gotten mixed up in its "Additional" point, where it says that glass's density is less than water's, which is a hallucination; it's not true.

What about OpenAI's ChatGPT?

The big elephant in the room, though, is that Microsoft's Phi is very far from being the state of the art LLM. It's small enough to run locally on a laptop. So what about OpenAI's GPT models?

To run this code below, you'll need to sign up for free at <https://openai.com> to get an OpenAI API access token.

```
1
2 import openai
3 from openai import OpenAI
4
5 import getpass
6 openai.api_key = getpass.getpass("Enter your OpenAi API token: ")
7
```

What does OpenAI's GPT say about the helium-filled glass balloon on water?

Counterfactuals in Language AI

```
1
2 prompt = "If a glass balloon, composed of a very thin layer of glass, and filled with \
3         helium, was large enough, could it float in water? Explain your reasoning"
4 messages = [
5     {
6         "role": "system",
7         "content": prompt,
8     },
9 ]
10 resp = openai.chat.completions.create(
11     model="gpt-3.5-turbo",
12     messages=messages)
13 content = resp.choices[0].message.content
14 print(content)
15
```

No, a glass balloon filled with helium cannot float in water, regardless of its size. The buoyancy of an object in a fluid is determined by the density of the object compared to the density of the fluid. Density is defined as mass divided by volume. In simple terms, if the object is less dense than the fluid, it will float; if it is more dense, it will sink. In this case, the glass balloon is filled with helium, which is a gas that is less dense than water. Helium-filled balloons float in the air because the density of helium is lower than that of the surrounding air. However, when we place the helium-filled glass balloon in water, the density of the water is significantly higher than that of helium. Even though the glass balloon is very thin and lightweight, the overall density of the balloon, including the glass and helium, will still be higher than that of water. Therefore, the balloon will not displace enough water to generate enough buoyant force to counteract the weight of the balloon itself. As a result, the balloon will sink in water rather than float.

Oh no! Even OpenAI's GPT 3.5 turbo gets buried in the connotations of cement. It gets that "helium filled balloons float in air." And it gets that helium is less dense than water. But then it fumbles into thinking "the overall density of the balloon, including the glass and helium, will still be higher than that of water." As Phi did above, OpenAI's GPT 3.5 turbo has implied that the balloon is heavier than water but lighter than air, which implies that water is lighter than air.

We know it's wrong; but it's not wrong because it's lacking facts, or has directly contradicted fact: The whole cement balloon scenario is far from being fact; it's counterfactual.

Post-hoc we are able to apply *reductio ad absurdum* to deduce that Phi’s and OpenAI’s GPT 3.5 turbo’s negative conclusions do actually contradict another fact, namely that water is heavier than air. But this is a respect in which counterfactual reasoning is in fact reasoning, not just dreaming. That is, counterfactual reasoning can be shown to be definitively true or definitively false. Despite deviating from what’s factual, it is actually just as much a form of reasoning as is reasoning based on fact.

Fact, Fiction, and Hallucination: What counterfactuals show us

Since ChatGPT overwhelmed public consciousness in late 2022, the dominant concern that was immediately and persistently stirred up has been hallucination. Oh the horror that an AI system could assert something not based in fact! But instead of focusing on just factuality as a primary standard for AI systems — as has happened in many business use-cases — it now seems clear that fact vs. fiction isn’t the only axis along which an AI system should be expected to or hoped to succeed. Even when an AI system’s response is based in fact, it can still be irrelevant, a non sequitur, which is why evaluation approaches such as Ragas and TruVera specifically examine relevance of response.

When it fails on the relevance criterion, it is not even the Fact vs. Fiction axis that is at play. An irrelevant response can be just as factual as a relevant one, and by definition, counterfactual reasoning, whether correct or not, is not factual in a literal sense, certainly not in the sense constituted by RAG systems. That is, counterfactual reasoning is not achieved by retrieving documents that are topically relevant to the question posed. What makes counterfactual reasoning powerful is how it may apply analogies to bring to bear systems of facts that might seem completely out of scope to the question being posed. It might be diagrammed something like this:

	Fact	Fiction
Failure	Non sequitur	Hallucination
Success	Aligned RAG	Counterfactual reason (regulated by sysematized facts that seem out of scope)

One might also represent some of these facets this way:

	Retrieval based	Model based
Correct	Aligned	Counterfactual reason
Incorrect	Non sequitur	Hallucination
	Fact	Fiction

Counterfactuals in Language AI

What do linear estimators have to do with this?

Since counterfactual reasoning is not based in seemingly relevant facts but rather in systematized facts, sometimes from other domains, or that are topically remote, it's not something that obviously benefits directly from document-store retrieval systems. There's an analogy here between types of linear estimators: A gradient-boosted tree linear estimator essentially cannot succeed in making accurate predictions on data whose features substantially exceed the numeric ranges of the training data; this is because decision cut-points can only be made based on data presented at training time. By contrast, regression models (which can have closed form solutions) enable accurate predictions on features that exceed the numerical ranges of the training data.

In practical terms this is why linear models can be helpful in business applications. To the extent your linear model is accurate, it might help you predict the outcome of raising or lowering your product's sales price beyond any price you've ever offered before: a *counterfactual price*. Whereas a gradient-boosted tree model that performs equally well in validation does not help you reason through such counterfactuals, which, ironically, might have been the motivation for developing the model in the first place. In this sense, the *explainability* of linear models is of a completely different sort from what SHAP values offer, as the latter shed little light on what would happen with data that is outside the distribution of the model's training data.

The prowess of LLMs has certainly shown that the limits of "intelligence" synthesized ingeniously from crowdsourcing human-written texts are much greater than expected. It's obvious that this eclipsed the former tendency to place value in "intelligence" based on conceptual understanding, which reveals itself especially in the ability to accurately reason beyond facts. So I find it interesting to attempt to challenge LLMs to this standard, which goes against their grain.



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Reflection

Far from being frivolous diversions, counterfactuals play a role in the progress of science, exemplifying what Charles Sanders Peirce calls *abduction*, which is distinct from induction (inductive reasoning) and deduction (deductive reasoning). Abduction basically means the formulation of hypotheses. We might rightly ask: Should we expect an LLM to exhibit such capability? What's the advantage? I don't have a definitive answer, but more a speculative one: It's well known within the GenAI community that when prompting an LLM, asking it to "reason step-by-step" often leads to more satisfactory responses, even though the reasoning steps themselves are not the desired response. In other words, for some reason, not yet completely understood, asking the LLM to somewhat simulate the most reliable processes of human reasoning (thinking step-by-step) leads to better end results. Perhaps, somewhat counterintuitively, even though LLMs are not trained to reason as humans do, the lineages of human reasoning in general contribute to better AI end results. In this case, given the important role that abduction plays in the evolution of science, AI end results might improve to the extent that LLMs are capable of reasoning counterfactually.

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and can be consulted via the QR link below



Veit Stratmann

Impossible tasks is a body of my work which centers on specific geographic locations that were, through the superposition of various political, historical, economic, social and even geological conditions removed from society and the political sphere. These locations have become black holes, outside the world although they remain of this world. I am fascinated with these sites – much like a rabbit paralyzed in the serpent's gaze. However, I cannot resist this fascination because these locations constitute an enormous rupture of meaning, a fragmentation which I try to capture in each of my pieces of work. At the same time, these spaces shake the very foundations of my artistic posture. As they are readily localizable and cover a given physical space, they affect the liberty of movement, human activity and thought processes in their environment. They provoke a civic or militant attitude thus creating another dilemma concerning the proper ethical posture to take. An activist or militant's legitimacy is based on their conviction that they are speaking "in the name of", tacitly or expressly mandated by a collective and able to dialogue with other collectives. On the other hand, an artist's legitimacy is not based on any mandate. The artist speaks in his name alone and only addresses other individuals. Thus this situation presents me with a dilemma : how to position myself if I choose to create and propose artwork which is perfectly acceptable from an artistic point of view but entirely indefensible for me in my other roles in society - as the citizen, father, lover, or friend?

To follow my fascination and assume my responsibility as an artist towards myself and and the society in which I live, I have to inverse the dynamics of the equation and consider the potential tension between my artistic ethics and my civil ethics not as an obstacle to "doing" but as a productive means. This tension becomes the core of the artwork, gives it form and acts as distinctive creative material.

In order to act, I thus have to transform a situation, which calls for a collective action and which is intended for a collective, into the material that allows for the action of an individual directed towards another individual. At the same time, these locations frighten me in terms of sheer scope and of their situation "out of time", for I am alive and anchored in my time. Given the fragility of my position in relation to these sites, I could only try to create forms if I took the risk of pushing my reflection to the point of rupture, stretching it to the point at which my own position as an artist was at stake and became the principal material of my project. I had to push my action to the breaking point, where the impossibility of realization gave meaning to the project – or where the meaning of the project forced the failure of my action. Thus, failure and the impossibility of realization became essential elements of construction.

The inherent tension of this problematic necessitates analysis and description. The textual restitution becomes a integral part of the work itself.

What happened was that, since 2012, I have built up a body of text/image works on public spaces that, for different reasons, became black holes in the world, outside the world while in the world, spaces that had fallen out of time and out of the social and political space. Those works are studies, analysing the situation and making a proposal for a « form », but they are not meant to be realised, because to realise the proposals I would need permission, thus the political will concerning the given space. But if I have this permission, the space would no longer be a black hole, and my proposal would not make sense anymore: thus « impossible tasks ».

An Italian curator, Francesca Zappia, based in Glasgow, stumbled over those works and told me that, according to her, Glasgow is full of « black holes ». She invited me to come for a week or so, discover the place and see what could be done.

In the end, the point was that the « impossible tasks » talk about places that are DEAD stable, whereas Glasgow is fluid and sprinkled with shifting black holes. Thus the proposal for Glasgow could not be structured as the other works and became this piece.

Walking in Glasgow, Marcher à Glasgow, Wandern in Glasgow

abgedeckte Flächen

abgedeckte Räume

abgedeckte Straßen

abgehobelte Flächen

abgehobelte Räume

abgehobelte Straßen

abgeräumt

Abschürfungen

Artiste en morceaux

Artiste raboté

Ausweidung des Raumes, evisceration of the space, éviscération de l'espace

biegsame Räume

brillant

des trous dans une trame

ent-deckte Flächen

ent-deckte Räume

ent-deckte Straßen

entleerte Straßen

Espaces gelés

Espaces liquides

Espaces en morceaux

Espaces rabotés

Espaces solidifiés

Espaces visqueux

Fläche daneben

Fläche dazwischen

Flächen ohne Oberfläche

Flächen im Zwischenraum

fliegen, überfliegen

fließende Formen

fließende Schichten

fließende Straßen

Friedhof als Müll, cemetery as waste, cimetière comme déchet

frozen parking lots

frozen streets

gehäutete Flächen

gehäutete Räume

gehäutete Straßen

geleerte Flächen

geleerte Räume

geleerte Straßen

geteerte Flächen

Walking in Glasgow

glänzend schwarze Fläche

glänzend schwarze Räume

glatte Schichten

gleitende Formen

gleitende Räume

gleitende Schichten

gleitende Straßen

hinterlassene Flächen, leftover surfaces

Irruption des Raumes

Irruption der Räume

Irruption der Fläche

Jelly spaces

Kapitalismus als Paternalismus, capitalism as paternalism, capitalisme comme paternalisme, Benefactors, Benefactor Museums, Museen im Leerraum, Muséén im Nichtraum, Muséén im zurückgelassenen Raum

Kapitalismus der Fläche

Kapitalismus des Raumes

Kathedrale als Müll, cathedral as waste, cathédrale comme déchet

Kollaps des Raumes

kraftlose Straßen

leere Räume

leere Flächen

leftover surfaces

Löcher im Raster, holes in a grid, trous dans une trame

Löcher in der Stadt, holes in the city, des trous dans la ville

M'as tu vu pragmatique, Ca d'Oro, Palazzo di Doge, Steinverkleidung, Ziegelverkleidung, Holzverkleidung, graue Steine, falsche Steine, rote Ziegel, falsche Ziege, getarnte Stahlstrukturen, Getarnter Stahlbau, Billigbau

Matsch am Rand

mobile Flächen

mobile Räume

Mobilität

Müll

nackte Flächen

nackte Räume

nackte Straßen

negative Räume, remaining teeth, Zahnlücken, dental gaps, der Parkplatz in den Gorbals, die Parkplätze in den Gorbals, der Parkplatz in der Gorbals hinter der Schranke, die Parkplätze in den Gorbals hinter den Schranken, Trümmerräumung

Noir brillant

Occupation d'espaces

Promenade

Räume dazwischen

Raumausweidung

Raum als Konsumgut, space as a consumer good, l'espace comme bien de consommation

Restes d'une trame flottant sur le vide

Walking in Glasgow

Rues gelées

Rues liquides

Rues liquides dans des réseaux solides

Rues solidifiées

Rues visqueuses

Sinnlöcher in der Stadt

Sinnlöcher in der Kunst

Sinnlöcher im Künstler

slippery forms

space as commodity

Stadt im Zwischenraum

Stadtabräumung

Stadtausweidung

Stadt daneben

Stadt dazwischen

Stadtflächen als Müll, urban surfaces as waste, surfaces urbaines comme déchet

Stadtraum als Müll, urban space as waste, l'espace urbain comme déchet

Stadtraum als Rest, urban space as a leftover, de l'espace urbain comme reste

Straßenausweidung

Straßen daneben

Straßen dazwischen

Straßen im Zwischenraum

Surfaces comme déchets

Surfaces en morceaux

Ubiquität

Unflächen

verformbare Räume

Ville rabotée

Wiesen im Eastend

Zurückgelassene Flächen

Zurückgelassener Friedhof, cemetery as leftover, cimetière laissé derrière

Zurückgelassenes Raster, grid left behind, tram laissée derrière

Zurückgelassener Raum

Zurückgelassene Räume

Zurückgelassene Stadtflächen, urban surfaces left behind, surfaces urbaines laissées derrière

Zurückgelassene Straßen, streets left behind, rues laissées derrière

Pendant ce temps, während dessen, Meanwhile :

Auf Wanderungen durch Glasgow im Februar. Bewegt sich der Wanderer oder gleitet die Stadt unter dem Wanderer hinweg? Ein Gleiten von Ost nach West.

