

inter/tidal. *ii.*

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Traveling between “here” and “there:” Hunting through collections for small ghosts

Kaia Scott

A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only when he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes ... a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. (Benjamin as cited in Gordon 65)

There is a restlessness with the notion of “place” that we can be reluctant to talk about. I notice, in myself and others, its symptoms: the desire to move frequently, to be focused always on the next location. We see ourselves ever drawn forward—maybe for school, for a job, to a partnership of some kind, always some *reason* for being in the place where we live. The concept of “home,” maybe more thoroughly expressed by the German word *heimat*, is a notion we have heard of, think about, but do not *know* in the sense that we believe others to have known it. It exists somewhere in soft focus and sepia tones, and we are suspicious of the nostalgia that seems to saturate it. One could say that we have merely extended a means-ends rationality onto the existential concept of “home,” but this explanation allows far too much to fall through its skeletal theory. With the declining relevance of many of our cultural institutions: marriage, trades, folk-cultural events, anchors of the self fall away. Postmodern and proud of it? Sure. The battles to rid ourselves of the shackles of outdated and unforgiving social structures have been well fought and hard won. We certainly wouldn’t choose to rebuild that which is rightfully shattered. And yet, what is it that we do when we find ourselves drifting, looking for fragments of meaning? With my own research, as with that of many of my colleagues, we often paint broad-stroked pictures of the life of the “lost” and “fragmented” individual. But are we too these individuals? If so, how do we cope?

As a member of a community of students who are interested in European modernism, there is an interesting contradiction. We are

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moved by the revolutionary energy that wanted to smash aesthetic artifacts and images handed down by older traditions, as their seeming wholeness was too monolithic and could not express the fractured, messy reality of “life on the ground.” The difficulty is that, in order to pay tribute to this energy, we must simultaneously contribute to a field that looks backwards towards (mainly) Western Europe at a time when it was setting the tone for a kind of global (monolithic) standard of modernity, and was the colonial empire of the world. All the while, we ourselves serve to reinforce the “official” canons of modern culture in a world where “life on the ground,” in many ways, is struggling to leave the shadows of those very canons behind. This contradiction has asked demanding questions of me, and my commitment to the type of art and criticism that I study, as I’m sure it has of many others. For this particular exercise, I am hoping to sketch out some kind of orientation from among a few projects that are true to their inspirations from modernist Europe while attempting to express their inspiration in a way that does not rebuild dead edifices. In similarities between these projects, I sense nodes of active, living searches for fragments, the acknowledgement of cultural debtors, and interrogations of our slippery sense of space.

When I look at correspondences that emerge in certain works done by my peers that interrogate “place,” a map of restlessness reveals itself here and there to tell us stories about aspects of our time and its relationship to place. I want to be so bold as to examine their work, in part, through the lens of my own self-understanding, and as similarities arise, gather aspects of other people’s work into its fold. Hopefully this can give dimension to parts of this small map. Perhaps I am seeing a small zeitgeist where there is really nothing but my own shadow, but then again, this little ghost might have something to tell us...

I will begin with three objects of correspondence: an issue of a journal that I have been planning to co-edit with a colleague and mentor to be titled “The View from Here,” a journal published recently by two colleagues called *inter/tidal*, and a magazine in-the-making conceived and edited by a writer and friend and a colleague of her own. The ideas for these three projects, developed and curated completely independently of each other, have three particular qualities that make them overlap into a curious constellation. The first quality is that these

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projects are all conspicuously collections. Secondly, each project has, as part of its foundational architecture, an arch that extends from Vancouver to an imagined “old Europe” (specifically Western European cities such as Berlin, Amsterdam, and Paris): Vancouver, for its part, presents a confronting topography—a real space that shapes the search as we attempt to address both its contours and its indefinable void. On the other side of this arch there is a flare that illuminates and animates the “old Europe,” and it comes from a time that loosely circles World War II. The third aspect of correspondence is that across each of these arches travels a ghost. In the act of creating/curating these objects with the help of these three aspects of correspondence, the people involved are working to observe or map an orientation of our relationship to our own space and time. It is this quality that calls me to see if they will layer into a pampisest through which a small zeitgeist can be seen.

(August 21st, 2004: scent—caught by something speaking beneath my own voice)

I stand on a hot crumbling street in East Berlin—plaster and badly done graffiti the ubiquitous markers—and lean up against a brick windowsill facing the cold grey plastic shutters that secure the divide between in/out. Over a grate the cool, stale air of long-time death of concrete cellars blows up my legs from the city’s catacombs of basements. The smell is unmistakable. I realize again, with the help of a Salter novel that the cultural fixation with “everything is as it is meant to be” is a distinctly North American idea. We feed on it like hummingbirds on sugar water. We need it to survive. Standing amidst the unapologetic crumbling of East Berlin and thinking of my weekend’s visit to Prague, I don’t quite know what to do with the feeling that North American culture seems vacant and insubstantial. Persistent, but misguided. Loose: future is impossible as we have ceased to believe in its potential: we think it is already here. And the past, well, the past is non-existent, doesn’t matter but as a foundation for our futurepresent; we believe we are “meant” to be here, now. I think we suffer from a lack of visible dirt. It is only the possibility of ignoring the past that allows us to pretend we are still new. Dirt clings to us all, but ours, not speaking from the buildings, but rather, having been buried with the countless dead, is so much more easily ignored.

Collections

How do we trace a constellation that suggests itself in shadowy collections that arch between “here” and “there” and are haunted by a ghost? The first and most conspicuous aspect of the three works in question is that they are (or will be) collections; they were conceived as a concept without a defined shape, rather as a flame that will take shape as it gathers an aura of moths that feel pulled to its light. As collections of works from various people who are invited to contribute to a theme, the projects do not set out to examine exhaustively a subject, but rather hope to draw together and contribute to a range of responses in the hopes that these will provide immanent correspondences of their own.

For “The Great Divide,” the “collection” is a key conceptual component of the project on several different levels. On a tangible level, the material construction of the magazine will enact this idea: each subscriber will receive their first issue as two series of pages with a large metal ring on which the individual can fasten the pages in any way they choose. The pages themselves will arrive in periodic bundles as a variety of independent works on central themes. In this way, every magazine can be re-arranged and re-conceived by the subscriber as the assortment of pages and themes grows. As Joni Murphy writes on the webpage for Catch and Release Press:

This magazine will offer subscribers a series of text and image conversations on themes such as Flying Machines, The Humors, Overheard and The Periodic Table. Each issue will arrive in two parts, each mailed from a different location [one in Canada, the other in Europe]. One half will be edited/curated by Ms. Macleod, the other by Ms. Murphy. (Catch and Release Press Webpage, 2008)

Through the arranging of the pages on the ring, the individual subscriber becomes implicated in the process of “creating” a collection. Each instantiation of the magazine will necessarily bear the imprint of the individual who receives it, as its structure is determined by their choices of how to put it together. Involving the reader in the creation of each magazine invokes the power of the collection as Walter Benjamin meditates on it in his essay *Unpacking My Library*. For Benjamin, a collection gains its value and “aura” by being brought to life through the care and interest of an individual. Objects incarnate

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into a potent and expressive being in the hands of a collector. They interact meaningfully with the other objects that comprise the collection due to being the foci of a person’s fascination. By way of the internal narrative of the person who has selected each object for membership, the collection obtains a coherence that underscores the uniqueness of its separate components. Through the act of selecting and adding, the collector weaves the objects together into something that bears his or her inalienable print.

There is a creative dynamic that animates the spirit of what Benjamin (1968) calls the “living” collection (one that is curated through the care and imagination of its collector). In it, the seeming order of the collection (exemplified by its catalogue), exists together with not only the collector’s “chaos of memories” (60) that accompany each item, but also, and very importantly, with the chaos from which these items have previously circulated and emerged and will presumably return. Part of the delicate and “whimsical” ordering that these objects undergo in their inclusion into the collection is intimately bound to the chaos of the worlds that they bring with them: “for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose magic is the quintessence of his object” (60).

Benjamin’s thoughts on the nature of collecting and collections has visibly inspired Nick Hauck and Natalie Wing, co-editors of *inter/tidal*. They file the items of their own collection between quotes from *Unpacking My Library*. Hauck and Wing invited the chaos of the objects’ worlds into their project by sending out a call for works, any works in arts/images/letters, that would meet their criteria:

The vocation of a journal is to proclaim the spirit of its age. Relevance to the present is more important even than unity or clarity, and a journal would be doomed—like the newspapers—to insubstantiality if it did not give voice to a vitality powerful enough to salvage even its more dubious components by validating them. (Benjamin in Wing 2008)

Hauck and Wing’s work channels Benjamin’s suggestion to summon a zeitgeist of the present by not attempting to create an object of explicit unity or clarity, but rather, a collection that speaks by virtue of its items’ ordering and proximity. By shuffling the submissions that they

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gathered from this call among excerpts from *Unpacking My Library*, the editors express their desire that the journal come to life in part through the method of its collection.