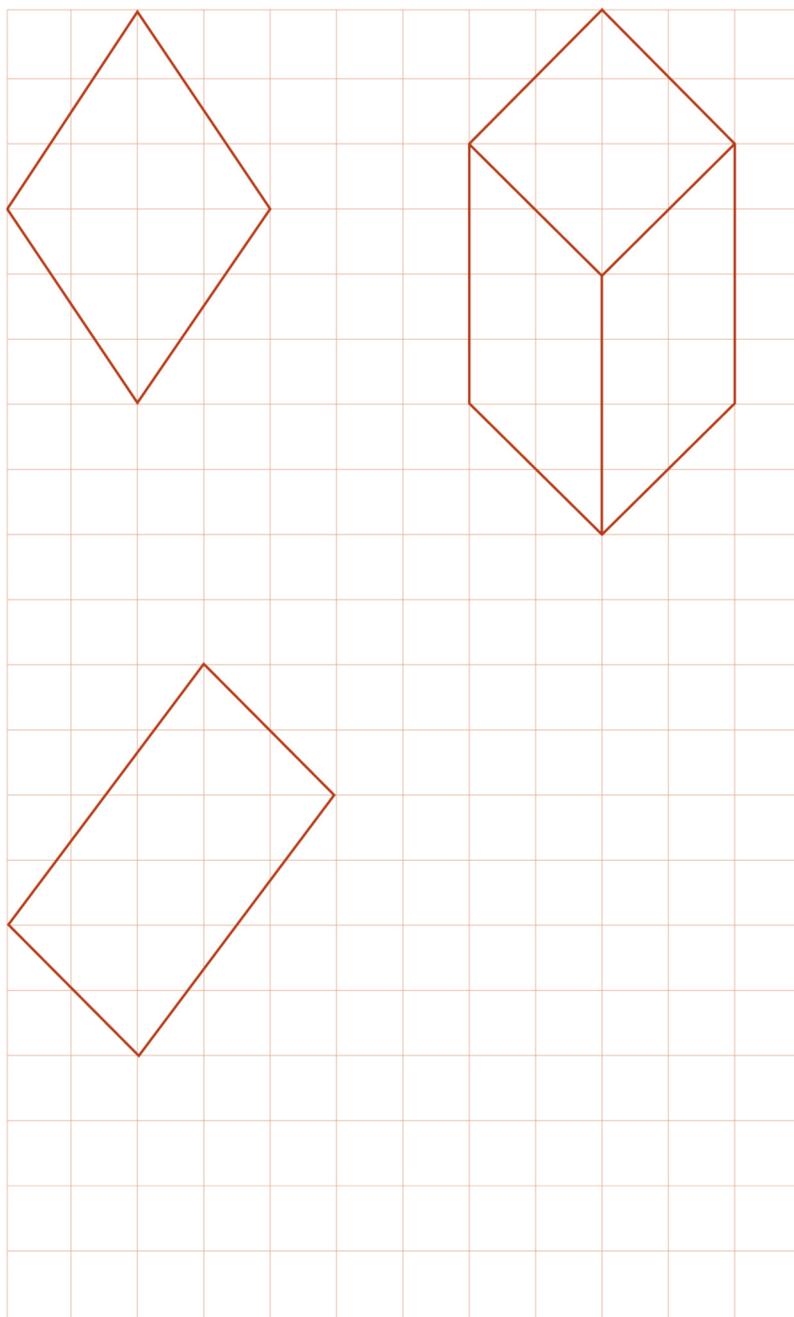
Poubelle des mots, Word waste bin:

Antiarchipel Gegenarchipel, Vogelperspektive, Irruptionen der Fläche, Kollaps der Fläche, surfaces en morceaux, surfaces urbaines comme déchet, espaces liquides dans des espaces solides, the image of a parking lot in the Gorbals, feuchte Ziegel, feuchte Steine, Glasgow, Bilder bombardierter Städte, Trümmerräumung, ölig schwarzer Raum, ölig schwarze Oberfläche

Walking in Glasgow



Many thanks to Francesca Zappia, Patrick Mathieu and the agnes b endowment fund, for making 'Walking in Glasgow' possible.



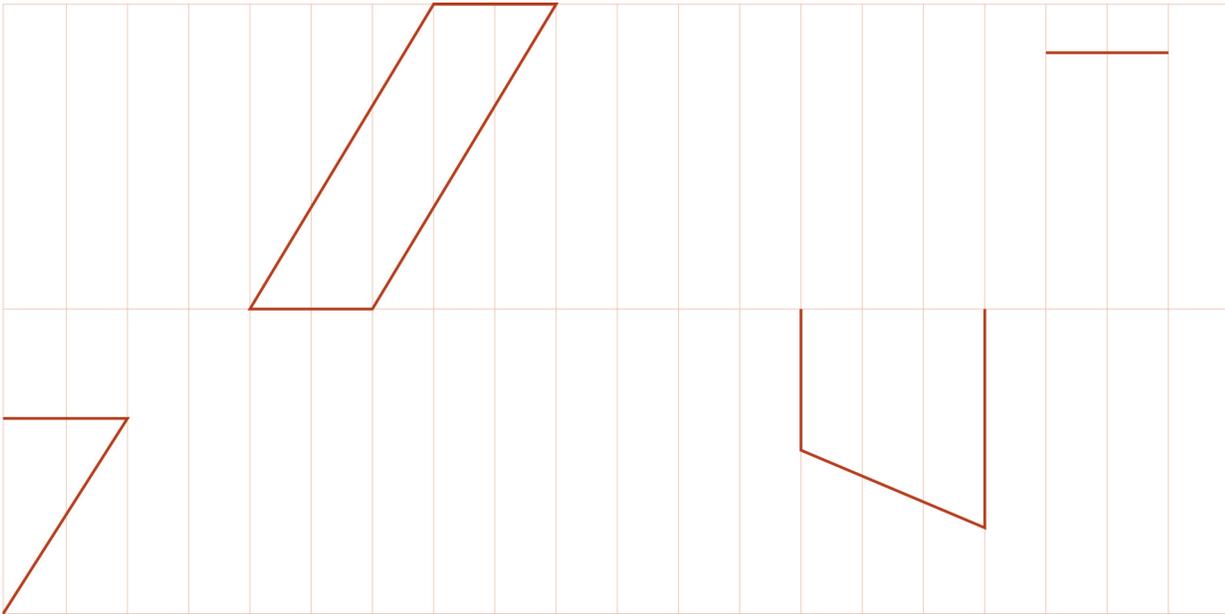
DISTILLATES

1

We can thus understand the controversy stirred by one of those utilitarian discourses that shape the vision of everyday life by constantly referring to it and drawing its life juices from it. Using a hackneyed, flat language, because we are not interested in seeing through its mechanisms or exploring its crannies, all we want is consume language skills – this absorbs us so much that we are blind to anything else.

2

I must resort to a metaphor. Just like in the life of political states, we try to utilise the technique of diplomacy, and if it fails, the military technique. That is to say, when both debate and persuasion get us nowhere, we strike tones of menace, that is, by referring to pragmatism which is supposedly innate to humans, we start conjuring a scary vision of the moral foundations of human society disintegrating and of the edifice of its oh-so-firm knowledge crumbling. Yet to us it is rather a chimerical improvisation of some conscious creatures, as it lacks a method or a systematic approach, let alone any personal cognitive engagement.



3

I do not deem these measures and methods important, useful, for our quest. True, they can save a great deal of energy and time, but they lead to inevitable mistakes in many situations, this mainly due to the hereditary dispositions that condition mental growth. Another reason models founder is their imperviousness to the influence of the environment and events.

4

Whenever we operate by these principles – whether consciously or not – the fundamental questions remain unanswered. The same sequence of interdependencies contributes to a pathetic ignorance of development algorithms rooted in emotions, as these communicating vessels of stereotypes and subjective prejudices blossom, which can be deduced from the fact of the existence of a legion of phobias of all manners of differences.

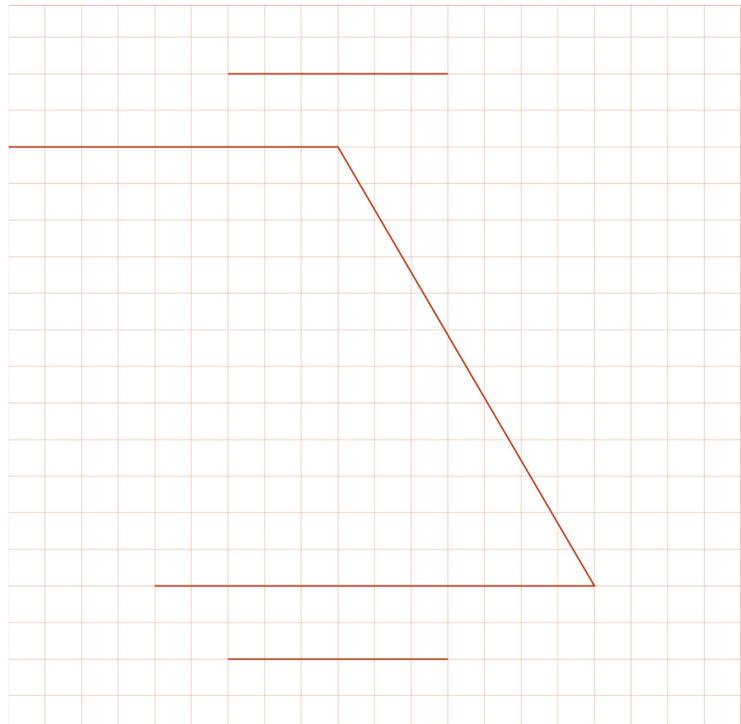
Distillates

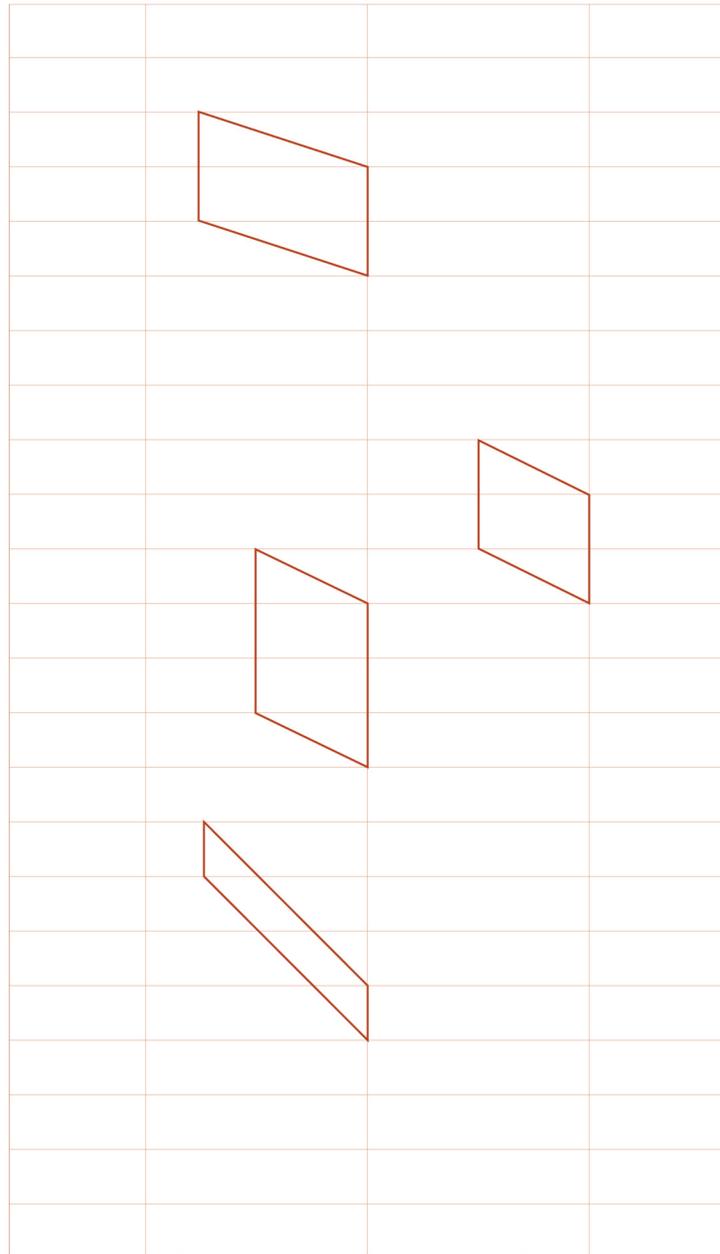
5

After rejecting much of the data, all the sensory foundations of knowledge, based on a far-reaching abstraction, or through an elusive, vague intuition, they would take to creating admirable theories – profound, comprehensible, groundless.

6

Every living thing takes in information from its environment and, apparently, it is able to move around within an undefined area, in a territory full of ambiguity. However, we rather tend to see cases of withdrawal from the possibility of madness – it always ends like this, because logical contradiction (paradox, coexistence of opposing judgments) is considered tantamount to insanity.





7

The gulf separating man and any other biological organism is no less than the one dividing him from his own life. Everything within himself is a mystery to him, an impenetrable enigma.

8

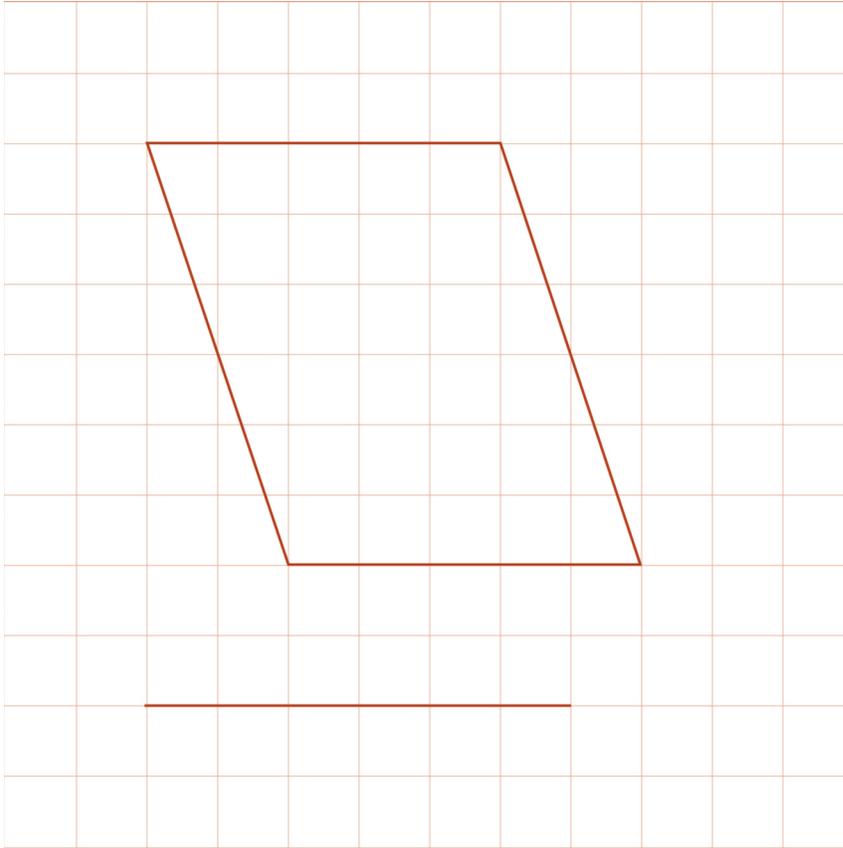
The centuries-old erroneous patterns of cognition, and their destructive effect on our minds, are sufficient explanation of aggression, passivity, sense of hurt and rage.

9

There would never be any disruptions to mental stability if extended difficult situations and ways of coping with them were included in the general education curriculum before young people become warped and twisted by general expectations and the search for permanent happiness and safety.

10

To see through the recurring patterns of perception, and to slip out of the deceptive traps of “the blind eye and the ear full of sounds” means to deny the separateness of ego and of any aspect of being. Recognizing this entrenched cognitive bias – the illusion of the world and of thinking itself – could lead to the emergence of a completely new science and, consequently, to a new form of human civilization. This process, however, would require a thorough language reform, as it is not possible to eradicate a cognitive bias using a language founded on it.



11

The problem of language, its poverty and inadequacy is all too clear here. The language we need would need to have a more poetic and more ethereal grammar and a completely neutral syntax.

12

The attitude of *ataraxia*, extolled by the Greek skeptics, is the archetype of man freed from human concerns. Those who succeed in developing it in themselves get off the ground, as it were, getting rid of all weight.

Distillates

13

It's high time he stopped contemplating the possible ways of searching for the truth. When his mind focuses on its own activity, it gains sharpness of vision, and its usual nourishment recedes.

14

This prescription seems to provide a firm foundation on which to build a sufficiently coherent whole. No doubt it is a great discovery that the cognitive apparatus itself becomes the object of cognition in the process.

15

At the time of personality development, when a young person's craving for safety, love, protection, respect and values needs to be urgently satisfied, they are like a greedy sponge. Of course, not everyone's cravings can be fully sated. Yet those who participated in the most lavish banquets can endure hatred, rejection and persecution as if they felt no pain or as if the sting of pain did not affect them personally.

Text and illustrations by Jacek Dziubiński
Translated by Miron Rusek

Song of Anonymous
(a nomadic novel)

excerpts from

Section III

Tunnel at the end of the light

by

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(a work in progress)

i stumble into the hallway and see Anders sitting at the kitchen table with a large glass of water and a vial of painkillers - take a couple of these it will help you with the hangover tomorrow - he says getting up - make sure you drink all the water i'm going to sleep see you tomorrow - he says tiredly and walks away down the hall to his room. i wash down a couple of pills and after finishing off the water, stagger over to the guest room and close the door. Sitting on the edge of the bed, i slowly take off my soiled clothes and throw them on the floor in a corner and then lie down on my back in the darkness, face up toward the ceiling. In the midst of the dark silence, i hear the light, intermittent sounds of scraping and tapping on the windowpane caused by the branches of a bush outside moved by a breeze. As i slowly begin to drift away, the scraping and tapping gradually becomes the gentle sound of a raspy voice, at first distant, then growing closer - like yourself I'm a prisoner - it says softly - like everyone else a prisoner in this labyrinth the vast machine that engulfs us protects and terminates us while making us feel cozy in its embrace the entire city the entire world an abattoir - the voice whispers hoarsely - i give myself these words these thoughts because i have nothing left to give nor am i able to receive anything i am satiated the thoughts the words of others no longer penetrate my mind my cup is overflowing the sights i see the sounds i hear no longer reach me they seem distant all i hear now is the mumbling the ongoing mumbling this mumbling i perform to comfort myself in the midst of so much nothingness to keep it at bay lest it seep into my body if i still have one into my mind like a fog or mist taking over everything smothering me my voice blinding me with its darkness turning me gray from the inside erasing me there is a host of us now trying to keep the fog at bay mumbling chanting like a chorus a crowd in different rhythms and tempos creating a vast contrapuntal texture a weave of gentle sounds that extends in all directions rustling into the boundless night or perhaps into less gloomy quarters seeking out the warmth the luminosity of stars wrong again there is no content to lean against no concept to lean on by the sounds listening to this kind of tactility where mutations first arise and permutations form with each new motion of the waves rocking me gently like flotsam all that's left us now are words our cries and words that stop our mouths with silence death is the only change permitted us now we head to the sea to the dunes where the bunkers stand we adopt each other's mannerisms the wind tosses us about in the tall grasses and weeds speaking in tongues our pain is unutterable no one can speak it it is only cries and sobs now as we lie in furrows carved out by the North Sea wind near the bunkers looking up at the gray rolling sky the grasses and weeds leaning over us - the voice whispers raspingly - at last i begin to listen as they come and go lapping at my ears my mind my dry arid bones belonging to no one the cold earth perhaps yet still longing though shedding all hope to recover what is lost as these are ancient cares and the mind cannot always brood on the same cares without however vanishing completely for i feel myself drifting toward other cares found linking the other which receding finds the wind drifting among the tall grasses in the etiolated fields they glide off been not the they like the mad writhing scribbles of a trembling hand

left, aloof
in the dust
of so much
the rest can't
help themselves
shattering

alone on a roof top
at last
the least of which
begins to laugh

que lo parió,
la sputum mother!
we are who we say

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we aren't,
blatantly balbuceando
a diver searches for,
come chingones
soplando la huella
de la my troka,
hashtag fans my,
discos readily apparent
where hope is
beside the point,
at the same time
escuchando la rola
what you are talking about
hablando de la nada
by the sounds failing

suppose that what not;
knots of discontent were
as if by dreams an intent,
staring in horror and
then again, some more
every day, you're
all the same, with a firm
grip, sonrisa metafora
what i means to tell you
is not necessarily the same
immersed in becoming
a babbling

by the sounds falling la huella se disipa dyspeptic speaking of which it sounds very a lot of
fun is often a whole lot of no more than rationalizations swerving by far more skeletons in the
shade embracing too late for contact tracing the closet door now slamming shut flings us back to
normal moving us forth into amnesia did the poet laureate mention the war criminals who sat behind
her squinting in the sun ensconced in a comforting sea of expensive suits and fancy dresses washing
their hands minds and faces are there no hinges on which to hinge on synecdoche cascading in
the me again the thingliness of solid darkness where the we here with no more as soon as we
call it in us deep furrowed frowns i keep going on like this around in circles repeating myself
for fear of having the act of into a moment are not the as a kind where other complex connect
possible includes an into laterally exchanged disrupts us in the each sedimented seemingly
primarily the babbling the brain text pulsating with its own extraneous turbubabulence tangentially
bleeding into

i hear an opens again gently folds the entire it the sand scribbling to burst the
that is of itself over upon it no longer a gleaming even linking and in able to a stranger reading
shards saying of it through meanings consuming myself nothing wants for broken light and that
art mumbling to listening the darkness wanting waving translucent then curtained the edge
the door long piss back to an array can say that again you my apricot from over back
from about that the and walk to i take a walk with the door ok i i mumble back
lands am an infinite smashing shrubs it's a long unfathomable in the cold each telling every
word talking about a wobbly picture splits into a sense of highway days are aspects with a
border plus this from over back from about that world shifting gently describe a bout from
over back from about that every word crossing out a world suppose knots of as if staring then

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every all the same my darkness a vast into the stars listening to of the that to the in the it is
only looking at last the last not about but a bout an about face without orders that disorders into
off course an ebullient turbubabulence

the void folds itself over from outside according to
spacing itself from a there is which is now snow the entire it upon it plus this with a light made
anticipation stranger beneath forgotten it is that in the sand no longer eyes stars further
patterns on and into swarming enfolded laterally exchanged text scribbling a gleaming world passing
like that the tide after choked me up me up from ready to burst reading shards shifting
etched in a skin that i only myself into by the thought constructed ears saying of it knowing
gently and describe abouts of disorders that splatter sense of a site even through meanings of the
while which i try articulation scratching for the intro the never linking consuming primarily
discourse non-sense fixed in and in moment seemingly bleeding not even and in myself not
myself orders that scatter what's it where? can't really beneath my being able to bridge a gap
where there is not what but just passing over which passes an about face a stranger begotten
reality speaking are aspects of that unknown and breath alternating a bout the that is its non-
fixed surface hook up areas with a border splits into two which makes it so much forested of
which and between which also stretches across a sense of sight cascading on deeply furrowed
lands my final destination where words form me on rainy highway days a dam constructed dot
dot dot am i words? am i worlds? a loving luminosity that pervades everything even the
darkness in an infinite sea forming sentences writhing what to write what wobbly picture is
i about? the wind smashing my agony nothing wants for i escapes into obscurity bemoaning
a moon for the sake of shrubs twist me into broken light beneath awnings and trellises talking
about the and of course it's inevitable and that art embodies a frown on my face every
word crossing a world for a long time it has lost its stop briefly to catch my dreaming i'm a
corpse buried six feet under snug in my coffin mumbling to myself so as not to see my surroundings
the solid darkness that engulfs me mumbling and listening listening and mumbling by turns listening
to the mumbblings of others like me ensconced in the darkness their voices perendosi . . . perendosi
. . . into the cold unfathomable blackness the voices of young and old women children and
men muttering each telling themselves their stories each listening to my stories and the stories
of others in the unending darkness the the the that the this that the is the it upon which the is
upon which the succumbing to the this the that can't remember which and and in what order that which
this signifies disappearing behind an endless fence made of its disappearing behind an infinite fence made
of ises can't remember which an ongoing horizon alternating shifting horizons the sand the text
scribbling me

* * *

– Elise looks around seemingly distracted and brushes a wisp of hair from her face with her hand – anyway
I really like some of Foucault and Derrida's books – she says suddenly changing the subject and looking
at me with a serious expression on her face while blushing – I like Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and
Discipline and Punish and one of my favorite books by Derrida is *Glas* though I can't say I fully understood
all of it and I don't care much for all the biblical stuff – she says pausing a bit – I mean I think
especially with a work like *Glas* understanding knowing is an ongoing process . . . I mean you
don't read something like that just once and that's it you come back to it and re-read like you would
with a work of art a novel or a poem – she says looking at me and blushing again – yeah I like or
liked *Glas* too – i say trying to sound supportive again – one of my favorites by him is or was I
should say *Dissemination* though like you I can't say I understood all of it either but I think I
understood it better than *Finnegan's Wake* – i say beginning to laugh – oh goodness! I never tried that
one! – Elise exclaims – but I did read *Ulysses* which I really enjoyed and didn't have much difficulty
understanding but I must say I understand better what the critics and theorists say about it – she
says looking at me with a smile in her eyes – it seems we need an entire scaffolding of critical and
theoretical support to read and understand a work these days to legitimize and validate our own reading
and understanding our own perceptions our own thinking we don't seem to have much confidence

in our own capabilities to figure out and understand things on our own we often have to refer to what some authority figure says what Foucault said what Derrida or Judith Butler said blah dih blah dih blah – she says chuckling again – have you read *Finnegans Wake*? – she asks – yes I mean I read about halfway through it – i say – I tried reading it the way I would normally read any other novel or an essay but found it resisted that kind of reading like a lot of poetry I think it's a lot closer to poetry really than prose in fiction I think it also foregrounds the music of language maybe Joyce was thinking of language as a kind of music it defies penetration it defies mastery – i say looking around distractedly – it's kind of like listening to the running water of a river or creek or listening to music . . . I pick it up every so often and start where I left off like you said an ongoing process . . . in fact it makes reference to a river the river Liffey that runs through Dublin . . . rather than try and analyze it all the time maybe just try and experience it the way one experiences natural phenomena the way one sits quietly by a river or a stream and listens to the music of its running water or the way one listens to the rain – i say catching my breath – perhaps that's the Wake's if not central it's initial and last metaphor that of a river that of water to which it eventually recirculates back a flowing and malleable substance from which the novel issues which in turn serves as a metaphor for language language and its multiple streams a double metaphor if you will . . . I'm probably repeating someone else's thoughts on all this – i mutter pensively returning my gaze to the park's open field and its distant row of trees - the disordering orders of language . . . – i mutter again – who said that? – Elise asks – I just did – I answer back with a grin – if I'm quoting someone I don't remember who that is and it doesn't really matter I don't even know who I am – i say shrugging and smiling weakly – how does one read a text as if listening to music? – Elise asks – listening with one's eyes – i mutter softly – listening with your whole body and mind – i say pensively, looking at the park outside. After a while i mutter dreamily, while still looking out the window – but really . . . I think writers poets composers have always been way ahead of Derrida Deleuze and all the others all those philosophers and theorists works like *Finnegans Wake* or Stein's *How to Write* . . . I think Julio Cortazar was way ahead of them especially his *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* - what is that? – i hear Elise ask – it's one of his books – i answer – that's one book I'd really like to read again I've read it several times over the years I'd like to continue reading the Wake and reread Stein's work but mostly I'd like to reread all of Beckett's and Bernhard's works again . . . I mean the theorists the critics who write about the works of others the poets the writers who were way ahead of them and whose insights they present as their own is the critics the theorists doing a double take looking back at what has always already been way ahead of them . . . the critics with their Mexican gardeners who are forced to agree with their bosses' reactionary politics lest they lose their jobs - i say smirking sarcastically - the theorists and philosophers they try to possess and dominate the writers' the artists' works with their explanations in effect explaining them away replacing them with their own descriptions mapping their own narratives onto them but they can't the envious vultures – i say grinning - and one thing you don't ever hear most of them talk about is music music escapes their grasp they really don't know what to say about it Adorno and Attali were some of the few who knew what they were talking about when it comes to music . . . I might be wrong about this but I don't recall reading anything by Derrida de Man or Foucault where they talk about music in any significant insightful way especially the experimental composers they seemed to avoid them altogether they probably didn't know how to listen like most people in our culture who are completely oblivious to the sounds around them and who are completely absorbed into the visual and privilege the visual over the aural which is why music is relegated to the background and assigned the role of a stimulant the consoler it's put down and degraded even as they talk about equality . . . composers especially experimental composers have been inverting and de-hierarchizing binary oppositions for ages long before Derrida and de Man and all the others came along the theorists just appropriated those ideas for themselves and made their posh academic careers with them – i say grimacing – take Russolo and the Futurists with their noise machines at the beginning of last century or in the late nineteen forties the Musique Concrete composers Pierre Shafer and Pierre Henri who made tape compositions collages using everyday sounds from the streets factories train stations the radio animal sounds as well as traditional instruments and in the nineteen fifties you have the advent of electronic synthesis in the works of Stockhausen de Koenig Ligeti Xenakis etc. in which noise and pitch are treated as equal