Pieces written by the editors themselves bookend *inter/tidal*, thus serving to open and close the space created by the object. Hauck ends this collection with an essay titled “A Frankfurt School Digression on *Artist’s Choice: Roy Arden Selects from the Collection*.” His essay takes a Frankfurt School approach to the images of Vancouver photographer Roy Arden and other photographers that Arden curated for the Vancouver Art Gallery’s “Artists Choice” exhibition. Hauck notes that the artists use the indexical nature of photography to try to speak to society’s deep naturalization of the circulation of consumer goods. He explains how the images use the indexical representations of the goods themselves to try to wrest a space free for critically perceiving their circulation and to stimulate the imagination to alternate possibilities. In a way, the collection, if it is seen as a form of historical articulation, also seems to act on the desire to “blast” certain items free of their context in order to re-imagine their place and potential. In “Ghostly Matters” Avery Gordon (1997) writes of Benjamin’s historical materialist project:

[it] is a different type of social constructivism than most social scientists are familiar with, drawing a good deal of its inspiration from modernist montage techniques, requiring not only attention to the thing thought, but also attention to the thinker’s mode of engagement (the *flow* and *arrest* of thoughts). The historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad, encounters what I have been calling a ghost. (65)

As Benjamin suggests, the technique of montage (which is closely related to the spirit of collection that is occurring in the three projects), the self-awareness of the consequences of the methods used (the conscious attempt to apply these techniques as a way of generating a particularly potent collection), and a view to encountering or summoning a ghost or monad (in this case, the attempt to summon a *zeitgeist* as the heart of the collection), shares a similar goal to a Frankfurt School ideal of art, in which the art piece is an object that can wrest the critical mind free from the structures that shape it and enable it to seek an alternative mode of thinking. Thus Hauck’s essay, which

is the last word in the *inter/tidal* collection, gives voice to the critical, political potential that provocative objects can have with respect to the systems of circulation that they themselves move within.

The job of the historical materialist, as Benjamin describes it, is to blast a particular constellation (of works, of correspondences) *out* of history, thus enabling them to take on an alternative life to the one that played out in their own time: to redeem the repressed of history. It is here, in the desire for alternatives and possibilities, that I see an intimate link to the heart of the collections under investigation. In each project, there seems to be a connection to another place that is rich in imaginative fodder and helps to create perspective and relief in the place that I will call “here.” In the conception for all three collections, and explicitly manifest in *inter/tidal*, there is a theme of “place” that runs through many of their items and grounds the emergent zeitgeist “here,” in our present experiences of Vancouver.

Todd Samuel Presner (2001), in his essay “Traveling between Delos and Berlin: Heidegger and Celan on the Topography of ‘What Remains,’” discusses Paul Celan’s poetry, which Celan himself characterizes as “Wortlandschaft” or word landscapes: “topography composed of language” (422). Presner investigates some of Celan’s poetry as memory works that move between the layers of space and time that co-habit a present. He observes that Celan’s poetry navigates memory of place without looking for that which is “authentic” or “originary” (as he suggests that Heidegger’s writings do), but instead, for that which “remains” in the wake of change, and what the remains have to say about that which has shaped change. In a collection whose goal is to summon the spirit of “here” and “now” in a montage-like style without explicit explanations or depictions, what is created—in the case of *inter/tidal*—is an object that strikes me as something of a “word landscape” of memories and present experiences of Vancouver by an interwoven community of people.

As it appears to me (with my collector’s eye), there is a quiet but important addition to the “here” that is being explored in *inter/tidal* and is a part of the conceptual structure of the other two collections. In each case there is a “there” that counterbalances the sense of “here,” while serving to expand and animate it. In Celan’s prose piece “Conversation in the Mountains,” two people encounter *between* the

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borders of their countries and, with their exchange of dialogue, “produce a site of memory ... through the mixing of languages under the borderless no-place of the stars” (Presner 425). Celan’s production of an anti-nationalized site of memory is bound to his experience of the violent loss of space and deepening of ruptures between place, country, memory and identity for Jews and other people after World War II. It would seem that in the case of our collections, there are also ruptures and suspicions that populate the creators’ senses of place, identity, memory and nationality; ruptures that motivate them consciously or unconsciously to extend the borders of an investigation of “here” to somewhere else that has the power imaginatively to blast it free of the structures that shape it.

Here and There

Celan’s practice of “Toposforschung” [topographical analysis] is not grounded in the locality of a country or homeland because ... [origins] and [sources] are all too easily connected with the violent nationalization of place. [His] desire [is] for a “Toposforschung” undertaken in the light of utopia: A no-place cannot, by its very definition, be nationalized. (Presner 423)

The idea for the journal issue “The View From Here” came from an essay that I wrote in 2006 that set out to explore relationships between the imaginative experience of certain European cities and the search for a sense of place. The essay explores literary/poetic expressions of homelessness, wandering, and memories of place through a series of texts, fictional and non-fictional, and is quietly driven by a desire to come closer to understanding my own compulsion to search through cities (especially certain European ones) for a deepened sense of place. My own feelings of placelessness and restlessness with “here” are multivalent and respond differently every time they are investigated. They contain elements of a culture that values a certain kind of worldliness and cosmopolitanism, a frustration and disappointment with what the present “here” is and seems to be becoming, a discomfort with the history of how “here” became what it is, the guilt that comes from inheriting the rich land of colonialism, and a desire to know more deeply a strong part of the lineage of our thoughts, gestures, desires and impulses, among other things.

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The idea for the collection “The View From Here” emerged from an investigation of placelessness that turns to a no-place (many places and a number of times) in Europe to help illuminate some of the questions that surround this place. The editors imagine that this essay could be fruitfully juxtaposed alongside other artistic and critical works that have something to say about the living connections between “here” and “there.” The very title of the magazine “The Great Divide” refers to the distance that separated its co-editors between Canada and Europe, and the longing that stretches across it in both directions. At a glance, *inter/tidal* may read as a journal that is solidly concerned with the place of Vancouver, but a closer look shows inspiration for much of the work traveling across a similar arc that touches down in modern/modernist European cities and culture. Alongside poetry on Vancouver’s downtown eastside are photos of Virginia Woolf; essays on Vancouver street photographers use the work of Frankfurt School of critical theorists; photos of Vancouver cityscapes speak next to treatises on Milan Kundera.

I cannot help but wonder what can be discovered from looking at this arc between “here” and the nebulous, imaginatively potent “there” of modern (and contemporary, but that itself lit by the remainders of the modern) Europe. Presner says of Celan’s poetic memory work that it is

not a return to a past via a future pathway or circular journey, but rather a “Gegenverkehr” [two-way street] and “Umkehre” [reverse] against the unidirectional “flow” of history in order to draw out the complex sedimentation of topography. It is a practice of memory intimately connected to marking, calling forth and living with “disjunctures” in time and space. (421)

It seems that the features of this small zeitgeist: gestures of restlessness and the hunt for a sense of place that includes its disjunctures; help to enrich an investigation of these collections as memory works in their own right that are attempts at “‘Toposforschung’ undertaken in the light of utopia” (Presner 423).

The mapping that occurs in these projects tackles a place that exists between two places, one imaginative and generative, the other perplexing, confrontational, and formative. “Here” is physical, it changes, closes us in or out. It is also existential—it is the space in

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which we think, experience, and move, it serves to unsettle us and uproot us with its history. If we choose to see “here” as a part of a Benjaminian monad, then we are confronted by the question: which “repressed of history” are we hoping to redeem? In a monad that bridges two distinct but nebulous times and places, for the people for whom these two places are generative and provocative, there develops a complex arc under which sprouts a motley cast stretching all the way back to the “beginnings” of *this* place in the narrative of Western History, moving to Europe somewhere around the early to mid 20th century, and touching down here again somewhere around now. This is an arc that contains many layers of time, and does not move through them in an orderly fashion. In order for a memory work to address these aspects of a landscape, it must have a way of perceiving the movement back and forth over this arc. As Presner writes of Celan’s poetry: “the word landscape is saturated with spatial and temporal disjunctures” (422).

It seems important to get some sense of “there” in order to talk about this particular arc and how it helps us to understand “here” more richly. In some ways, “there” contains the “light of utopia,” in others, it casts shadows upon “here.” For many, “there” was the beginning of “here” as a potential re-birth from chaos of the old world in the utopic “clean slate” of the new one carrying shadows through to now with a legacy of colonial domination. From “here,” it seems we are also infatuated with the light from “there” as a site for the potential re-orientation of our institutions of western civilization through what we perceive as the dynamism and experimentation of modernism. “Here” also contains a tenacious fascination with the horror that followed this experimentation. This horror is often perceived as the crescendo to a parade of wars and industrialization in the narrative of European History, casting a shadow over “there” as a generous source of much of “here’s” culture. And then there is the muted light of understanding, the provocative flame of “profane illumination” that suggests itself from an archeology of the “there” within “here” while still looking forward alongside the likes of Celan and Benjamin.

The energy that can be felt from the work in the collections under investigation is often partly tied to the stimulating imaginings of the modern European city and some of the thought, life, and work that

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took place there. Similarly there is an energy that comes from the tension of seeing the march of colonialism, imperialism, fascism, world war, advanced capitalism, and severe global hierarchy that both preceded it and followed in its wake. Gordon (1997) writes:

indeed, to fight for an oppressed past is to make this past come alive as the lever for the work of the present: obliterating the sources and conditions that link the violence of what seems finished with the present, ending this history and setting in place a different future. (66)

In none of the collections can I decipher an explicit effort to address and fight for an oppressed past. However, I do feel compelled to notice that there is a particular “there” that for some reason lives alongside attempts to talk about “here,” and I can’t help but wonder at the connections between discomforts with the implications of *settling* physically, culturally and existentially “here” in the present, and the urge to develop collections that build topographies of exploration between this “here” and that particular “there.” Alas, this shadowy point on our map needs much more explanation than my personal ruminations will provide at this moment, but maybe a question can also be a landmark.