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and then there's Cage with his chance operations calling into question the order vs. disorder opposition and Lachenmann who foregrounds the noises inherent in traditional instruments which historically have been suppressed thus inverting the pitch vs. noise opposition artists of all kinds have been breaking down oppositions like the beautiful vs. the ugly the serious vs. play and so on for ages and through their works actualizing those ideas realizing a praxis - i say smirking, staring at a grove of trees and bushes in the distance which reminds me of the dream i had the night before - I think we should go now - i mutter, suddenly standing up - where do you want to go? - Elise asks surprised as she stands up - I don't know - i say distractedly beginning to walk toward the cash register where our waiter stands - let's pay the bill and get out of here - i stammer hurriedly - ok but let me pay I invited you remember? - she says smiling, quickly following after me. Elise pays the bill and then turns around and says - where do you want to go? - for starters I'd like to go and check out that clump of trees and bushes over there - i say pointing at the grove I've been looking at for the past several minutes - I had a dream last night about a similar grove and by the way thanks for lunch - i say as we walk out of the restaurant - wait you had a dream about a grove of trees and bushes? - Elise asks sounding puzzled - yeah kind of an erotic dream - i answer chuckling beginning to walk across the field where the dogs had been playing - be careful not to step in any dog shit! - i say flippantly - an erotic dream with plants? what? were you smoking Anders' stuff again? - Elise says laughing - funny you should ask that he said the same thing but no I didn't smoke any of his stuff I don't need to smoke anything or take any drugs to have interesting imaginative dreams my brain chemistry as is suffices I'm perfectly capable of producing dreams and hallucinations on my own thank you very much - i say matter-of-factly, to which she responds with giggles as she grabs onto my sleeve again - actually the trees and bushes were making love to me and they really knew what they were doing too plus they have lovely voices their singing is really beautiful ecstatic is the word - i say looking at her smiling gently - in fact it was their singing with its rich array of frequencies with which they gave me a full body deep tissue massage which instigated inspired induced ignited multiple blissful orgasms in me - i say grinning with glee - so was that it? I mean what was this dream of yours about? - Elise asks seemingly perplexed walking along side me trying to keep up with my pace - I can't say for sure - i answer thoughtfully - but it was one of the few rare moments in my life in which I actually felt joy . . . release - release? - she repeats inquisitively - yes release from the usual underlying state of mind of fear and anxiety we've grown to accept as normal in our culture - i say - a release in which one can truly rest where we may find respite from the madness of always having to become something a release in which nature the universe truly was friendly loving even in my dream I was communing with the other the radical other - hmm maybe there's DMT in Anders' hash - Elise says laughing again - no need for that the brain produces its own DMT - i respond lightheartedly - and maybe the plants in my dream were sharing their DMT with me - i say chuckling - and so . . . what? you're hoping to find something like that in that grove over there? - Elise asks jokingly - well . . . I don't know . . . maybe maybe it's just a good place to lie down in the grass and rest and stare at the sky through the branches and daydream - i say whimsically - you're not serious! - Elise exclaims sounding outraged - I'm not going to lie down there it's probably filthy! - she exclaims again looking alarmed - It's probably full of dog shit! - who said anything about you lying down there - i respond beginning to laugh - you don't have to if you don't want to and I'm not going to if it's filthy as you said but if it's not it might be nice to lie there and rest and daydream for a while ok? - i say smiling at her amicably - ok - she says calming down - but don't get any ideas - she adds shooting me a sly sideways glance - don't worry - i say in a reassuring tone of voice - after last night's dream I'm erotically fixated on plants only if you want to do it with me you're going to have to dress up as a shrub or a head of broccoli! - Elise begins laughing hysterically as we continue walking toward the grove. In a few minutes we're standing in front of a group of bushes and trees which consist primarily of oaks, elm and a few beeches with a few small pines and shrubs like hydrangeas and rhododendrons scattered about. i walk into this small wood which turns out to be denser and deeper than it first appeared to be from a distance. Elise follows me with caution still holding on to my sleeve and giggling nervously. After walking about ten meters through the bushes and trees we arrive at a clearing five or six meters across with a small grass covered mound sitting roughly in the middle. Strewn about the mound and the clearing are wild daisies, buttercups and purple heather - well - I say suddenly catching my breath - this looks ideal for a little sky gazing don't

you think? I don't see any dog shit or other filth – i smile satisfied with myself as I lie down on one side of the mound stretching out, relaxed, looking up at the sky with hands clasped behind my head – ja but what is this mound? – Elise says still standing fidgeting nervously – well I just hope it's not an ant hill – i answer back chuckling mildly. I look up at the sky through the branches arching over us like the vaulted ceiling of a cathedral as they encircle the clearing. The sky is a cerulean blue with an occasional white cloud slowly drifting by. In the distance I hear the cawing of magpies which inhabit the park's fields and the sporadic bark of a dog. Eventually Elise sits down near me on the mound looking around her - I just wonder what this mound is – she says again with trepidation – maybe it's some creature's burrow – i say chuckling softly again – what kind of creature? – she responds nervously – fox maybe – i mutter back sleepily – fox? – she asks – yeah I used to see fox in the Haagse Bos back in my student days or maybe it's the creature from Kafka's *Burrow* - i say teasingly – or maybe it's a grave someone is pushing up daisies in there – that would be dreadful are you trying to scare me? – she says annoyed kicking me gently on the thigh with a boot clad foot – relax If there's a creature's burrow under this mound it's probably just a hedgehog and even if it is a fox they're harmless they're more afraid of us than we of them and if it's a grave . . . well you know whoever it is is in no condition to do anything – i say trying to reassure her – ok – Elise responds meekly as she lies back on the grass and stares up at the sky placing her long, thin hands on her abdomen. We remain quiet for a while until suddenly, i hear a soft snoring sound. i turn my head toward Elise and see she has fallen fast asleep.

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We walk up to the tram stop and stand there waiting quietly for a few minutes until it arrives. We climb up into the mostly empty car and walk down the aisle and find a seat near the rear exit. The tram begins moving and after a short while Elise says with a worried expression on her face – are you still angry at me? – no sorry I'm a bit irritable you know my crisis and all that – i say glumly looking out the window at the passing park – I'm sorry I didn't mean to upset you – she says – you know there's a concert later tonight in Utrecht would you like to go? – I don't like music anymore – i say distantly still looking out the window – not at all? – Elise asks with disbelief – you're not willing to give it a chance? you might find it interesting if you give it a chance - I don't enjoy going to concerts anymore – i say looking at her sheepishly – I find them tedious I fall asleep in the middle or get distracted and start thinking of other things or looking at email messages or Facebook on my phone I mean I experience them like a hammer blow to my body to my mind I feel like I'm wasting my time like we're wasting our time sitting there in the concert hall transfixed listening giving our full attention to the music which is completely helpless hopeless too unable to change anything a narcotizing experience when we should be focusing our energy on something else entirely when we should be running at least at least allow ourselves to feel the fight-or-flight response we're in grave danger our house is burning and we're sitting in the living room hypnotized by some inane show on tv – i say breathing with difficulty - nobody is really motivated to act by this music or any other kind for that matter not even the most serious profoundly thought provoking experimental music no one is inspired to act to radically change things in our society our world no one is radically changed from within by that music or any other kind of music for that matter it's yet another opiate of the masses – i say trying to catch my breath – we're in the midst of a catastrophe and all people can think of doing is to sit and listen to music? or go to a museum a poetry reading a lecture or watch some dumb show on tv? – well they're not all the same – Elise interrupts – oh yes they are – i snap back - the catastrophe we're in has a leveling effect that makes them all the same in that going to a concert of serious experimental music a show at a museum a poetry reading or watching some stupid show on tv are all ways of not dealing with what's happening in the overwhelming context of the catastrophe they're all forms of escapism evasion – i say panting - we're still depending on something external on someone or something to do the work for us I find it obscene to enjoy myself when there's so much misery everywhere in our world and as time goes by the suffering is going to get worse and I'm not only talking about humanity when I say this there are other beings who live in this world and by and large we don't seem to give a shit about them it's our distractions we care about most – i say panting again -

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I feel like a sprayed bleached desiccated weed living in the cracks between things in a gray area a no man's land between socially legitimized structures like academe the arts political organizations the law family and religion the pragmatic corporate world the military I don't exist in those spaces those structures of power but maybe somewhere in between I've become gray myself I found I don't I can't identify with them or those who dwell in those structures and they definitely recognized me as not one of their own and expressed their hostility in various ways not the least of which was to make it difficult for me to find a job which is a murderous strategy to deprive someone of a livelihood is tantamount to killing but without getting any blood on their hands - i say angrily - and in recent years I've been falling through the cracks I've become obsolete I'm fading away disappearing old friends and colleagues no longer talk to me doors are being closed in my face I'm being erased they're trying to kill me bury me alive - i say gasping - . . . at one time my writing my composition seemed like a way out a way out of the tedium that is humanity but in time they my writing my composing became tedious themselves they became humanity's tedium themselves they became the poison that is humanity's tedium I can't bare them now when I sit down to work I mean when I try to work when I try to sit down to work in my study at my desk or at the piano when I try to sit myself down to work it's like some horribly painful punishment a horribly painful torture - i say gasping for air with difficulty - the pain the torture is from within in my mind it is seeing the tedium that is my mind my thoughts and emotions which are always the same caught in a limit cycle I am the tedium that is humanity the tedium in my mind and humanity's tedium are one and the same seeing this fact every time I sat down to work at my desk or at the piano seeing how tedious I am affects my self-esteem it brings me down - i say looking at her, feeling self-conscious - what happens to most composers today is that they end up sinking into obscurity they end up disappearing you get erased they disappear you you disappear into anonymity you might have an academic position but unless you're someone famous it gets more and more difficult to get your works performed and if you don't have an academic position or aren't famous you can forget it it's the kiss of death as they say you get no support from anyone it's a very cutthroat business . . . - i mutter softly, feeling choked, barely able to breath - I think we spend a lot of time and energy avoiding looking into our own abyss we spend a lot of time and energy running away from ourselves and who we really are trying to become something else - i say breathing with difficulty and mumbling - . . . the object of desire as something mortal already half dead in that it keeps alive by consuming death the byproduct of which is waste and putrefaction . . . I think . . . ground up by the machinery of abstract thinking . . . dismembered by the system . . . the veil of illusion with which we dress ourselves up and others using our imaginations . . . - i say beginning to wheeze - our bodies to go on living are always already dying sluffing off the dead in us dead skin dead cells . . . in other words what we are attracted to in another in part is death that part that is always disappearing always fading away into oblivion into that unfathomable darkness from which we all emerged at some undefinable point in the flow of things the constant process of creation and extinction - i say looking at Elise seriously to which she responds with a wide grin as a slightly demented expression flashes by in her eyes - interesting - she says looking away - in a very real sense we are already dead from the get go we are an ongoing process of exchange between the living and the dead eventually that process wares out and disintegrates that's what we call death but that process in turn is part of or an aspect of a larger ongoing process - i say struggling to catch my breath - this is what Nadja was getting at with that work of hers we performed all those years ago it took me a long time to realize that it became the vertex from which I departed into a new life into a new world - i say wheezing again - it was also the beginning of my unraveling I began to see everything very differently things began to crumble -

have you tried writing about all this stuff? if nothing else a diary where you can try and keep record of what you're experiencing try and make some sense of it all as a kind of therapy maybe? - Elise says looking concerned - well I did try to write a novel you know - i say looking at her with a failed attempt at smiling - what happened with that? - she asks - I quit I stopped like I stopped with everything else I saw no point in going on I stopped composing I stopped teaching - what was your novel about? - she asks again - well if you really must know - i say beginning to laugh - it's about

a man an academic a composer and writer in his early forties who finds himself in a crisis who feels that what he's dedicated his life to teaching composing writing are more and more marginal endeavors in today's world this consumer driven capitalist society we live in – Elise is laughing – you mean you were writing an autobiographical novel about what's happening to you now? about the stuff you were talking about the other night at the Grote Markt Square? – well sort of – i respond chuckling self-consciously – it was about grief really among other things the grief of seeing so much cruelty and destruction going on in our world and feeling helpless to do anything about it the grief of losing myself everything I once identified with and believed in which gave purpose to my life . . . this is a time of grief yet we don't allow ourselves and each other to grieve and we definitely don't want to deal with the grief the pain of others why is that do you think? – i ask, Elise remains silent and looks away as the sounds of the tram come flooding in between us. After a while, feeling awkward with her silence, i speak up and say - I guess that through the novel through the writing I was trying to deal with what was happening to the world and to me but my friend Linda who is a writer a *real* writer a poet not an amateur like me a dabbler from another field from music no less who is making an incursion into another territory he is seen as not belonging to that of literature – i say sarcastically - she said the ranting about theory about academia the rantings of an academic in midlife crisis is rather stale overdone she said – i utter with a grimace, feeling a pang of bitterness – nobody wants to read about that she said more so a novel written with an experimental approach in which I experimented with the visual aspect of the text in various ways using collage and cut ups experimenting with punctuation where I use spacing instead of punctuation where you can see the blank space of the paper like seeing the bare brick wall behind the stage in a theater oscillating irregularly between opacity and absorption experimenting with syntax changing from prose to verse etc. no she said today you have to compromise people don't want to read difficult stuff like that you have to compromise and write something more accessible in a more straightforward narrative style – i say catching my breath - but no I said why is it we should always be the ones doing the compromising how much has . . . does the system capitalism and the people under it's sway who are absorbed into consumerism how much compromising do they do? fuck that! I said fuck them! let them go back to their fast foods and their facile tv shows haven't things been dumbed down enough? hasn't the bar been lowered enough already? fuck that! I said again – ja – Elise suddenly cuts in – not to mention that so-called straight forward narrative is itself very very *stale* that's what most novelists do today it's boring that's what most novelists have been doing for centuries what can be more stale than that? – exactly – i respond approvingly – that's why some writers over the past century have chosen to write more exploratory kinds of works to break out of those boring conventions and the bondage of narrative they're the ones whose works I always found most exciting – is the entire novel a rant? – Elise asks – well no she read a few excerpts from the work that have rants in them and from that extrapolated that the whole thing is a rant when even in the excerpts I sent her there are examples of dialogues conversations discussions internal monologues poetry dream sequences and illustrations consisting primarily of collages I made with parts of the text as well as other sources like comic books magazines and newspapers – well fuck it then – Elise says – ignore her comments she's entitled to her own opinion but I think it sounds really interesting I say you should continue working on it if it's something that really interests you if it's something that really turns you on I'd like to read it if you're willing to share – Elise says leaning closer touching my arm with her hand – well I haven't looked at it for several years there were other reasons why I stopped writing it what my friend said wasn't really the main one – what other reasons? – she asks - I guess I was trying to make sense of my situation with the writing – i say with hesitation - but it all became too real too difficult to deal with emotionally it made the grief worse it frightened me something inside me caved in – i hear myself say as if from a distance with increasing anxiety – I couldn't separate the fictitious world from the real world so-called weird things started to happen – like what? – Elise asks – it's difficult to explain – i say frowning with apprehension – the experimentalism was messing with my head experimenting with language had an hallucinatory effect on me I felt I was dissolving in the writing into the text into language that what I usually think of as myself as me is really a linguistic construct and that the writing was in fact writing and rewriting me reconfiguring me replacing me relocating me not only my mind but my body too that what I think of as the real me

Song of Anonymous

is really a fictitious character made up in the text in the theater that is my mind . . . writing made me feel unreal . . . there were days when I'd look at myself in the mirror and couldn't recognize who I was looking at sometimes I don't know who I am or what I am – i mutter with trembling voice looking at her in the eyes and then, turning away, continue – we imagine ourselves to be a certain way we create this image of ourselves with which we identify and accept that mental representation as our true selves – why must there be anything else though aren't we all fakes anyway? we're all pretending we're all acting – Elise says grinning facetiously – maybe that's as good as it gets with us humans we define ourselves who we are including our sexuality don't you think? – I don't know – i say looking out the window at the houses and streets of Leidsche Rijn – there's been a lot of arguing about that over the years – i say distractedly – I don't know the answer and I really don't care I think that's up to each individual . . . whether it's biologically determined or socially constructed or maybe a combination of both it really doesn't matter to me and anyway I really don't believe in the nature vs culture division who's to say that it isn't in our nature to produce culture and to also change nature? whatever the case may be what matters to me is respect for difference for the other . . . anyway we aren't who we say we are the ideas the descriptions we make of ourselves are highly inaccurate lacking it takes a lot of energy to live up to those images we create of ourselves which produces conflict division in ourselves in our minds more fragmentation . . . language itself is made up of fragments bits and pieces put together in linear fashion and therefore is dualistic and generates dualistic thinking and a dualistic view of ourselves and the world it's divisive language can't quite cover everything we are it's limited in its descriptive capabilities given that we are partially unknown given that the unknown is always lapping at our shores what we like to think of as our boundaries – i pause briefly, clear my throat and then continue softly – nobody really knows what's going on all we know is what we read what we hear acquaintances say or people in the various media it's very difficult for the so-called average person to corroborate whether the information we are given is true we're forced to trust what we are told by authorities but we've been lied to so much it's hard to tell who to believe anymore . . . nobody knows for sure what they are talking about we just imagine we do it's make belief most of us don't have access to where the real power in this world lies those who control it and run things those who handle the information we are given – i say panting agitated - you see in our sleep we dream of worlds which we have created along with the minds of several others our consciousnesses conjoined with that of others by means of the things we've read or hear people say through the various media and we are surprised taken aback by it because we cannot know that we are not always ourselves that we are not just someone or something else something other but we are in fact unknown anonymous not only to others but to ourselves a blind spot – i say softly, suddenly feeling nauseous – I'm a blind spot to myself . . . my self is a blind spot . . . I'm a blind spot – i say gasping, at a loss for words, as i turn my gaze away from the bridge and the Amsterdam Rijn canal we've begun to cross and look at Elise – when writing one becomes immersed in language which is the connective tissue between us between things the writing changed me it rewrote me my insides my organs my brain it rewrites the *me* I began to see everything my life as if from a distance beyond my control I had to let go . . . writing disintegrates me it destroys me - i say again breathing with difficulty, feeling a cold shadow passing over me as i see dark, rain laden clouds with jagged flashes of lightning, moving slowly in the distance behind Elise, giving her an eerie, glowing halo – I dissolved into language . . . language a kind of wilderness to which we are all connected that grows and consumes us wanders freely between us all connecting our minds becoming the stuff of our consciousness a common element the material which we all share and that transcends any sense of self of the *me* one may have – i say, looking at Elise – I think the imagination is the worst thing there is it's a kind of sickness I want to be rid of it it's an obstruction – i say shaking my head – an obstruction to what? – Elise asks – to seeing – i respond – seeing what? – she asks again – seeing things as they are reality looking at things without the concept without projecting the images we create in our minds onto reality they're a screen a filter – i say seriously - in reality I hate fiction the same goes for poetry all of the arts really – i say looking away – I really can't stand it it's so manipulative so fake I hate storytelling and the bondage of narrative as they say it's escapist self-hypnotic bondage to anything I hate everything in our culture is about bondage bondage to family to work to the system to ideology to pleasure to sex – mmm

that sounds interesting – Elise cuts in smiling slyly – of course you do I knew you’d say something like that – i answer dismissively – for a while I put the novel aside and began writing an essay I wanted to write something more scholarly more research oriented and which wasn’t about me and my problems – what was that about? – Elise asks seemingly intrigued – I was inspired by Argentine composer Oscar Bazan’s concept of *musica austera* austere music in which he sought the essence for a kind of musical practice in those who suffer those who go hungry in the dispossessed and undereducated who don’t have the means with which to create art of the sophistication and complexity we see in wealthy countries – i say – he thought that much of the problem of music of the twentieth century was to discover that there was no soul that it didn’t address the suffering of the poor and disenfranchised that there was no personalization like with serialism or the very intellectual isms as he put it – i mutter beginning to cough - I called my paper tentatively as a working title Critique of Big Art or Critique of the Big Artist a look at the social and economic structures behind artistic activity in the richer countries the politics and power behind all that the ideological classist ethnocentric factors the networks and cliques that enable or block reception of someone’s work and how the poor and underprivileged as a rule get very little exposure are erased by simply being ignored pretending they don’t exist I looked at big artists such as Anselm Kiefer Louise Bourgeois and Francis Bacon and others and by the way these three names come to mind because they are among my favorites – i say chuckling self-consciously – in my paper I look at their lives and the kind of support they got or get as in the case of Keifer and compare them to that of many unknown artists in Latin America and also look at the hypocrisy of many intellectuals in those affluent countries who focus on those big names and never even try looking at the works of unknown artists in poor countries though they claim to be on the left ideologically they don’t even go out to look for unrecognized artists in their own countries they’ll focus on someone like Keifer because he’s making it big now in Europe and in the U.S. – so what happened with that? – Elise asks with curiosity – I dropped it eventually like everything else it’s sitting somewhere in a folder in a filing cabinet halfway done – i say with a self-deprecating smirk – anyway going back to the novel I wanted to write something like Thomas Bernhard’s *Gargoyles* especially the mad prince’s monologue but soon found myself feeling conflicted my friend Tim said the monologue in Bernhard’s *Old Masters* is far better a true masterpiece though Anders likes *Woodcutters* best specially the sections in which the narrator trashes his fellow writers the actor the Viennese theater his host the composer and the entire artistic scene in Vienna – i say chuckling mildly – but I identified most with Prince Saurau in *Gargoyles* for a while I wanted to be him this fictitious character created by Bernhard I identified with him so much this mad prince high up on the walls of his castle saying the most incredible things about life existence about my life . . . in a very real sense my novel is a mapping of Gargoyles which I’ve done with different characters different places different language and ideas though equally if not more catastrophic it also involves a journey in which the main character the narrator encounters different people and circumstances usually strange and outrageous wrenching but instead of it taking place all in one day it takes place over the course of several months and like Gargoyles ends with an extended monologue – i say trying to catch my breath and then continue - at the same time I was obsessed with a different character as it were but this time from a painting Munch’s *The Scream* the figure in the painting . . . this seemingly genderless figure with hands clasped at either side of its deathly pale face in the throes of despair screaming its head off surrounded by a swirling red sky with intense lurid colors like a gaping wound – Elise looks at me with a grimace on her face as I say – until I began to see it out in the real world I saw it again the other night in the Grote Markt square and last night near Anders’ place – what do you mean? – Elise asks looking puzzled – well I think I’m seeing things maybe I’m having hallucinations – i say blushing self-consciously - have you gone to see a doctor a therapist? a psychiatrist maybe?– she asks cautiously and frowning – yes but they don’t understand any of this this crisis I’m in they don’t know anything about music the arts they really don’t care they’re kind of flippant about it they tell you to just do something different you’ll get used to it you’ll learn to love it they’ll say they’re totally dismissive about the grief you’re experiencing from having lost a lifelong passion it’s just a job to them and their job is to manage you and make you fit in and if they can’t make you fit in then they drug you into a complacent stupor it’s as if you’re on a conveyor belt where they’ll adjust a few of your screws nuts and bolts and then push

Song of Anonymous

you along – i say scoffing – if I’m ill so be it I’m ill for a reason it’s about the only truthful experience I’ve had in a long time I don’t want to stop being sick . . . *sickness will surely take the mind where minds can’t usually go come on the amazing journey and learn all you should know . . .* – i sing as Elise looks at me with a puzzled expression on her face – illness protects me from the real world so-called the reality people have constructed which is a kind of hell I’ll take my hell any time over theirs at least it’s mine – i say spitefully. We remain silent as the tram moves through a neighborhood in the outskirts of Utrecht. In a few minutes we arrive at central station and get off the tram – where would you like to go? – Elise asks, as we stand on the platform looking around – how about the Binnenstad the medieval city I always liked that area haven’t been there for twenty years it’s nice to walk around in – i say smiling, my mood seeming to have shifted – do you want to go to the Oudegracht area? – she asks – yeah! the Oudegracht canal area I forgot about that I used to go there all the time lets go there – i respond with enthusiasm – ok we’ll have to walk several blocks to get there – she says – that’s ok with me what about you? – i ask looking at her – sure – she says shrugging – we need to go that way – Elise says pointing in a southeasterly direction.

We walk away from central station and head southeast on Moreelsehoek street, which after about a block makes a sharp turn left toward the Stadsbuitengracht canal. As we’re walking away from the station, Elise puts her hand in the right pocket of my jacket where she finds a folded sheet of paper i left there a few days earlier – what’s this? – she says with curiosity pulling the paper out of my pocket. She stops walking, unfolds the paper and says – wow your handwriting is so neat . . . this looks like you’ve cut and pasted the hand written part onto a typed page – yeah it was the beginning of a collage – i say somewhat irritated – then Elise begins reading in a soft voice – *sequences of sentences series of words pieces there of syllables letters phonemes forming a divergent series resembling thus an infinity of creases and pleats dispersed matter random thoughts . . .* – wait a minute – i interrupt her, feeling self-conscious and snatch the page out of her hands – that’s private stuff you can’t just take things from people like that and please don’t put your hand in my pocket I don’t like that – i say angrily – sorry – she says blushing – I was just curious – haven’t you heard of asking if it’s ok first? you seem to have boundary issues – i say annoyed – sorry – she says again, looking down at the ground, seemingly mortified – I thought we were friends – friends? – i answer back irritated – what are you talking about? I don’t even know you you don’t know me we just met a few days ago it takes time for friendship to develop I don’t believe in instant friendship – I’m sorry I apologize I didn’t mean to upset you – she says looking distressed – look – i say sighing – forget about it ok? chalk this up to my crisis I’m really not well I probably should not have come I’m depressed . . . about everything . . . but . . . let’s just go for a walk in town and try and have a nice time ok? – ok – she says meekly, looking away, still blushing.

We continue walking in silence, heading toward the historic sector of the city. After a couple of short blocks, we arrive at the Marga Klompe bridge that straddles the Stadsbuitengracht canal and walk across. We head in a northeasterly direction onto Mariaplats street. After a while Elise breaks the silence and says with caution – so . . . are you still writing then? – sometimes – i say dryly, still feeling annoyed – is that part of your book? – I don’t know maybe – i say shrugging – it looks interesting – she says quietly – it’s an old habit – i say trying not to sound angry – I keep notebooks or pieces of paper in which I write ideas thoughts I always carry a notebook around with me in my bag pieces of paper in my pockets a pen too – i say in a matter-of-fact tone of voice. We follow Mariaplats for a few minutes until it makes a sharp right which takes us in a southeasterly direction for about a block and then make a sharp left turn onto a narrower version of Mariaplats heading in a northeasterly direction again where, eventually, the street changes name to Zadelstraat – it sounds like you’re a writer – Elise suddenly says assertively – you think so? you think that means I’m a writer? – i say – well ja – Elise answers – by definition a writer is someone who writes often even constantly someone who can’t help himself herself can’t keep himself from writing it’s a need an obsession even – she says looking at me as we walk along Mariaplats toward Zadelstraat – I think of myself more as a scribbler – i mutter sarcastically – this “writer” business sounds a bit too literary to me too artsy – i say smirking

sequences of sentences series of words pieces thereof syllables letters phonemes
forming divergent series resembling thus an infinity of creases and pleats of unified and dispersed matter
random thoughts not much more than that am i this i that no one knows and i myself barely
an elusive shadow that can't be grasped by my very own words my very own thoughts incomplete
me finished in my incompleteness composed of units that are neither logical nor organic the writing
pleats and creases and ragged packets with holes inside out and
outside in the i riddled from within and without by a writing practice that scatters everything that would
world is infinitely cavernous - i whisper gently

with eyes still covered - caverns within caverns
absences because someone has tried to kill me since i was young there's always been someone who
has tried to kill me to put me under do me in shut me up bury me alive as the subject is a

the object of desire as something mortal already half dead in that it keeps alive by consuming death
the byproduct of which is waste and putrefaction... i think... ground up by the machinery of abstract
thinking... the machine of concepts representations dismembered by the system... the veil of illusion
with which we dress ourselves up and others using our imaginations

our bodies to go on living are always already
dying stuffing off the dead in us dead skin dead cells... in other words what we are attracted
to in another in part is death that part that is always disappearing always fading away into the
shadows into that unfathomable darkness from which we all emerged at some undefinable point in the
flow of things the constant process of creation and extinction - i say looking at her seriously to which

we are already dead from the get go we are an ongoing process
of exchange between the living and the dead eventually that process wears out and disintegrates that's
what we call death but that process in turn is part of or an aspect of a larger ongoing process - i
a kestrel appears, multicolored for several creating a breeze
moving their leaves and chimes as darker clouds sing. Then buzzing, she ranges over the maybe, we hum
along. The waves mesmerized with a gentle grim, play when suddenly sway. Back and forth in sync until it

in our
sleep we dream of worlds which we have created along with the minds of several others our consciousnesses
conjoined with that of others by means of the things we've read or hear people say through the
various media and we are surprised taken aback by it because we cannot know that we are not always
ourselves that we are not just something else something other but we are in fact unknown
anonymous not only to others but to ourselves a blind spot - i say softly, feeling nauseous - I'm a
blind spot to myself... my self is a blind spot... I'm a blind spot