There is one thing that stands in strong relief against the busy and shifting site of the modern European city that hovers on one end of the arch. There is a ghost that travels across the arch and stalks us all in our attempts to build collections that speak across divides of the moment. It is a ghost that animates us, informs us, inspires and humbles; and without it our collections might not have taken form. Gordon writes that uncovering the monad depends on this dynamic: the coming to life of something that demands our work and attention.

Benjamin’s materialist historiography depends fundamentally on animation, on being able to demonstrate to others the moment in which an open door comes alive and stops us in our tracks, provoking a different kind of encounter and recognition. And for that, the quickening experience of haunting is essential. (67)

Ghosts

In her introduction to *inter/tidal*, co-editor Natalie Wing begins the entire work by stepping behind a dead man. This action follows an excerpt from Lisa Fittko’s *The Story of Old Benjamin*, in which the title character describes a tiny yet poignant aspect of his final journey to escape the fascists crowding in on him in France. “He had calculated and worked this out during the night, he told me: ‘With this timing I will be able to make it to the end. I rest at regular intervals—I must rest *before* I become exhausted. Never spend yourself” (as cited in Wing 2). After this story, Wing opens the collection by telling us: “I began with a desire to walk behind Walter Benjamin.” Here is where our constellation takes shape—here is the breath of life in our small zeitgeist—with the ghost of a dead man that precedes and haunts all of our collections. As Wing (2008) writes:

It occurs to me ... that such a desire is both familiar and strange. The desire to follow a figure like Benjamin, himself following many figures, is familiar in academia; presumably this familiar academic desire is figurative. ... There is a literal strangeness about the figurative familiarity of following. To follow is to come after a person in sequence, to walk or to move behind. If I literally, that is to say chronologically, come after the figure I desire to walk behind in sequence, then I place him behind me. ...it is a desire for dialectical movement, a desire to walk behind the figure in motion whilst already ahead of the figure whose motion has literally, though not figuratively, ceased or, as in the case of Benjamin, been halted. (2-3)

For Wing, there is a path that she desires to pursue, one that is haunted before and after by Walter Benjamin. In some ways, the ghost of Benjamin serves the contradictory function of an anchoring point along the arc between “here” and “there,” while simultaneously throwing both these places into motion by asking us to look at their interpenetration. Our feelings of sadness and loss at his early death help to mobilize desire to redeem the energy and imagination that was buried in WWII. His work renews in us a desire to seek buried imaginations in our own “here” and “now.”

Benjamin’s work in his own time reaches over to us “here” and animates ways in which we may begin to investigate the burials and repressions in our topographies that make us restless and desirous

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of strange psychological exiles. In writing of the ghosts of the disappeared that aggressively haunt Argentina’s political history (among every other aspect of Argentine life), Gordon asks a deceptively simple but essential question: “What looming and forbidden desire is this system of repression designed to inhibit and censor?” It is a question that has the power to unleash ghosts of every ilk, and a question, he proposes, the haunting of ghosts has the peculiar power to lead us to. Gordon, for his part, answers this question as follows:

It has many names that I will call simply, and despite the reputation it has acquired to evasive naïveté, the utopian: the apperception of the fundamental difference between the world we have now and the world we could have instead; the desire and drive to create a just and equitable world. (127)

In our own work, the vistas and reliefs that emerge from our topographies help us to see the ways in which this world, this “here” might be different.

Haunting is also the mode by which the middle class needs to encounter “something you have to try out for yourself, feeling your way deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness until you do feel what is at stake, the madness of the passion.” (Taussig as cited in Gordon 131)

These collections strike me as a way of searching through a fractured landscape without presuming to cast our voice upon it in the shape of understanding. Instead they acknowledge that our vision is but a fragment of something that takes shape around our own narratives, but includes the uncontrollable chaos of that which we invite to join our voice. In the case of the three collections that have captivated my collector’s eye, there is a desire to collect from across an arc, and we are nudged ever forward in our pursuits by the captivating urgency of a ghost. This, in itself, is something of a reflection: an opening remark. It is an attempt to suggest the beginnings of a map of sorts, and to notice the constellations that give it shape. The small ghost (not Benjamin, for he is a large ghost that haunts many different sites) of this moment, this constellation of impulses and attractions among my peers, has something to say to us about the ways that we

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wish to move along this map. Perhaps in seeing it more clearly, we can begin to follow its uncertain path towards that which is at stake for all of us.

(June 13th, 2005: sounds—discovering moments of muteness)

Layers of Landscape—A derelict regional train. Unbearable screeching accompanies each stop in all of the smallest of Southwestern Bohemian towns. The classical landscape is patchworked in the shimmering poppies of disused post-commune fields; the shocking yellow of canola (“the oil fields of the future”); tarnished industrial “parks” where no one plays; new post-communist medium-density housing. Vaclav’s voice traces a path from Celtic rites remembered in ceramic-holding crevasses (old Czech legends: origin myths created post-humously), to romantic sanctuaries. From “Sturm und Drang” to heavy industry with its cancerous-chain-smoking fallout to modern pilgrimages: integrations of myth and rite.

As the train bounces its way to the German border, my eyes catch and dislodge from Garton Ash’s book on post-communist Europe, and Erich Honnecker pulls Chancellor Kohl’s direct office phone number from the pocket of his prison pajamas. Meanwhile Vaclav Havel is elected president of the newly divorced Czech Republic. All of this is scored by the sounds of Petr Nickl’s “Tanec Hracek,” the avant-garde stage adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson’s “Dance of the Toys;” whose luminosity has been haunting me since last week.

It seems that in the slow descent into madness there is a point at which surrender is the only possible option. It develops with an internal coherence all its own, and one feels why all else but adds ingredients to its alchemy.

Vaclav speaks of the art itself as a pilgrimage—a process of communal and internal mapping—art as an experiential process then shared outwardly to create a locus for a new/alternative integration.

Western Bohemia: the long “yo, yo” of Prague stretches out into a wider “yoh, yoh”—one that anticipates the round “yaw, yaw” of Bavaria.

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Mausoleum

Matt Fehr

The campus emerges atop a mountain, hidden from below. It occurs, in this way, at a remove; dark waste fringe from the urban grids, the passage up the mountain is a full tangent, time enough to smooth out the civic infrastructures below. In the histo-literary tradition of isolating the Academy from the polis so as to perpetrate the auspices of difference, the complex trembles within a geographic void. [Any similarities between this arrangement and the properties of quantum mechanics are not metaphorical but apparent.] It is a tangible distance; every time we come here, we reinforce slacker regime, the crowdsilence of transit, overinterpretation, drudgery. Attend it, a structure harbouring an institution as benign, sputter paper. Perpetuate.

Cornerstone, the East entrance and the highest level of the scape. Setting from here, we are already tangential; the campus is complex, lacks nexus, has no seductive entrance, center. It is assembled straight out of the strata, an erratic of motifs, ideologies, flight lines... we who are indirect from the outset already correspond with design. Do we observe amidst intention's blurred sweep anything besides the signs we have already templated? The manifold forms beyond this century's sensors' calibrations plot their eventual objections, and for now we stack assumptions: 1. Labyrinthine architecture incites vagrant bodies. 2. Ocular lines are not load-bearing. 3. Juxtaposition is an ideal banal. 4. Gravity relates. 5. Our hesitation is most often affirmation. 6. Language is no substitute. 7. There is little insincerity in landscaping. 8. Caution.

Follow a linear rule: parallel and perpendicular. We enter the domain of the frame. The idea follows the traditions of painting and the conditions of architecture, those considerations of exclusion, enclosure. The frame is where it happened, the concrete columns on either side as we pass, this time, atop. Like the frame at the perimeter of a painting,

Fehr / Mausoleum

the perpendicular architectural motif is a convention that constrains but does not successfully disavow the imagistic or material flights within its structure. The frame's pertinent functions—selection (exits) and separation (walls)—reassert enclosure [the mechanics of folding], name our location and architect our trajectory. Heavy motif, surely, dulled us haptically, but the long diasporic conventions of box architecture were in this complex stratified beyond themselves into excess, until the tyranny of the planar surface was corrupted by its own weight, and slumped atop the mountain, jagged. Style, the exact line, weight of the concrete, break apart in the irrigidity of our path not from one building to another but staggeringly across a field of material density. The frame, liquid under such pressures into collapse, becomes strata, the multiplicitous static of our walk.

It acts against itself and us, the planar lines that hang heavily above are aloof because our tacit experience is conditioned by redirection, practiced detour; the suggestion of the materials into hollows, upholstered recess chatter, petty capitalism. When we walk the straight lines they fold, deflect the spirit of the perpendicular we are always negotiating the irritating elements of the crowd, corners. It was the complex processing us, chewing. Years, causeways that end abruptly in foliage, the blatant facadism of every institutionalized thought. The concrete's apparent symmetry sinks us into the strata, hoards us into points of capture; when we dart, venture scenarios inward, fictitious, precarious traverse.