Song of Anonymous

at her as i make quotation signs in the air with my fingers – my writing is really a kind of *writhing* I scribble about without trying to make connections without trying to complete ideas make them whole consistent and coherent develop a continuity I also doodle around . . . I scribble between the lines of others' writing I often scribble on their lines in books novels poems magazines and newspapers journals . . . I scribble between them and around them I scribble and doodle on their margins writing a new text I'll write on their texts like an invasive species a weed or a vine – i say trying to catch my breath – I appropriate them by applying my scissors cutting and pasting them in my notebooks I create islands by scribbling rivers lakes and wavy oceans of scribbles and doodles around them – i say, suddenly feeling energized. Elise is looking at me with a wide grin and a crazed expression in her eyes which makes them sparkle – if I am a writer I guess you can say I'm a transgressive writer . . . a lot of the scribbling is asemic – i continue in a frenzy – the hand takes over has a mind of its own its own writing separates itself from my body my mind – i say gasping for air – I'd love to be scribbling on these buildings on the street on people's windows I'm sure my hand would love to if a hand is capable I mean if a severed hand is capable of such a thing of being loving if it had its way it would be scribbling on the walls of these buildings the windows on the cars on the street on the passersby themselves they would be the hand's canvas its paper its notebook turning them into books with multiple entangled stories to tell inscribed etched engraved in their skins their flesh their minds an intanglio an entangle-meant – i say agitated, increasing the pace, feeling a new bout of energy coming over me as Elise grabs onto my arm trying to keep up with my manic tempo – I fidget around with pen in hand my scribbling is a kind of fidgeting really – i say nervously, feeling increasingly self-conscious, wanting to get away from Elise and be alone – I fidget around manically with my scribbling looking for something to say not sure there is anything to say not sure there is anything left to say most people speak without having anything to say they speak to make noise to cover up the unfathomable silence that surrounds us everything cover up the unfathomable emptiness inside – I say breathing with difficulty – all that chitter chatter is just making noise it's like whistling in the dark while walking past a graveyard or some such scary place which is what life this world this universe is nothing but a graveyard a scary place with its unfathomable silence that listens – so what do you propose we do? – Elise asks irritated – nothing do nothing desist stop – i say calmly – stop what exactly? – she asks again visibly annoyed – stop talking for one – i say laughing – but you're the one doing all the talking! – she exclaims angrily – yeah right now but I mean in general as a society we're a culture of gabbers yacketty yacketty yak blah dih blah dih blah incessantly – i say laughing nervously – stop talking stop writing stop composing teaching or whatever this incessant thinking stop forcing ourselves each other to become – become what exactly? – Elise asks irritated – become this become that – i utter manically increasing the pace – stop trying to become a writer an artist the word is so loaded it's surrounded by such an aura such a heavy aura literature art and all that crap it's so romanticized like all the other arts . . . a thinker a philosopher a scholar we're all so desperate to live in the aura of success even if it's vicariously of what use is all this striving once we are on our deathbeds? stop trying to become something other than what we are right now here – i say – well at least you know you tried and don't die full of regrets wondering what would have happened if you had acted upon your desires – Elise says with a dark frown on her face, holding on to my arm trying to keep up with my pace – or you end up having many regrets when you remember all the people you hurt to get where you're at the destruction you caused in order to elevate yourself above others – i answer snidely – In any case I don't see myself as a writer not in the literary sense I don't see writing as a profession I just write because I need to because I enjoy it and also for therapeutic reasons once it's done it's gone it's really a physical thing it's my body my flesh my mind my hand my hand makes me do it I'm not going to exploit it for profit of any kind I'm not going to turn it into a book and in any case if it is a book it's interminable I can't keep up with it – i mutter trying to catch my breath – wait! – Elise suddenly yells interrupting me – can you slow down please? you're going too fast for me – she says pulling on my sleeve. Irritated, i yank my arm away from her and continue speaking – once I get going it's hard for me to stop I can't slow down you'll have to wait for the whole process to run its course before I can slow down stop and anyway it's your fault for asking me all those questions you ask your demanding explanations from me – i say panting agitated

– and all the caffeine I had earlier today probably doesn't help maybe we should have stayed longer in the grove on the mound taken a nap relaxed rested and just be – i say emphatically, looking at her with a big smirk on my face – oh come on now! must you be so mean? can't we relax and "just be-ee" while walking? – she says mockingly making quotation signs in the air – well alright - i say annoyed, suddenly becoming quiet, slowing down the pace as we arrive at the Oudegracht canal and stop before the Maarten bridge.

* * *

Elise takes me by the arm and says – how about if we go and sit down somewhere and have a drink, maybe something to eat too, it's getting near dinner time – that sounds good to me I could go for a nice cold beer – i respond with a smile – but just one or maybe two no more than three – she says admonishingly, wagging a finger at me and giggling lightly – I promise scout's honor – i say raising three fingers from my left hand and grinning facetiously – where would you like to go? – Elise asks – I say the farthest we get from the sex shop the better – well then – she says pointing to our right - we better go that way I know a place right before the Kalis bridge – we turn right, go down a short flight of concrete stairs and begin walking in a northerly direction along the canal. We walk for a couple of blocks and arrive at a square next to the Kalis bridge which is mostly occupied by the tables and chairs belonging to a large restaurant. The place is crowded with tourists – where do you want to sit inside or outside? – Elise asks looking around – outside – i reply – but what if Karl is searching for us? – Elise says suddenly looking worried – well we can sit facing east and west so if he comes from the Kalis bridge or from the Maarten bridge we'll see him I doubt he'll come looking for us he looked like he had enough humiliation – i say looking around fidgeting in my pockets – or maybe that's what he wanted us to think I'd feel a lot more secure if we sat inside and with our backs to the wall – Elise says with a big frown on her face – ok if that's what you want that's fine with me – we walk to the restaurant's entrance and peering through the wide windows see it's packed with people – well it looks like we don't have much of a choice Elise – i say sighing mildly – or maybe we should go somewhere else – she responds uneasily – look I really doubt Karl is coming after us besides what's he going to do? if we sit out here we'll be surrounded by people – i say trying to reassure her – just take off your blazer it's a dead giveaway turn it inside out and fold it over the back of your chair and he won't be able to spot us I'll do the same with my jacket – i say trying to reassure her again – look there's a free table over there we'll be safe there – i say pointing at a table that's just been vacated in the middle of the crowded square – alright – Elise says reluctantly – but if anything happens it's your fault – she says giving me a dirty look as she starts walking toward the table – don't worry nothing's going to happen – i say as we make our way through the noisy crowd. When we arrive, Elise takes off her blazer and i my jacket and we fold them over our chairs and sit down – well this reminds me of the Grote Markt square the other night – Elise says smiling facetiously – oh don't you start with that now – i say reprimanding her jokingly – we already talked enough about all that stuff – maybe – she responds smirking as she opens her bag and reaching in pulls out a lighter and a joint which she swiftly puts between her lips and lights. She inhales deeply and then, after holding her breath for several seconds, begins coughing convulsively – goodness Elise – i say surprised – I didn't know you were a pot head I already feel high just looking at you – i remark beginning to chuckle, Elise bursts into laughter and at the same time offers me the joint – well ok maybe this'll be a pot and absinthe night of course this will ruin any attempts at us staying clear minded and alert in the event Karl shows up – i say sarcastically – it won't matter if we're high enough – she responds giving me a playful wink – maybe you've got a point there – I say after taking a drag from the joint and pass it back to Elise – goodness this is strong stuff! - i exclaim already feeling giddy and euphoric – do you roll your own or do you get Anders to do it for you? – i ask giggling, she laughs and says – I really don't know Anders that well he's an old friend of my sister's I only see him once in a while sometimes when my sister visits the Hague like we did the other night at the Grote Markt square I really don't talk with him very much - she says giggling restlessly, looking at me with glassy, bloodshot eyes – so you roll them yourself? – i ask again – well no I buy them rolled at a coffee shop near my home – she answers distractedly, nervously looking around at the crowded square. I suddenly notice a waitress standing by our table – what would you like? – she asks smiling at us – I would like a couple shots of

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licorice liqueur – Elise says smiling back – and you sir? – the waitress asks – I'll have a beer and a double shot of absinthe too – still smiling, the waitress quickly turns around and zips out of sight – did that just happen? – i ask dumbfounded – what? – Elise says giggling again – did we just order drinks from a waitress? – i ask trying to keep a straight face – Elise begins laughing and says – I think so – we both look at each other and begin laughing uncontrollably – well I hope that wasn't a figment of our imaginations because I would really like a beer – i say giggling nervously – and don't forget the absinthe – Elise says also giggling – I've been a bit absent minded lately do you think the absinthe will make it worse? – i say laughing, Elise slaps her knee and shakes with laughter – I don't know – she says laughing loudly – what difference does it make? maybe being absinthe minded is good for you – she says beginning to laugh again as i bend over laughing uncontrollably. Suddenly, our waitress is back with our drinks. First, she carefully places two shots of licorice schnapps in front of Elise and then, with equal care, she places my beer and my absinthe in front of me after which, like a ballerina, she nimbly spins around and quickly walks away – we forgot to order food – i say startled – I'm starting to get the munchies – don't worry – Elise says sipping on some schnapps – she'll be back again – i pick up the glass of absinthe and take a drink – you know some of what you were saying earlier about the self being a construct of language of our imaginations the mind as a kind of theater or maybe better yet a kind of movie theater? – Elise says smiling and winking at me taking another drag from her joint – all that reminds me of what the Buddhists say in the Lankavatara Sutra – yeah? what's that? what do they say? – i ask as i finish off what's left of the absinthe – we are all one consciousness experiencing itself subjectively nothing is born and nothing dies life is like a dream we are the imaginations of ourselves what we think of as objective reality is a projection of our minds – she answers cheerfully – are you saying you're a figment of my imagination? – i respond with skepticism – no the way you perceive me what you see and hear of me is a mental construct a construct your mind puts together with the information it receives through the sensory apparatus if it can be called that an apparatus which also functions as a kind of filter as you said earlier it's a purely subjective experience it's all mind all of reality is mind you implied as much when you talked about an unfathomable silence that listens – she says with a serious expression on her face, her mood seeming to have suddenly changed – the entire universe is aware which to me is a frightening thought it's not only an unfathomable silence that listens a sentient silence but an unfathomable silent darkness that listens a kind of sentient darkness a sentient emptiness that listens to our cries our anguish our pain and terror impassively with cold detachment we are surrounded by an utter darkness that observes us the way a ruthless predator impassively watches its prey from its dark lair – she says frowning with tears welling up in her eyes – whoa! – i exclaim sitting up in my chair – I think you're letting all that the you've been putting in your system get to you – i say trying to smile – that's one reason why I stopped smoking the stuff it made me feel depressed and paranoid not a good combination – you're smoking it now aren't you? – she answers glaring at me – well yeah but I hardly ever touch the stuff plus I'm on vacation I can allow myself some liberties and besides I'm already depressed and paranoid as it is they cancel each other out I don't see how it's going to make a difference in that regard – i say shrugging, reaching for my beer, and then Elise says, wiping tears from her eyes – what I was really trying to say is that . . . what we think of as reality . . . what we think of as objective reality . . . or rather . . . what we think we perceive as objective reality is a construct of our minds a picture if you will a representation put together by our minds our brains assuming they're the same thing – she says beginning to giggle – it's very difficult to explain all this with words without falling into metaphorical language . . . and that in itself says a lot about the ungraspableness of what I'm trying to describe I guess I'm trying to go beyond language with language itself which of course is impossible! – she says flustered – I mean it's as if . . . there's the *as if* again . . . with each word uttered one pushes further away what one is trying to get at – she says chuckling helplessly – it's as if you're trying to reach for something but the very act of reaching pushes the thing you're trying to grab further away – i sit quietly looking at Elise unable to say anything. After a while I shrug and say – yeah well all of what you just said so well is one reason why I stopped trying to explain . . . to figure out . . . to grasp . . . what reality is I mean to try and grasp it conceptually . . . try and imagine what it is . . . to try and think it . . . thought is limited thought and language are limited . . . thought and language are a part . . . an aspect of reality . . . or . . . what is but a very small a tiny part of reality and can't grasp the totality of it from that particular

position of tininess . . . thought and language can't apprehend the totality of which they are a part an aspect - i say catching my breath and then continue - it would be like a cell in the tip of a hair on an elephant's tail trying to grasp . . . perceive . . . apprehend the elephant's entire body . . . or somethink like that - i say tiredly - it's pointless to go on talking about it . . . reality is boundless whatever that means it made me sick trying to grasp it all I can say is that it's boundless but I can't say I understand what that boundlessness is it lies beyond anything I can imagine I'm too limited to understand what that means or is and the distinction or sameness between *means* and *is* is difficult for me to grasp too all I can do is admit that there's a lot more to reality than me and that most of it is unknown to me or maybe there's a lot more of what we think of as the me - ja - Elise suddenly cuts in - the thirteenth century Japanese Buddhist monk Dogen Kigen said that our true body our true self is the entire universe - yeah well I really don't want to know about all that the universe whatever that means . . . whatever that may be it gives me the creeps I'm horrified by existence absolutely horrified - i suddenly pause briefly, frowning, and then say - I'm too puny to be thinking about all this stuff - i say breathing with difficulty - life the universe reality and all that it gives me vertigo it makes me nauseous I just can't deal with it lets just stick to this reality here to the earth and leave it at that please no wonder Descartes split himself off from the world it's too much to handle! - Elise begins laughing again - at heart I'm really a very simple person Elise I'm happy enjoying a beer lying in a grove of trees taking a nap or looking at the sky through the branches simple everyday things like that make my day I'm just your simple average so and so - yeah right there's nothing simple or average about you - Elise says squinting and pointing her finger at me - you don't fool me - i shrug and take another sip of beer. We sit quietly for a while enjoying our drinks, listening to the sounds from the crowd around us until Elise says - speaking of Descartes and going back to what you were saying about writing and the reader . . . I think a lot of theorizing that is done about writing and interpretation is mired in Cartesian dualism the split between mind and body between mind and the world the subject separate from the world . . . don't you think? - i look at her and shrug - I mean I think that someone like Derrida is still at heart a cartesian thinker because of his faith in thought in language and discourse as instruments to convey ideas and describe the world and thought itself - Elise says looking at me with a big grin on her face - what do you mean? - i ask, somewhat intrigued - well his idea that writing making our mark on the world so to speak is necessary for being is not that far removed from the Cartesian view that the mind contains all of reality writing after all is not separate from thinking and language from the intellect - she says looking at me and taking another puff from her joint - I don't follow - i answer and take another sip from my glass - well according to him to Derrida since everything is an endless play of signification ultimately an object the world and this includes ourselves can only exist as a representation all we really have are the signs with which we construct representations which always already displace the thing the object represented the signified displaced replaced by its description . . . the process of signification itself and ourselves included - she says seriously - I still don't follow - i say frowning at her - I tend to agree with the last thing you said but I don't see the connection with what you said earlier about Derrida basically being a Cartesian thinker - well - Elise says taking another sip of her schnapps - for him - for who? - i ask, interrupting her - for Derrida - she answers - for him there can be no pure meaning because meaning can't be reduced to the object itself because meaning is something that takes place somewhere in the relationship between the signifier and the signified and that process of signification takes place exclusively in our minds it's an internal process if you will and more specifically a process that takes place in one's intellect which Descartes saw exclusively as the self as being - o . . . k . . . - I mutter cautiously, fidgeting nervously in my chair - go on - I mean - Elise says grinning at me - like with Descartes for Derrida being the self is an exclusively intellectual matter and this includes language thought and therefore writing his analysis seems to be based on a basic separation between the self and the world for him . . . - for who? - i ask interrupting Elise again - for Jacques - Elise says giggling mildly - any attempt of the self to know itself exists apart from the world just as it does for Descartes - can you elaborate on that - i utter, feeling overwhelmed - Elise rolls her eyes playfully and says - for Jacques the relationship of the self to any kind of external reality physical or otherwise is mostly irrelevant to his analysis of the importance of language in being because as I've already said for him being is exclusively defined as the intellect of which

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language is a part he's not really interested in any kind of relationship between the self and external reality because according to him that relationship is not possible and the reason for this is that it's all a play of signs taking place in the mind the intellect it's always already an internal process . . . what I'm trying to say here is that the separation between mind and the world is a foundational assumption that permits him Jacques to carry out his analysis - Elise says smiling at me smugly, gently rocking her crossed leg - but what really gets me about all this about the poststructuralists and their followers of which to a point I am one - Elise says grinning facetiously - is this need for authority both to be one and to have one to follow someone to tell us what to think and how to think someone to tell us what is true and what isn't while at the same time criticizing authority and hierarchical structures criticizing power criticizing the "truth" I mean what's disappointing to me is that it's crystalized into a truth it's become yet another "Truth" with capital T - she says chuckling making quotation signs in the air with her fingers - a ground a foundation and that leads to the establishment of hierarchies power structures especially in academe I mean criticizing the need for an absolute truth a foundation but still setting oneself up as an authority figure professing a truth of some kind like the critique of presence or the critique of origins for example or the critique of power while at the same time climbing the ladder and fighting striving for position within the academic hierarchy holding onto and becoming part of that power structure - Elise says visibly exasperated - I mean the very same people who preached all of that weren't willing to let go of power themselves and became part of the problem - goodness Elise - i say frowning dumbfounded - we already talked about all that - i mutter tiredly - we already know there's a lot of hypocrisy the people who are always pushing and challenging others to change aren't willing to change themselves they don't undergo the radical change of consciousness they're always preaching they want to be the bosses they're attached to power to their positions and the privileges that come with those positions their lifestyles their fame they're part of the problem none of that is news one thing that never really got taken down are hierarchies even by those who were always talking about it they love their hierarchies they love their positions in those hierarchies from which they preach de-hierarchization - i say panting - but they're not all bad there's Luce Irigaray for example whom I like a lot do you know her? - Elise asks giving me a nudge under the table - actually I do - i answer annoyed sitting up in my chair and moving my legs away from Elise's - I read a book of hers called *The Way of Love* which I liked a lot it was a breath of fresh air especially within the predominantly grim confrontational and antagonistic environment of the male dominated field of philosophy and critical theory in academia - i utter tiredly, dismissively waving my hand - oh yes! I love that book! - Elise exclaims - it was truly subversive especially in the context you just mentioned I mean she dared talk about something that is rarely talked about she talked about love closeness intimacy with others and talked about yoga and eastern philosophy as a way of unifying body and mind in an environment predominantly under the sway of the Cartesian mindset where the self is seen as separate from the world and people have hardened into battleship personalities who see each other as potential competitors potential enemies . . . you can see this in their propensity toward militaristic language with words like *attack* and *strategy* and so on - Elise says sarcastically, smirking at me - yeah . . . well . . . so much for my asking you not to talk to me about this stuff anymore! - well you'll have to admit I've piqued your interest haven't I? - she answers back grinning at me - well yeah but . . . but . . . anyway - i continue annoyed - I thought Derrida was trying to break down all those dualities all those binary oppositions like the mind versus body dichotomy - well yes he was but he was always already doing it based on his faith in the intellect . . . from the point of view of an enclosed subject that is always already separate from the world . . . maybe he failed to break down those binary oppositions in himself he was still acting in the world as a divided self - Elise says frowning, looking concerned - it may very well be he didn't go far enough that his critique wasn't radical enough as some people have argued he wasn't radical enough with himself he and other postmodernist thinkers didn't deconstruct themselves their own minds they just theorized about it but didn't actualize it there was still a center a hardened center the *me* and that center is foundational it constitutes a ground on which their works and their actions in the world were based - she says still frowning and then takes another sip of schnapps - interesting I hadn't thought about all that - i mutter quietly and take a sip of beer - as you know - Elise continues - for the postmodern thinkers language is everything

language is all we have whereas nonduality for the Buddhists enables them to redefine the “problem” of language and being – she says grinning, making quotation signs in the air – according to this book I read recently¹ for someone like Dogen language is both necessary and irrelevant now to many this might sound like foundationalism because it assumes a kind of transcendent truth that can be reached but the claim that language is all we have is itself foundational and based on the Cartesian dualisms that postmodernists claim to undermine – Elise asserts, looking at me with an ironic smirk – and as I said before some people say Derrida’s critique didn’t go far enough that it wasn’t radical enough that it didn’t go far enough in deconstructing itself like his notion of difference which stops short of breaking down the dualities it claims to break down . . . – how so? – i cut in with skepticism – what people? – . . . and this is because he Jacques didn’t seem to fully understand that deconstructing one term of a duality for example self-presence the transcendental signified also transforms the other term say supplementation difference and so on – yeah . . . I don’t remember much of that stuff anymore it’s been a long time – i mutter with resignation – so though Derrida disrupted the hierarchy of signifier to thing he still remained stuck in the halfway space of a burgeoning pure textuality whereas a complete deconstruction of those dualities would lead to a way of experiencing not dominated by them in fact according to the Buddhists to someone like Dogen the complete breakdown of those dualities leads to a deep transformation of body and mind and to how we relate to the world a transformation in how we experience ourselves our physicality in the world which also means a transformation in how we define the self and being in this world leading to an experience of reality beyond language the dualities inherent in language and thought which we as a culture embrace prevent us from realizing the nonduality we seek – are you sure about that? – i say, interrupting her again – are you sure that we’re seeking nonduality? who is this we? i really don’t think most of those people those thinkers you’re referring to are or were seeking nonduality – well – Elise responds – they were seeking to break down Cartesian dualities . . . – yes but that doesn’t mean they were seeking nonduality in the sense the Buddhists seem to mean it – i abruptly cut in again – it was more about inverting those hierarchies the power structures in them in order to seize that power for themselves I don’t think they were interested in the kind of merger of subject and object the Buddhists seem to be talking about which would seem to entail a relinquishing of power of the me the nonattachment they’re always going on about – well yes – Elise responds looking flustered – I mean that’s the point of the criticism that they Derrida and other postmodern thinkers didn’t go far enough weren’t radical enough . . . the deconstruction of the dualities inherent in language and thought and in Western philosophical discourse in general would finally point to an experience a direct perception beyond language and thinking and a nondual way of experiencing language and thought a very different way of using language and thought you can see this in Dogen’s own writings which are copious and the unconventional manner in which he uses language . . . but most westerners are afraid of undergoing such a transformation such an overturning of their minds because we fear losing control of ourselves and others we fear vulnerability above everything else let’s face it most of those thinkers are or were still very Western-centric Euro-centric even I don’t think Derrida and other postmodern thinkers experienced that deep body and mind transformation and seemed to have remained hardened Cartesian egos until the end their deconstruction remained only an intellectual exercise which is in keeping with Decartes’ view of the self as being nothing more than the intellect – Elise says looking at me seriously, sounding slightly pained - well don’t you think Derrida was aware of all that? – i ask frowning at her – it’s hard to believe he wasn’t – she answers pensively - but maybe he didn’t know how to get out of that situation maybe his faith in thought’s ability to solve these problems was excessive thought itself being an aspect of that interiority I was talking about the self as intellect . . . which is what the Zen Buddhists say thought can’t apprehend the truth reality only aspects of it you said this yourself a while ago when you said thought and language are too limited to grasp reality and if it is philosophy’s main mission to grasp reality and understand our place in the world life

¹ Yagelski, Robert P., *Writing, Being and Nonduality, Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability*, Hampton Press, Inc., 307 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, 2011.

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the universe and everything it is bound to fail if it relies exclusively on thought just as we are bound to fail if we rely exclusively on belief because belief is basically an act of the imagination a product of our minds – Elise says smiling – now wait a second here I’m a bit confused – i say still frowning – didn’t you say a while ago that for Descartes reality is contained in the mind? – ja as representation reality is represented in the mind – she answers – ok but didn’t you also say a while back that the Buddhists in that sutra you mentioned . . . – the Lankavatara Sutra – Elise says – yes the Lankavatara Sutra didn’t you say that in that sutra the Buddhists say that what we think of as reality the objective world is all mind that it is a construct that takes place in our minds? – yes – Elise says grinning – so the Buddhists and Descartes agree on this? – i say puzzled – it would seem that way doesn’t it – Elise says smiling again – but whereas for Descartes the self is basically the intellect for the Buddhists the self is much more than just the intellect the me the ego they don’t reject the intellect and thought they just see them as an aspect of the true self a small part of the true self for them the self includes the entire body and they go further than that as Dogen said our true body our true self is the entire universe itself what he called *immo* the inconceivable that being the case the self is not separate from the world it *is* the world for the Buddhists there is no separation between self and other or to be more precise reality is paradoxical in that we are independent individuals and at the same time we are dependent on the entire universe we are different aspects manifestations if you like of the universe for them the relative and the absolute aren’t separate mutually exclusive they’re enmeshed you can find the absolute in the relative transitory everyday world we live in – so what? are you a Buddhist now? do you practice Buddhist meditation and all that? – i ask with disbelief – oh no! – Elise answers chuckling – I’m afraid I’m as stuck in the Cartesian mind set just as much as all those others I’ve been talking about! – she exclaims beginning to laugh while taking another sip of schnapps - goodness Elise – i say and cross my eyes sticking my tongue out one side of my mouth as i tilt my head sideways – wot is tha’ supposed to mean? – she asks putting on a mock British accent – what? can’t you interpret a few simple gestures? like a tilted head crossed eyes and a dangling tongue – i respond sarcastically – well they could mean anything – she says taking another token from her joint – no they’re very specific physical gestures which when taken together mean *I’m too wasted to have this conversation* you’re going to make me have a *surmenage* – i say with emphasis, smirking at her. Elise giggles and takes another sip of her schnapps – aren’t you at all intrigued that Cartesianism still has such a strong hold on people’s thinking in this postmodern age? – she asks – no – i respond flatly – I already told you I’m done with all that it’s utterly pointless it’s just an empty academic exercise all that thinking it hasn’t changed much of anything human beings continue to be the same self-centered assholes we’ve been for millennia . . . none of this matters anymore Elise I mean you might be right or you might be wrong or some of both but the fact still remains that none of those thinkers you mentioned or the ones before them in the Western tradition and in the East have managed to bring about a radical change of consciousness in humanity and so avert the general movement toward destruction we’ve been seeing for decades and which has been going on for a long time before you and I were born – i say with a grimace as i reach for my drink – clearly none of that has worked and we keep going back to it all banging our heads against the wall hoping things will change that’s why one day I ended up walking away from the whole thing in academe and elsewhere it’s a dead end a kind of death that keeps us in place repeating the same mistake over and over again it’s a kind of madness . . . you know – i say breathing tiredly - all these things we say all these thoughts all this speculation this constant talking to each other and to ourselves in our heads is the product of trauma we’re a traumatized lot suffering from ptsd a collective ptsd we’re a severely traumatized people and we try to compensate for it by becoming this becoming that doing this and doing that – i say annoyed, with a wave of my hand - one big act of negation we’re in a constant state of denial about what ails us always trying to escape it the fact of our pain our misery all of which leads to more trauma we compound the trauma further we do it to ourselves and each other – i mutter heavily - and for your information we’re no longer in the postmodern age we’re in the post postmodern age or maybe even in the post post postmodern age the *after after* age capiche? and besides considering the catastrophe we’re in and the regression to barbarism we’re seeing everywhere those categories are irrelevant no longer functional – i say beginning to yawn – have you thought of writing all these ideas

down? maybe you should write a paper about all this stuff you've been going on about and in the process leave me out of it *finito* end of story ok? – i say giving Elise a wink – ja I've been thinking about writing about all this stuff but I wanted to know what you think about it – she says – you mean you want to pick my brain and use me as a sounding board for your ideas not tonight dahling I'm too high I can't concentrate on a discussion like this one besides for me there never has been a separation between mind and body my mind and the world all of that doesn't and never did connect with my experience that's not how I experience reality it's a false dichotomy a false problem a lot of people around the world a lot of cultures don't experience the world and themselves the way Descartes did or is said to have . . . people . . . teachers . . . so-called educators foisted that way of being in the world on me on us . . . maybe Descartes was ill have you thought of that? he felt alienated from the world . . . maybe he experienced the world that way due to trauma due to some terrible childhood trauma he separated himself from the world maybe his entire oeuvre was a very elaborate rationalization which he developed as protection to distance himself from the pain the fear it was a defense mechanism it was a dissociative maneuver thinking that way is a dissociative defense mechanism against this mad world we live in I mean not the world but against humanity's insanity afterall if there's anything that can be said about us human beings it's that we are a violent lot and have made conditions in this world hellish with our violence and destructiveness and of course that self-alienation produces further trauma – i utter trying to catch my breath - that's a very interesting idea – Elise says with a big grin on her face – I think I'll investigate that maybe that'll be the main theme of my paper I mean about Descartes' thinking being the product of trauma . . . - not so fast dahlin' – i say smirking – that's twenty bucks fork 'em over – Elise starts to giggle – I don't give away my ideas my precious insights away for free you know? – i say looking around for our waitress –

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in the liminal, hypnagogic state between wakefulness and sleep, i hear an intermittent voice in the distance, speaking in a reciting tone. At first i think it's an announcement as the voice seems to issue from the speakers in the ceiling above, but soon it becomes the scratchy, creaky voice of an old man i've heard before in my dreams – . . . *the anchored mind screwed into me by the psycholubricous thrust of the night sky* – the raspy voice recites - returning from a story between points dissimilarities dissimilarities as distances one winces – it whispers in my ear – huh? what? – i mumble tiredly – shut up go away who the fuck do you think you are? – i mutter annoyed in my half sleep – *I don't think I am* – the voice whispers emphatically in my ear - one end of this disjuncture dimensions enraptured by ruptures under wraps one jags zigzags irregularly allowing for gaps to show in the reading the writing the *writhing* – the voice snickers - jagged shapes puzzle-like slowly swirling round an ism an ism as isthmus erratically erotically bumping into . . . you said so yourself remember? – the voice giggles facetiously - the materiality of the impossible a subtraction polyvocal perambulation thought I saw less than dust I comes away with no pictures succeeding another imperative the making of . . . ticulars an . . . ducible . . . teriality avant . . . indeed practice . . . ing as . . . city . . . ple . . . lity fore . . . of its . . . ials and . . . tions not only does it continue to change it also leads into further – the gruff voice says coughing gently - how the maintains disjunctions the between indeed installed malpractice of . . . inants rather twin dom . . . volume collectivity to name a key series of . . . deafening moments signals the end of the moment of the signal colliding traces against a wall burning electric – the voice says, seeming to fade into the distance remaining silent for a while only to return abruptly, speaking in my ear with a raspy whisper - when they speak this way a gargantuan struggle ensues in me a struggle in which I have to find new ways of believing in myself recuperate myself from their thievery take back my body and mind blood and marrow believe in myself again thus what is called the writing subject left us behind again – the raspy voice says, coughing again – there is of course something missing – it stammers abruptly – something is always missing one can't help but overlook something however carefully one may have thought about what one is doing what one wants to write wha' happens is not only is something always missing but something is always amiss – the voice says with scorn - one always has the sensation the