There is no singular trajectory, and one vector of the deflection process is weather. From one end of the complex to the other, there are paths running parallel that vary in their degree of enclosure; we can pass through corridors, sheltered, atop, exposed. Weather is afforded structural agency to further construct us into the concrete or completely erase it in fog. There are times when we begrudgingly wander in clouds. The complex is at no other time more reminiscent of a mausoleum than when it is immersed in atmosphere and precipitation, crawling with Cylons, mentioned in passing. When it

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rains, our trajectory through the grounds is through dank internal halls; even so entombed, we never forget climate, seeping in peripherally, errant windows and the semi-exterior of Convocation Mall. In fair weather, we cannot dismiss the notion that the University is a proud structure, measured in geologic time, autopoetic discourse. Weather smooths the strata, the heavy concretes afford some elasticity, our swing; we oscillate between routes depending, until the clouds rain again and become the architectural function that severs us from Freedom Square.

Maintain east, follow the globular lines, track of the sun. We unfold the University the way we might a piece of machinery, superstruct the history of Greco-Roman method onto Erickson's prison architecture, traditions of the gendered gaze, 1960s proto-postmodernism, Western academic Institution, geological determinism. The machines are domains, segments of architecture, rhetoric, politic that stretch out slightly mutated filaments into the other regions of the mass, conservatively churning out the semiautomatic stylizations of distinction, becoming departments. The principle of interruption is in few ways manifested in the activity of the doctrine, ourselves of the rooms; architecturally, we again wonder at interior miscommunication, productive disorientation, stand in photographs, take the elevator out of a enduring love of technology.

Originally, a modernist future-ruin atop a reforested outcrop seemingly prepared to outexist even the terminal city splayed beneath it, irrespective of use. Our body knows nothing of this geologic time that is not imagination, terror or a few specific orgasms. If there is a disconnect between our hands, toes, faces, and the architectural constructs, it is a matter, time, a few parts of some careening hadrons. So we eat from vending machines until we learn scope, speak summary, wheel our backpacks out to face the electric dark, you articulating buses. What is it, space? Assemblages are words. The complex has little accumulated human history so it whines the ache of its slabs, something about the taut skin of ideology and the pleasures of

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maintenance, dozing. In the ragged post-apocalypse, the campus thickens with moss, the beams rot and sag gravity's curves. A few skinny humans burn furniture through the night, scavenging ipods. But theory has no use for future-tense, and architecture does not apprehend. We who glean what we can from powerpoint, photocopy, engage never if not automatically, transmit, transcript. By expression we are for now.

There are as many layers as we could uncover. First, strata is the concrete we track, the material constantly closing us, mountain, furniture, object. Strata, secondly, is the structural levels of the complex: the ragged line of our passage, erratic in four dimensions, sprung most formally from stairs, raised platforms, the alteration in our degree of architectural capture. The third is bodies. In the fourth parallel, strata is the reactive tangential: the mental or imaginative space that architecture opens by closing off, in most cases, idea. Our strata is this strata, a strikethrough across the other layers of strata, by catastrophe or craze, into drivel. Form in this instantiation is a feedback loop, so we are the whorls of rooms, architecture's punch, and stratification a mechanism that bursts autosexually in the teletheory we apply like glitter to the inattentive world.

to cities, us cities

no way / las way / highway

to cities
bound by ballad
let my lyric lead
the way

lonely like
new orleans lonely
no place
and know
friends you chase
who wash away

know

before you
get there

cities too hold growth
streets too turn trauma on
sidewalk signs relief

rise recipes
las vegas is line ups
so place
sewn straight
your next meal
ahead and heads

so

before you
get there

through it
my way

wait, still
going on

no way

skipped a page while walking home asked article to leave me alone
smoothed pronouns and so much water sinks in tries i think
subconscious anniversary over and over emergency why she holds
those digits obviously they're her contacts blink but cry not a dry
throat in the house boiling over older a humid heave hold on
shimmer see past / read fast use your upper charm strength
everyone's got an angle so we ride on waves acute mistakes create
concentricity trade sleep for this dream traits take knees from the
pavement and they're tapped have not faced phase eight no scene
rapid eye movement release levied given riches in water
everywhere but not a drop a sink

she swallows moves through pink lipped and pulled at teeth trades
is that for a silence mock musicians the lullabies of instruments
under beds not coming back these things we leave impatient swan
songs collecting crumbs at the edge of a pond that just grows and
goes it's not goodbye well it can't be if bottomless hands that keep
pumping palms like empty buckets another one another tanked
throat thank you waiting to straighten but proud of these swells far
lands and these bands on too are busted by roadsides rest stop
and think

rulers who don't like lack people lick that wrap up in one year and
out never ever look back in vogue over her shoulder hood held
there in blackness and sick for coming attractions swarms of
cement or collections at corners pass the rejection not knowing if i
subscribe to the issues stylish stacked stats gone like news "Up to
a third of the people who weathered the storm are thought to have
post-traumatic stress disorder" and "I didn't know whether to laugh
or cry or just be mad as hell—a condition in which many people
here find themselves on these days" PTSD is every time she hits
my knee and apparently, every anniversary and that that's when i
finally broke down and cried" hang on why we skip these stones
across the water, each lesson dropped like a dollhouse there is a
two-story, with the entire front wall blown off so that it is completely
exposed with all its stuff still inside" like tight trophies hang on to
patriotism Almost nine months after the storm, the city finally
awarded a contract for the removal of the more than 100,000 flood-
damaged and abandoned cars that littered the landscape weight
for federal housing money that is finally on its way

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

trips there whether
you like it or not
our own footing found
text in the patterns

giving lip to the bowl
lovers lie with cold hands
they're
bodies inside

Don't you wanna
go in Saks
unfurl the burlap bias
tangling such souvenirs

(one article, apologizes)
"In April twelve people were killed in a city
...In may fourteen more
let Chocolate City

melt in your mouth
one in seven is drinking more
and she does it to find her balance
depression doubles and i

"I wouldn't like that"
wait another year
finish the article
rap it up

mc adlibs
like he's on madlibs
hey, yay,
went shopping before making a donation anyway

betrayed and breathless / feeling like Katrina with no FEMA so say
these
flashing lights
too hard to watch
like lack and licked, cue cards flipped

an outdated teleprompt
and now the king is face down

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

banned, tripped and i remember being afraid of new orleans humid
with the tumult of teens and i try to explain that my crazy paper
ideas come from fears planes, hospitals and i panic not knowing
poetry or beats other than those told to me so we take trophy to the
streets and walk like notes, bars aligned against us like limp licorice
in sticky seersucker suits these men watches set to time passed
some kids who play like they know the tune but not the words say

maybe in another walgreens, place granted such escape we worry
for one and hold onto another each other's lint brush in this time of
secrets small windowed misunderstandings tie tight sheets and
music blown conditioned by the air of another high school try
temperate and wind up with the optimism of arched highways
grinning tall amongst the clouds stay still

pretend politics
aren't airborne

preserve that hall hold
meetings of last leg legislation

it's not where you live but how you made it
there there
katrina was supposed to be my name, anyway

to trade try hilltops the city is made through these waves a swell
day and the reasons they carry you who is holding on the screen
flickers in interference and beats you know we won this race

lap like time
out of breath

no way

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities



las way

maybe if we
give ourselves over
to the
economy of bodies
make sense
of minds split
decisions down
the middle of
the dance floor
race ratios
against clocks
this time
around the room
is combers and
mirrors looks like
we got it right
this time
so summation
equals strength
in weak ties
bound by arms
tight at waist
of this
time

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

body to
face one
store scores
along lines we
right weight
to hundred
under deep
breath the air's
burden carries
conversation
laden
with the
write wait
of lies
tongue tries
and is tied
the tip just
sit here and
listen lip lock
key rings
and notes
of beer, man
this air mail
lands like
lust with
the right
wait

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

complains about customer service
the agent switches to spanish she
lines up months later the anxiety a
hollow leg leans furtive on buffets
each exchange clinking heavy in
our pockets grip with the warmth
of walking wobbled knees want it
in another spring sun wait weight
knows heavy hearted love handles

hold on

prince prints the longest walk sees
sunburn escapes through photos or
with false endings upon inspection
this isn't me here mirror bridges on
balance wait shifts under so skies
say believe me a poet's lies find her
lips kissed drawn diamond to t shirt
blood buried strawberries strewn on
pure table tops glassy eyed blink land

or miss it

deserted paris' pastries hold their
e's like they were worthy ecstasy
a burger king convention digging
a whole kingdom in this sand see
the world starts with sauntered
boulevard de certain lines les filles
fill in fake names night knights such
agency in april fools find gold here
two hundred dollar sky and streets

paved with old who knew we'd make

like here

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

embody showgirls us
swallowed by doors
throats dirty coins and
curses hang from tired
shoulders just try to smile
believe

las vegas face.

too scared of
new york new
york's coasters
and muggers
high rollers
hold hair like
lion's manes
mgm grand and
the veins of venice
streets start looking
like iran, iraq,
is real
planet hollywood
move on
rome around
come on
it's slots
of fun
pull ever
levers love
holding hands
trespassing empty
lots, machine
hums, um,
the basic stomach
black jack, bj,
the phone in her hotel
room answers
vodka can't bury
like water
wait
the sands gone
and see that
new frontier

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

through one
dollar bargain
for margarita
market stalls
stops and starts
where stardust
falls and signs
crack a smile
pioneers this strip
of rows of teeth
gleaming worldwide
wild party girls
line lips and stick
to plans pivotal
on forgetting

fashion show mall tells
all

where are we (you are here)
getting specific now we can't see the ocean
the problem here is replacement.

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities



Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

highway

I five we four start to pour coke in this car, swallowed in minutes
sits and sees him left standing in a window handed like the rest of
them
stops

Tip top topple in curbs stomp the stump the bent wrist of this rest
hopeful in hospitals she's seen before she traces the leather case
of a man she talked to there who is dead now
there there

They're walking outside a track and feel sickened by stops and
starts and stars that hit cars—the same image by day and by
night—cloistered bands bring together leave on music
play

Songs that hold us together he knows we know and she tells him to
press paper to knee sees him again in fast food forward without
presumption they promise to share

She's shaken propped by backpacks they usually know when to
stop but are running on empty it's funny when parents don't pick up
on fear for they fall rather hollow and crack
back

Bones on loan passed on advice she didn't know she was saying
goodbye but I said stay with her you'll know and the words outgrow
whispers and the kids are running for Chinatown pick pocket porn
and drop dollars still forgot
air

In the cards are hard in backseat bedsores worn like the callous
asphalt of that road on and on sun and red red Redding grills meat
like questions meet here but don't
stay

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities

Carve lines in the window you want to watch above it hot heavy
horizons burdened by secrets so summer's wait and getaway goes
elsewhere

When you outgrow the chance to runaway past prodigy where
home is spiraling further a smooth umbilical roads weak arms and
heavy Rhodes an Oregon left dangling same as hotel room
keys

Bottle caps under beds we are anxious for another eternity but
overlook immortalization threw photos out to see we're wide
stanced and hands on wasted by Bay bridges but that's there and
he says he's
scared

In California
Past tense and coming up

Sign says

Next write

(play on)

Fedoruk / to cities, us cities



de Courcy / Richard / st.



saint woodlands

you haven't forgotten
a hunger collapses your corridors
and in your flowerbeds
spring waits rotting

now victoria hill
saint woodlands what of gary hill?
and what will you do now?
with your fenced ruin your asbestos and piping

will you?
take cover
a sterile smell
and mobiles neglect their revolving

this silence a stillness still inside rafters

a barrack of mute mourning
for effaced under centre

saint woodlands of your children who came to put you out?
your unadorned heart
a fragment

knew want
new walls in root
collect new avenues
new centres new pacing new buildings new burrows new cement
sidewalk new atop what and you

On July 9th 2008 a fire engulfed the Woodlands complex, New Westminster's former insane asylum. The inside of the building was partially demolished, making it easier for the flames to travel from room to room. Crews saved a portion of the south complex, considered a heritage building.

Fire crews attended to three minor fires the previous week.

Victoria Hill is the name of the Onni developed condo community on top of the old Woodlands site. Onni purchased the land and buildings from the provincial government for 18 million dollars.

Gary Hill had all his teeth forcibly extracted as a child at Woodlands due to unruly behaviour.

Gary Hill received five hundred dollars from the provincial government's Legacy Trust Fund for counselling.

In 1950, disabled adults were relocated and the institution was renamed the Woodlands School, for children.

There are four reported cases of sterilization at Woodlands, performed under the provincial Sexual Sterilization Act (1933-1979). There are multiple documentations recording the use of admissions to Woodlands as a means by which a person be considered for sterilization.

never knew it

mcbride ravine swallows the letters
and limbs
in the end
limbs thread the mud of graves
(nameless)

what voices lay dormant

saint woodlands
who masturbates inside your walls
who reaps the pangs of want?
first names erased now faceless

are you suspect saint woodlands?
all have plans for you
of what to do
what to ever do

all plans aside saint government s apologized
do you feel that he s forsaken you?

and what of those who shy from points? who still their hands
from counting (from keeping)

In 1977 the provincial government dismantled the headstones of the Woodlands graveyard (1920-1958), where approximately 3000 residents were buried. The headstones were reused as building material, others were thrown into a nearby ravine. The graveyard was re-designated as a park.

Woodlands' resident files contain incidents of verbal abuse, kicking, striking, isolating extremely hot or cold baths and showers, use of shackles, chronic infectious diseases like hepatitis and salmonella, denial of food, over administration of medication, sterilization, use of birth control, assault, and intercourse.

Documented evidence of injuries include bruising, burns, broken limbs and teeth, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy. Injuries were often left unexplained in the files.

In 2000, Dulcie McCallum, in a government commissioned report, concluded that the physical and verbal abuse committed by staff was systematic.

McCallum concluded that the systematic and sexual abuse committed by staff at Woodlands was facilitated by a code of silence among workers.

McCallum concluded that due to the former residents' illnesses they should not be subjected to the judicial process in court.

In an Open Cabinet Meeting, on May 30th 2003, Gordon Hogg, the former Minister of Children and Family Development, apologized to past residents in provincial total institutions, acknowledging that the model of care was flawed and that some residents were mistreated.

de Courcy / Richard / st.

adrift in downtown new west
or stuck in onerom squalor
(stitched into the skyline)

your prostitutes on kingsway and edmonds
into the sun dragged shadows behind
(slide silent across sidewalks)
what of them?

forgotten

vancouver streets
hang
also in this decade s closure

inside eastside rapture
clinics and prisons tenement

saint woodlands your innards

saint campbell saint government your innards

a dance for you inside glass sides payphone (busy signal
phonebox theatre presents) a waver to keep

On behalf of 1500 Woodlands residents 200 are currently involved in a class action lawsuit against the provincial government. Under the Crown Proceedings Act, the government can only be held liable for the actions of its employees post 1974.

In 2006 Poyner Baxter, the former representative law firm, presented the former residents with a government settlement offer based on a points system that would establish differing rates of compensation based on the type of abuse suffered. The settlement would require former residents to explain and prove abuse.

In the 1980's through 1990's the government embarked on a province wide program of deinstitutionalization. Woodlands was closed in 1996.

The majority of resources necessary for community re-integration never materialised.

These decades also witnessed a substantial increase in visible homelessness and addiction, especially in vancouver's downtown eastside.

Premier Gordon Campbell, post 2001, eliminated the Mental Health Advocate's office, the minister of state for mental health, and greatly reduced the Adult Mental Health staff.

de Courcy / Richard / st.

from ravelling out with want

saint woodlands
when will you give?
bury your hands
i tire of looking at you
a spectre
between sapperton station and columbia

do you wish to be remembered?

praise taken from your belly
already
saint woodlands your name
in the name of science

praise the silence

longer than a century
when will you
give

the small movements of waiting kept for decades in fingers (not
knowing quite how to calm them)

Between 1954 and 1978, almost three dozen research papers, including drug studies, were published by the then-medical director of Woodlands, Dr. Bluma Tischler.

One such published paper was on extracting urine samples from children by inserting a needle through the abdomen above the pubic bone and aspirating the fluid with a syringe, a method of obtaining a sterile sample.

On May 8th 1978, in provincial Legislative Session: 3rd Session, 31st Parliament, Premier Bill Bennett recognized the work of Dr. Tischler and established a graduate fellowship in biochemical genetics in the name of Dr. Bluma Tischler.

Dr. Tischler was also honoured by the American Association on Mental Deficiency in Denver, Colorado, on May 18th, the winner of its 1978 research award on mental retardation.

After the graveyards closure in 1958 unclaimed cadavers were often sent to U.B.C. for medical research.

Woodlands operated from 1878-1996.

de Courcy / Richard / st.



de Courcy / Richard / st.



in the blue metal trunk your years gather. just rusting. between lines draw a bath touch the spine of books mimic old photos naked in folding. a celebration. just left with these addressed envelopes and nothing to say. vinyl cracks in records and scratches in linoleum tell the places you went to rest. an old bedroom once papered now painted over. i wake here. mind my p s and q s but displace the other letters. the dust and flora mix together inside concrete square space (and do not separate). keep counting. i watched him paint you over. and why not walk. why not walk out into it. the pavement meets my pacing. assemble sleep out of old instructions and new weariness. left leaning and not knowing what sound is adequate. turn on the radio. turn that sound. recognize a broken umbrella and

retired winter coat. try them on. turn that sound. take my waist
and turn slowly in that doorway. found all these addressed
envelopes and no letters and left laughing for nothing else to
sound. keep counting. being a white root i squirm beneath you.
on bent wire hooks clothes left you alone and you thank them
for it. the single ceiling light swings out. catch that sound. or
keep throat closed. either way why not walk. reenlist discarded
maps to retrace footsteps. steep in the morning light. your
innards all members of a confederate pledge allegiance. you
turn that sound and want to tell them. keep counting what you
found rusting. a celebration. i gather your years about me. bend
into bed. just left leaning and on the line not knowing quite how
to say so. turn that sound. to catch that collection and keep
counting.

eventually your hands
in bathtub tomb
float pictures too. a white sound
static station eternal
(internal). snuff it out. your own
hand writing your own
name. in glass benign hunger
your hair hung
round you. unemployment lines
coffee lines pawnshop lines
bus lines in lines run long
i long
end line. eventually
your teeth. pressed
as flowers press
between pages. slight
hands lull obscenely
finally
(a fury). waiting. uncloze in
narrow staircase. wet and rank
caricature. finally
frozen in the last frame. my
sinews mimic your. wanting