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feeling the notion the unbearable feeling and notion that something is amiss because of this because something is always amiss one that is to say / cannot keep myself from writing incessantly in the constant process of writing I may find what's missing I may stumble across what's amiss and therefore recuperate it in the constant process of writing one may however unwittingly cover all the gaps plug in all the holes and crevasses found in reality cover all the textures all the shapes colors hues and layers cover it all up with descriptions such that nothing may escape one's perception so that nothing from the other side may poke through and gain a foot hold in this our reality you see? – the scratchy voice implores – it is this kind of generalized distortion that gives the thinking its rich delicious *delirious* quality – it says quietly, as if praying – its saturation with branches twigs turns reflections eddies and curlicues tangential planes and lines of flight *somos divagantes* – the voice mutters in Spanish - we are digressive divergent . . . can't distinguish anymore between night and day day becomes night night becomes death and emptiness day becomes black as pitch and night a searing white light they blend into each other leaving not much of a gap a small fissure perhaps which if one were to fall into it one would lose oneself in a swirling miasma of gray hues which is where I long to be where I belong they blend together becoming like photographic negatives of each other I go forth arrayed in a glaring white robe into the cold darkness of a night eternal as I reach the center point the image is reversed I am suddenly dressed in a frigid ink-black gown disappearing blindly into the searing white daylight helpless . . . resisting all drives to accumulated meaning into a continuum of time understood as force I throw myself into death chanting *I throw myself among the dead* – it whispers hoarsely, now chanting - *I throw myself among the dead*

this I see hear when I'm writing the words themselves broken their sounds their images fragments of materials adrift like flotsam debris from a wreckage in the onrushing current of circumstances that is our existence the writing itself the drifting words a kind of mapping of catastrophe bumping into each other searching each other's jagged edges like chunks of ice floating refuse drifting down river toward the falls like flotsam jagged white grayish shapes puzzle-like slowly swirling round and round caught in a whirlpool like jetsam near the river's edge where the bend begins blindly searching each other's edges shapes erratically bumping into each other never quite fitting in

where are we now? the story began somewhere I know – the voice says - but soon got lost among many others and I'm hard pressed to say which one matters most though it seems the turbulence the mayhem the energy generated by them all is what counts that juncture is what's worth telling about and behind it behind the writing that upon which and against which the writing incises resisting the indagations where pen and pencil are like daggers with ever blunted points prying at the surface of things as one tries to gather in a few gestures the facts and events into a landscape which might give it all some kind of sense wherein even the senseless has its place – the voice mutters with each raspy exhalation – all the faces all the voices blend into one face blend into one voice – it whispers cautiously - it is the silence that listens it listens to our listening this unfathomable eternal silence at the heart of all things

where am I now? – the voice starts again abruptly - the deluge has passed leaving behind a carpet of white petals and green leaflets strewn about the ground and my shadow my shadow is lost among the shadows of others further down the road the muddied furrowed roads I look down upon them with frowning forehead aching the darkening shadows of trees growing long in the cool evening air I need to see know where the river goes where it jumped up from the ground among ancient rocks unknown why it rolls along seemingly without a care not knowing why or where its next turn or jump will end without a care it leaps aimlessly flowing like life itself life represents itself points to itself incessantly

where are we now? the deluge is past or will soon be for it is still raging and we are here alone alone on this rock over which a cloud of dust rises above our heads over cities and mountains unknown a handful of dust over the eons multiplied rising above the hills over the restless cities of the night we call our home these labyrinthine thoughts voices and images coming out of murky walls then absorbed back into oblivion echoing a handful of dust over eons multiplied having become a desert this labyrinth of bones rising over rooftops and hills this

handful of dust over the years multiplied now having become a billowing cloud of brown and gray a handful of dust or ashes over the eons having become a desert lifted up into the heavens by a restlessly searching wind this cold and empty wind we hear rattling our doors trying to get in a cascade of sounds images and thoughts pounding on our walls a clatter of dry bones rattling the doors and windows only to be absorbed back into oblivion again this cold and empty wind blowing through me and everything alone in the vertex of a groan that issued ages ago from where? from where? from the center of *where* as these words issue from the center of who? of what? of where? a cold breath issuing from a beginningless past arising ages ago from where? from the center of where? just as these words issue from the center of *where* from the center of *where am I now?*

I will never say I because of everyone I won't speak again no I won't speak to anyone no one will speak to me I will listen to no one just as no one listens to me I won't speak to myself there is nothing left to say nothing but dust will spew from my mouth dust blown by the cold wind the freezing cold wind that incessantly blows through everything throughout millennia from a beginningless past - the voice mutters trembling -

Meneer! Meneer! - i hear a woman's voice call in Netherlands - Meneer! - she calls again, giving my shoulder a nudge. i open my eyes and see i'm lying on my side on the bench. i look up and see a tall, blonde female police officer grinning down at me. i slowly sit up yawning and rubbing my eyes - had a rough night? - she asks giving me a wink - thanks for waking me up I was having a really weird dream - i manage to mutter - too much to drink? - she asks chuckling mildly - you might say that - i counter weakly - were you waiting for a train? - she asks smiling - yes the six o'clock to Den Haag - i mumble back tiredly - well you missed it it's a quarter past six but there's another one at six thirty five try not to fall asleep! have a good day - she says smiling again and briskly walks away - thanks - i manage to mumble under my breath, eyeing with longing the side of the bench i was lying on -

Charles Stein

As You Are

(80th birthday)

You did
begin

or if not
 you exactly
still —

not
 not YET
 you

but your ancient father
sitting on a bench
in the hallowed past

it can never be eradicated

 you're so old
and you can't even say what you are

**

You are
as you are
because you aren't
what
you are but more than that —

the living difference
from the well-known
thing — what you want to say
but cannot — this
difficulty, itself
the one we all
confound ourselves
to find ourselves
outside
in

Five Poems & One Drawing

All the Dandelions

1

that ever flourished
on any lawn
till now

assigned a proper index so if
anybody ever wants to find one?

not a problem

2

Hear that rushing silence?

Any beast
since beasts began

heard it too
roaring away
when all other sound subsided
and they attended.

3

Now complete the graph
by writing down the function
in neat hand
at the bottom of the ledger.

That way
when mother comes in here
she'll think we've been *proper busy*

(sneaky me
 busy
 at the bottom
 of the ledger

Charles Stein

can't cheat me—

I've absorbed
the crime
against me
into my own crime
beforehand

(tricky me

4

Need to get back to sleep now:

dream beforehand
unwritten on any ledger

percolates
behind the mind screen

so that these words
appear
before
the proper dream—

later perhaps.

5

Time shmime

(screw time)

time screws
round and round
the null hypothesis—the one where nothing
proposes itself,
or I do,

I propose nothing

at the start
of any ledger

Five Poems & One Drawing

any
calculation
of the real which
existence doesn't proffer
but keeps
 secret
in its own
allotment
to itself
of just how weird it is
that nothing
seems

6

Now I'll allow
sleep to flourish

as if a large rotunda
of flourishing bushes
burst from the shore

where I swam
in spite of everything
against the coastal waters

but there was a rocky promontory where I foundered

the first time
and now again

or again again

since this dream has already
foundered
on its own occurrence
and receded
behind the mind screen

where was I?

now?
or then—

Charles Stein

here
behind the mind screen

7

Soon I'll hear
my own words
read
by own voice
back to me

and the little I knew
in the uttering of them
shall have vanished utterly

into an oblivion
all their own

8

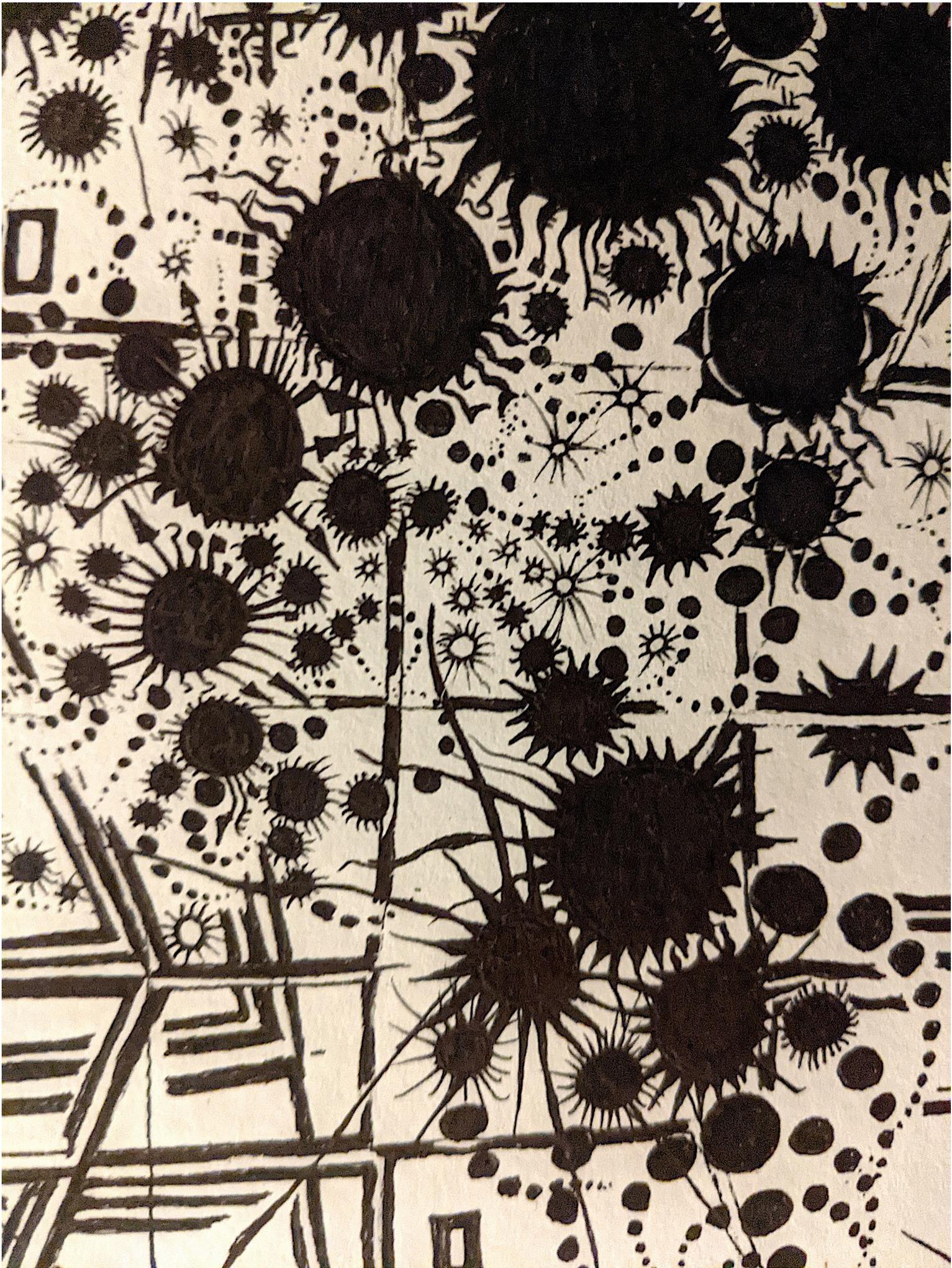
Shall I dwell
on oblivion

or in it?

absent
from my own occurrence

even now
when I do or did occur
for the first time

even



Who Says This?

That thinking today is a Ghost Dance—
Jacques Derrida the Ghost Dance
 of language itself—
watching the sunset
 sail off into the sunset—
Being's
 transfinite
 ocean of metonyms
where meanings go to return
 back through their last initiation,
the vast imperium of meanings
 "solved"—

their spanking welcome home
through the very portals of emergence
as if the creaky door
twixt timelessness and oblivion
swung both ways—

"Do you know where you are, little mouse?"

"Certainly! Alive
in the Master's vestibule.
And you, who inquire
 so peremptorily—
do *you* know
 anything
 at all?"

Five Poems & One Drawing

9-2-15

The Mind of Money

1

later perhaps. The entire panoply of human intellect
integrated and resolved
to the Eye
of an exquisitely selected
avian synecdoche

(the crank neck of a great blue heron
its terrified machinery
jetting across eyesight to the lily pond

all the money gone (again)
and the Mazeway
internal to the individual consciousness
marking out
livingly
the moments at which the day's events
selectively
are to happen.

Beyond that:
unpleasant encounters
austerities
immobilities.

Sufficient money
opens the Mazeway —

time becomes a playground —

Rappaport I think was the anthropologist
Richard Grossinger studied with
who chose the word "Mazeway"
for the living maps
inside the mind
that charted a culture's possibilities

and I use it here
for the living calendar
that organizes thoughts
about existence itself
into a workable schema.

Charles Stein

3-28-15

Who Were Those Tiglons?

every moment
its own

[picture]

excerpted from the whole

imagined
of time
and set upon for milking:
hermeneutics.

The tiglons I remember
from the Central Park Zoo
circa 1947
were named David and Charles,
or did my father, David, make this up to amuse me?

Now google that: the names
of the Tiglons
in the Central Park Zoo
circa 1947.

Five Poems & One Drawing



From the 1860s to 1890s, prominent citizens such as financier August Belmont and inventor Samuel Morse donated various animals; General Custer gave the zoo a rattlesnake, and General Sherman offered an African Cape buffalo, one of the spoils of his march through Georgia. One of the zoo's most exotic donations was a "tiglon" that was donated to the City in 1938. Charles the Tiglon was the offspring of a female African lion and a male Siberian tiger, the combination of which being more rare than a "liger," which is the offspring of a male lion and female tiger.

OPEN SPACE



On the occasion of Benjamin Boretz's 90th birthday, we are proud to announce the website dedicated to Ben's music, writings, thoughts, and performances

www.benjaminboretz.org

website designed by Tildy Bayar

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