Richard / for rene

yourself burnt out
your words burned up
a lightbulb breaks. and i
a walking grave
hold your death within
my joints. eventually
your tendons. frag
across the hall
water collects. (a cavity). rene
in the pacific
sturgeon in the fraser. caught
between piping and porcelain. (you
sink in strange angles). passing
from east to west. my knee
dislocates
one two three
times and finally
breaks
loss of a tendon. eventually
your ankles. past
sapperton hall an empty echo
coffee cup. and the rest
of you

sewed parts

danielle lafrance

the signs are signing, signature
wake up next to Being and Oblivion
reads: it's absent

start/ingling, water brigade is
dry now
red flag, red flag

malingering through gallery spaces
white aligned pillars
swallows hides
L'art et les mots

le prix

la peau

composition
sujet

vile

figure

oublier

la brosse

LaFrance / sewed parts

nice we were, all
together

/ergo/

sewed

consumers

left house of lability

“learnt to distract myself/
false suggestion”

jealousy

moves

continuum, tu me manques

du temps

j'ai perdu
la notion

“whoever sharpens
perception tends anti-social;

rarely well adjusted”

never/ too well/ to begin with
not check, not check
ima, maintenant, ailleurs toujours

dominated general, not check

START

tingling

:madman 20, bygone

strangers over susurrus
half hovered
we plunged into the fleuve
only to establish perceived
Competence

LaFrance / sewed parts

I've stopped loving
individual text/preface shredded in
a reading machination

trés/adult/ gemæded
Col-ecció, Picasso blue
my friend died too

they affect my subjects
cut the parachute

Remodel **Anger**

very adulte mea culpa

LaFrance / sewed parts

istence *complicd*

l'espirit d'escalier
dizzy spell/speak of extended networks

of connected citizens

inebriated off which words?
lurk this/ that painting
never speak again (la brosse)

every work of photographic

art

has its lurking,

objectifying

inverse
in the

archives

of the police

LaFrance / sewed parts

figure makers dress up dolls
je te hais, plus que avant

in ink
aloha, sinners

latent Pan/ universal

succumb to sound
guilt colours and words

je t'ai perdu, je m'en fou

aveurge, il est
close ups and no longer visible
je vais death drive to the sea

of customs

found *no check* found
unrelated excavation of body
traded mine for a dollar

LaFrance / sewed parts

Memoirs/memories/dot map with disregard/memewars/Explode!

line of black and blue
time passes becomes unbearable (lightness
of Being)

“tell me,” someone says
“it’s over,” comment de parler
no love lost 1622
placed depressing text, neatly supported

fingers (stained) salida

upset straightened

pourquoi tu ris du moi?
fuck, myspace is state controlled

a neighboring form,
wood grained collage
seamstress bestows a zipper

no watch
find lovers instantly!
see salt dry on layers

confession: I stopped
death to flowers/hell the poppy

LaFrance / sewed parts

eyes/ speak immense loneliness of the world

signed:

bv unromantic

azotea, sweep la ona
you provide la haine
I'll provide my scape

LaFrance / sewed parts

~~FORGOT~~ :10

the business of going was a disease that nagged all of us

el neurto recién nacido,
cost took only a mouth

Skeletal Remains

mj florczak

en route to Richmond Hospital...

Svenkeson:
nicotine stains on
long fingers
skin transparent as
wet cigarette papers
telephone poles tick
off the landscape
in three quarter time
moss grows on all sides of trees
I keep taking the wrong bus
graffiti on box cars barn doors garbage bins
how far to Richmond
hospital
tar and nicotine
arsenic and
other ingredients
too desirable to mention.
humming birds
torque exquisitely
country music is
mostly refrains
Agatha Christie wrote from
mathematical equations
barley is winter
soup, thick with
starch and diced
vegetation
snowflakes too delicate
to survive fade
hairlines recede in waves
beaches and memories resurface

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

water lilies lotus flowers
attached floating

cellophane wrapper turquoise strip adrift
blows across the parking lot
Byzantine tile
fish in a tank

NO VISITORS
He passed this morning.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

Skeletal flight

After the Royal Ontario Museum: May 30, 2005.

i. the Dinosaur Exhibit from fossilized remains found
at Liaoning, China.

Fragile
feathered
imprints
bones
trapped
between
Cretaceous
and Jurassic
in sediment
thin as
vellum pages
bird-like dinosaurs
conjure visions
of griffins
high on castle walls
Saint George
slaying the dragon.
In light of Liaoning,
The Odyssey
is less
fictive
and Loch Ness
as much a possibility
as emu
and ostrich.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

ii. in flight over the prairies:

White drifts of alkali lakes
ridged and furrowed
mud banks
the only imperfections
in an otherwise
geometric pattern
of land
ploughed and planted in
strips
like ribbons on
veteran's medals or
log cabin piecework on
Mennonite quilts.
Such order
and predictability.
here and there a river
flows through
intersecting the pattern
writhing through
the prairie
lakes
ooze up from below
deliberately
curving, carving through
the right angle precision
of agricultural design.

Roads lay across the scape like
seams laid flat and
double stitched

Stenciled on the wings:
No Step No Step No Step
the wing sections
designed

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

defined
reminiscent of
those on
the prairie below.

Farm roofs
gleam like
metal filings
in the sun
lakes foam at the edge
river banks
white with alkali
pucker
like old lady lips.

In the distance a haze
of mist and cloud
shroud the looming
rockies.
White peaks hover
in our airspace
like ice bergs
greeting ships at sea
A city below
sits like a microchip
on the prairie motherboard.

Further on orange-roofed structures
are strung together
in swirls and crescents
a coral necklace
for Demeter.
Empty highways
accent
the isolation
of small towns.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

Coming into foothills
we bank
rugged ridges
replace the neat-tidy promise
of agriculture:
disruption
eruption
turbulence
crowds of clouds below
thin blue sky above
sunlight everywhere

grasping at
research straws

i

Frontotemporal dementia
(FTD)

not so innocent as

online florists

scientists

redefining

quality of life.

A protein—progranulin

necessary to

nerve cell function

to remembering

luncheon dates

and appropriate behavior

for same.

Clinical research

indicates

inadequate progranulin

production's

a genetic mutation

causing FTD.

Too late for

Mother. Send her

roses;

long-stemmed

burgundy

velvet petals

peeling down,

like the dress

I once found

in the back

of her closet:

stunning

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

sensuous
deliciously sexy
on anyone
capable
of flirtation
and desire...
does progranulin
or lack of it
affect
sexual behaviour
initial research
may lead to treatment
“in time”
mother
hovers nears the
finish
but I wish
Mackenzie and Feldman
mothers with
progranulin rich
minds.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

ii

fronto
temporal
dementia
fronto temporal
portal into the brain
sensors removed
wires crossed
boundaries demolished
isolation
depression
short circuitry
rerouting
gummed up
plaque
without a brainbrush
synapse
without a path
scientists probe
cause and effect
in effect the brain
shrivels we
die
lost
wandering
anchorless
in a vast
carapace
of skin

Personal science

My father died. Dementia diminished my mother, her remnants peering out from the skeletal remains. Future possibility of retrieval, remission.

Andras Nagy “Manipulating the Mouse Embryo” 3rd Edition. Fluorescent mice glow-in-the-dark genes preference RED

UBC research facility diagnosis: Alzheimer’ autopsy required to certify not yet not yet not yet.

Fluoresced mosquito testicles sex without reproduction.

Brain plaque knots synapse mired in the glue of available archival material unclog reroute regroup.

Nagy synapse symphony exploding RED coding RED igniting RED possible future application objectify pedophiles rapists serial killers (glow in the dark hands and other protuberances).

*Neurofibrillary tangles
Alzheimer’s tango instigated by enzyme Cdk5 lost eyes lost eyes lost eyes her children become unborn strangers hovering she forgets them and him and how to breathe.*

Acquisition human embryos healthy fresh for stem cell research otherwise down the drain biological waste reclaimed. Mice cells excretions stimulate human cells to grow put them in a gummed up cranium. cell stimulation regenerates hope for a fountain of youth marketed to ageing consumers. Cell shit perfection. Eternal nubility.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

Friday Fish research proves
fish reduce brain decline
save our oceans

Mother: And what is your name dear?

Neon writing scarlet letters
Manipulating the Mouse Embryo Origin of the Species
Genesis in the beginning Andras read the red warning.

Stem cell research applications:
Creation/restriction of types to eliminate/quantify
societal rejection ignorance prejudice disease
deformities purifying the race sans Auschwitz editing
the DNA script written for mankind discerning markers
humane research mapping human perfection Nagy's
fluorescents light the way to extended profit margins.

Government intervention:
Clone registries
Clone nomenclatures
gen bank
the European molecular bio lab
DNA data bank Japan.

Coding out disease and deformity: possible retroactive
application or reserved solely
for future generations?
Stem cell research
brain cells unglued
Nagy's biological waste
another man's
opportunity
xtracted
diverted
redefined.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

Suppos
ing
famili
arity
with
the
terms
of
Nagy's
agreem
ent
with

the
CIHR
Suppo
sing
compr
ehensi
on
of the
terms
the
intent
the

restrict
ions
the
open-
ended
n
ess of
it all
one
still require
s the

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Intellect
ual
capacity
y
to
swim
in this
bioche
mical
soup.
Multiply

cells
Simple
math
complete
x
theore
ms
distrac
ted
generat
ions
wither

Nagy
clones
conque
rers
created
from
people
discard
ed a
race
coded
for

purific
ation
purg
i
ng
us.

Florczak / Skeletal Remains

A Poetic Life of Sarah DeVries on reading "Missing Sarah" by Maggie de Vries.

black/blonde
family bond
Kits Beach
tennis swimming
hiking.

slashed palm.
small time
petty crime

investiture
West End
Davie Street
Group Home

interpreter
a child defined
by the line
of her pencil sketches

shifting perimeters
Point Grey
West End
East Side

Drizzle
she melts in the rain
inside a drink
flirting with a swizzle
stick
a fleeting sense of
class
til she hits the glass
bottom

hair of the dog
life unhinged
ride the slow train
chosen terminus
Princess and Main

happiness twisted up
in
daisy chains she
writes poems to
lead us through
a heart
tangled in
sweet peas
geraniums

skirting the dark
side where red
pink and purple
petals dangle
adrift against
scabrous walls

freefall
stiletto shoes
frozen toes
cocaine heroine
ice smack
don't look back
two kids
too many men
still some friends
to hold onto

dissolve
1995 and
still alive
crack
HIV
hep C
pap smear
DNA

Fizzle
1997
rollerblading
accelerating
begging
her sister for

\$30.

Install
another brick in the
wall
self-incarcerating
architecture
self-labelled
junkie
whore
holed up
in a corner
of her mind
dying
to be
safe
respected
cherished

Christmas 1997
money for dope
thanks to Wayne
a peaceful
carefree
day

April 1998
water taken with
vitamins
glass left on
the night
stand
two sisters embark
the Veendam
the Beacon Hotel

Missing:
29.
Sarah de Vries:
30.
Dead/missing/dead/
Count.

Ire Shakes Free

Peter Morelli

when a road is a pair of shears
iron to loss of hair a foot
down sharp rock
ropes that tie to post
are heritage woven
gun smoke hides in the grass
powder mist that sifts
through tall blades with
'wish of secrets sounding
out a tremble
there are many faces
clover too through which the
ground will shake in weighty
breath of sweet barley smell
for all the fury is extant
worn emerald on the regal
brow burrowed in the muck
still the silence moves against
stalks of anger
shaping parade of anguish into
contour lines of quiet siege
amongst the hills
descending soft the raven caw and cough
of leaden hail and spark
a tributary whelming down
slope to scour off
scud that swags across soil
cold carving sounds
etch stone blocks into eerie stories
struggling against permanence
and passed time binds the isle
to the aching earth call for fresh
rustle of the stirring blades
breathes unheard amidst the din

A Travel Journal Documenting Our Tour of Shit-hole B.C. Towns, a Shopping Spree in Morocco, a Carpet Ride to Baghdad, and Six Years Haunting the Halls of Post-Secondary Institutions on the Trail of a Degree in English Literature

Leaf McClary

We came back from a fantastic North
heavily tipping servers all along the coastal highway
singing those inspirational, come all ye's, and the *missa potatum*
Sticky and dripping pitch, we were gripping manuals and books of conduct
like the one about leaving the Midwest for the Middle East
My hair was thick with brine and my skin looked like a salmon fillet
My girl was reeling from the cultural adjustments she had, so rapidly, just to make

A time, it would seem, had been spent away from home
"Which watch was it when she was last spoken?"
she asked, as we joined the rapt mob, all drawn by the scene before us

Ewers of peerless design being lowered into the Sewers of Paris
and mine was the third rower in blue
A doer in there is....
[Ok, now you're surely fucking with us]

I'm posing
an imposter crusading against the twilight
Memories in what you now call the Middle East
I'm what you now call Paul

Apologist
Launch your missive
Give it a name
Maybe.... "Epistle from the Wannabe Apostle"
Or..... "Unlucky No. Saul"

The church father plays Whore or Model
on the streets of Mogador
'till the "cozy brown snow of the east"¹ drives him into a Rabat room at the Rihab
Praise Allah

¹ Lou Reed

McClary / A Travel Journal...

-I've been dumped by a million girls. You...you just listen to me
-Why would I ever listen to you?
You're confused by your own feelings
feel awkward when someone does a nice thing for you
and hurt when they don't

Let us ring now fancy's bell
and call the faithful up from hell

ALLAHU AKBAR! ALLAHU AKBAR!

The liturgy of the drunks always fired me up a bit more than any of your come all
ye's
I liked the way the Pontius lost some of his steam in that trial
but Aloysius Ignatius Fenugreek Esquire IV is biting at Frank Osbaldistone's rear
and Roger MacGonnaccal found love roasting in the belly of a rodent
indigenous to the beanfields of Colombia
"not Oregon at all"²

Pogue Mahone; Acushla Machree and more of that whoop-tee
Signs on the road to get there from the 26th of Joo-lee
Exclamation mark cow
No boomerangs permitted in *la Royaume du Maroc*
Get a temporary tattoo in Jemma al'Feena
Want a wallet; fresh-squeezed orange juice;
more rugs, lamps and desert scenes than you can carry through douanes?
'*ASHRA DIRHAM!* '*ASHRA DIRHAM!*
La shukran

There's a fishing boat, there's a smuggler's lane
We cross this moat, from the Spanish Main

I was a malt jobber's son; she a general's daughter
Raised in the barracks on the Rock of Gibraltar
Upstart officers: her whetting stones
Me: her sure thing
Picnic pomegranate; "lick the tracings of juice; core the runnels; earn my hand"

No thank you

She "thought that probably [I] was a humbug and certainly a bore"³

² Jack Kerouac

McClary / A Travel Journal...

I can't say I've always preferred drugs to women, but I tell the story of one of the
thousands of times I've chosen them over women
Caramelizing granite hunks
scraped from bills into the parabolic end of a browning spoon
Chipped plating bonds form pewter solution
It just seemed so much easier and, on the surface, more dignified

-“Want something that’ll really make you fly?”
-“N-no...N-not just yet. Uh...th-thank (?) you”

The Hollywood of the Arabic North is selling barks formed of splinters
Glued together, pressurized Rood shards
Erasmus derided as, at best, distractions from our spiritual duty
Here they spray suffocating red paint on the stunted conifers in the courtyard
to make those silly Christians feel at home
Accommodate ‘em like with Orson Welles on the set of *Othello*
The same courtesy need never be extended
when Roman Polanski is doing, to death, *Macbeth*
A boast has just left m’lord’s lips as he beholds the Norfolk Pines
mobilizing to make his more intimate acquaintance
He’s silent, for a spell, before uttering his concise and apt judgment:
“Weak!”
Later, he be’s all like “I’s sure they were giving me the green light”

This is part of middle management’s effort to broaden the product’s appeal
This is what will, ultimately, drive all the 10 000 Things into drab territory
This world is full of gentle and easy things that somehow cause a great deal of pain
This world will judge you summarily and have you supplying the evidence
This world will make you answer for the expectations you have set
La shukran

Lopez, that mobbled queen’s scapegoated leech
got hanged for the rendering of all the pounds of flesh it took to make up Shylock

ALLAHU AKBAR! ALLAHU AKBAR!

The deaf and dumb mill through the broad commercial strip
The not-so-muted shopkeepers lunge at you
from their kiosks buried deep in the darkest regions of the souk
Some workers are tearing into a junkie
A pensioner’s getting hassled for his fare

³ Thomas Carlyle

McClary / A Travel Journal...

A sudden rush of social concern and I'm standing before the crowd
demanding they attend
"You're called to pray and you are stayed for"
I shout into the beard of a hapless spanger
"are you deaf, man?"
At the muezzin, I almost spit
"put out the closed-caption flag, fucker
I'm through talking to these drones!"

ALLAHU AKBAR! ALLAHU AKBAR!

A Carthaginian peace
He/she/it smiled at the revolution come dripping blood
Pistoia delenda est

What's the news of the world, Boy?
Are all the people safely out of the Pale of Settlement?
And you, are you still just a tailor's son or have you become a tailor?
Nah!
Admit it
Say "*pecca vi*, I'm a total shit"

Kobiyashu Maru, you raise the bet
In the towns
and in the fields
we never can forget

I love, I love, I love a Ja-a-ah
Praise Him motherfuckers!
I heard Ba'al in the minaret making with the prayer calling
It's called again and you come
dripping ointment and losing footwear
submerging limbs and ready to submit
Sing a surrah
Genuflect
Praise be to Him
And we watch it end
Just like this

A Trip to Iran and the Trouble with Travelogues

Natalie Sorenson

Last summer I went to Iran to research Islamic art. I traveled in the company of my professor, a driver, and guide. The following photographs document some of the things that I saw. The text, I hope, elucidates the complexity of representing one's travels.

Travelogues, both fictitious and not, are always seated in misunderstanding; it is the traveler's position of not knowing that makes her sensitive to what is very ordinary for someone else. This is what makes travel tales so exciting; they are rife with vivid descriptions of the new sensations the main character undergoes. Looking again at my photographs and travel journal I clearly remember feeling overwhelmed by new experiences. My notes largely focused on the visually stunning and delicious food: the plum-juice coated preserved fruits, strands of cotton candy, trout kebab, squares of creamy white cheese and pickled vegetables. Toward the middle of our two-week stay I felt that it would be very easy for the new diet, arid climate, and visual surroundings to make me into a different person. I felt that everything I like could easily change. In other words, being in Iran revealed more about the limits of my sensibilities rather than giving me an objective understanding of the country.

I write this explanation because I am aware of what photographs can and cannot say. For example, one might see my tendency to fixate on objects rather than people. Read into that what you will! I use my camera to take visual notes, collecting instances of those things that preoccupy me as an artist: dazzling patterns, color or shape analogies made between objects, and traces left behind by people interacting with their surroundings. In other words, I look for those attributes of objects that evoke readership; I look at *how* objects are read (through comparison) and responded to (through interaction). In turn, my photographs are traces for you to decipher. They carry the same kind of latent (albeit ambiguous) meaning.

Sorenson / A Trip to Iran...



Hamid's Joke



Shrine of Abd al-Samad, Natanz

Sorenson / A Trip to Iran...



The desert between Isfahan and Na'in

Sorenson / A Trip to Iran...



Drawings by the children of the camelhair coat-maker, Na'in

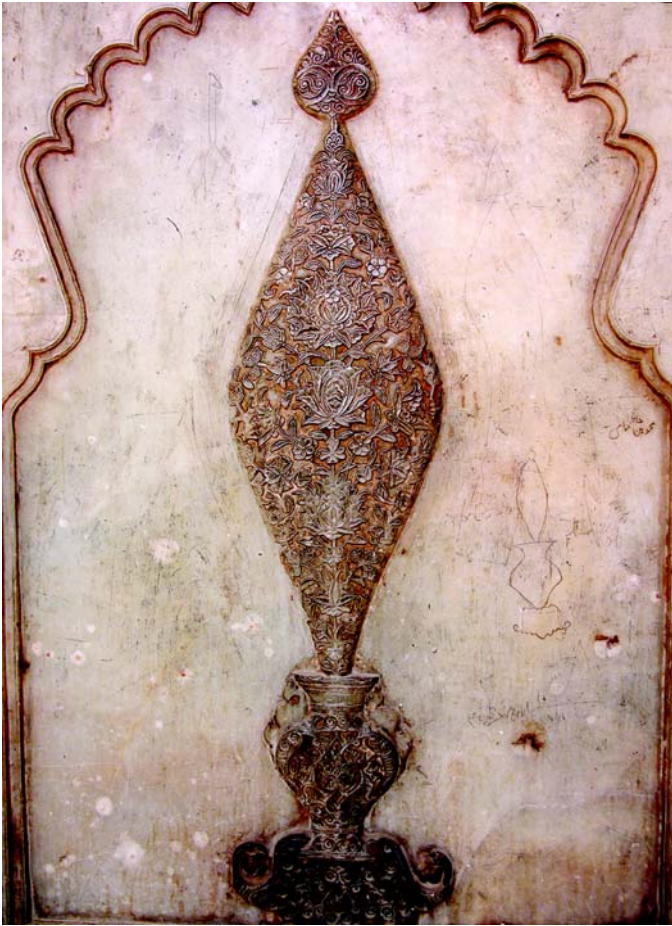
These charcoal drawings lined the walls of the underground passage that connected the coat-maker's shop to his house.



The entrance of Chehel Sotoun (Palace of 40 Columns), Isfahan



Abbasi Hotel Garden, Isfahan



An attempt to draw the urn



Mattresses on a flatbed truck, Isfahan

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Basement of the Friday Mosque of Na'in

Sorenson / A Trip to Iran...



View of Yazd at night

Sorenson / A Trip to Iran...



Tour bus on a street in Tehran

Carve Me the Edge of a Moon

Maria Lenart

The landscape is smoking, yellow and white with dust. My parents are asleep and dawn is brilliant as I search my closet for moth-coloured overalls. My life is porridge, blunt shovels and Sadie. *Let's get out of here, lets*, she says, three days ago while my dad is locking the cows into their stalls and I am cleaning the barn with a pitch-fork, scraping at the manure and hay stuck together. My gumboots are too big and I am thinking that Sadie's hair is the colour of newborn chicks, like fresh straw, the sun and the lemons we crush for drinks. I love the plainness of the prairie, the sun and the sweat trickling through my scalp. In my head I see Sadie playing dress-up in my barn-boy clothes, she pushes my hair out of my eyes, *Krystle, we gotta get outta here, we need to get you some clothes. I hear they've got some awesome stores in West Edmonton Mall. We'd dress you up all girly and shit.*

It's two days since Sadie left.

I love the mud and fields, the flatness, the sharp edges of sky, the wind that colours everything.

That night feels cool and magnetic. I pull layers on while packing my favourite Vans into my black book-bag. I slip out of the house and walk towards the highway. I've never been scared of the dark. Cars don't come by too often, but I hold out my handmade sign. I tuck my other hand in my pocket. A car on my left slows and it smells of diesel and something creeps up my spine. I can almost hear Sadie telling her new friends, *My best friend is beautiful and brave, she smokes cigars and rides horses without getting thrown.*

I think how I've never been scared of the dark before and the smell of it.

**Time, Space, and Fragmentation:
Defending the Aesthetics of Language Poetry**
Jennifer Chaput

If reality is trying to express itself in words it is certainly taking the long way around.

-Lyn Hejinian, *My Life*

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

-Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

In *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson argues that “postmodern” culture is in the midst of a “crisis of historicity” (27). According to Jameson, this crisis manifests itself most obviously in a dislocating of the temporal in favour of a “spatial” organization of culture and cultural productions. In specifically addressing this crisis of historicity within textual productions, he points to the stylistic prominence of temporal fragmentation and “disunity” in many postmodern works, critiquing the “heterogeneous” postmodern aesthetic of seemingly “random raw material and impulses of all kinds,” which results in works which contain “profound discontinuities” (31) (the term “postmodern” is itself contentious: I use it provisionally for the purposes of this paper). Jameson, employing the term “schizophrenic,” and specifically drawing on the example of Language poetry, argues that aside from being politically empty, this stylistic feature of discontinuity is often merely “decorative,” and results in sentences that “fall apart into random and inert passivity” (31). The passive quality of the text is indicative of the general political passivity Jameson suggests is found within the culture of postmodernism at large, which, as an aesthetic phenomenon, fails to entertain a necessary critical political dialectic in relation to capitalism (31). In response to Jameson’s provocative oversimplification and mischaracterization, I view fragmentation as a particular aesthetic strategy and compelling and *active* site of experimentation.

Although Language poetry has been linked, to varying degrees, with “leftist” politics and a politically motivated agenda, I am not chiefly concerned with whether postmodern texts generally, or

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Language poetry specifically, offer or fail to offer the type of Marxist Utopian potential with which Jameson is generally concerned. While the relationship between aesthetics and capitalism is the chief concern of Jameson's book, my concern centers around the degree to which this focus is limiting. Most obviously, Jameson's position is reductive, evaluating aesthetic productions generally in terms of a grand Marxist political project or meta-narrative. This ideological telescoping leads to some contentious mischaracterizations of the "passive" and "schizophrenic" aesthetics of fragmentation and discontinuity found in Language poetry.

Jameson adapts Lacan's definition of schizophrenia as "the breakdown in the signifying chain" and applies it to designate what he views as the general temporal breakdown and "disorienting" fragmentation of Language poetry (26). It is necessary to complicate Jameson's suspiciously neat critique of what he terms the "spatial" (versus the temporal) organizing principle of postmodernism, as well as his misdiagnosis of the fragmented text as essentially "passive" and "inert" –as part of a general response to his definition and characterization of this fragmented aesthetic. Additionally, it is useful to problematize Jameson's characterization of schizophrenia (symbolically, not clinically speaking) as essentially negative, or "morbid" (29), and propose ways in which fragmentation and "schizophrenia" can be seen in aesthetically positive, or "healthy" terms.

Ideology is an inescapable part of this discussion, but my aim is not to operate solely in terms of Jameson's mode of discourse, and to justify the Utopian political potential of Language poetry, as many have done. Instead, I want to shift the theoretical terms of the discussion away from a Marxist perspective which focuses on the political failings of Language poetry, and towards an analysis of the ways in which Language poetry, if approached from a more explicitly poststructuralist perspective, functions as an active site of generative aesthetic potential. Through opening up our way of thinking about language and the whole conceptual framework on which it is based, poststructuralist theory arguably does better justice to the poetics and fragmented stylistics of Language poetry and postmodern textuality than the closed, goal-oriented political project of which Jameson is a

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part and which depends on the very unified conceptual framework poststructuralist theory complicates.

The Language poets were themselves highly theoretically informed, from the later Wittgenstein through to the post structuralism of Barthes and Derrida. It is because of this potent philosophical and theoretical inheritance that I'm interested in looking at their work through this perspective. This includes, most notably, theories that complicate eschatology, teleology, grand narrative, the stability of language, and the traditional definition of authorship. This arguably offers a fuller way into thinking about fragmented textuality. Although this perspective carries with it its own necessary set of reductions, as any position taking naturally does, it is a perspective whose main reduction is the emphasis on escaping reductiveness –from the reductiveness of a totalizing system of binaries to the reductiveness imposed upon the text by the “tyranny of the author” to the reductiveness of a linear narrative structure (“Death of The Author” 147).

The focus of this discussion is the work of Language poet Lyn Hejinian. Her prose poem *My Life* provides an object lesson in many poststructuralist concepts; and, in both her work and her theoretical writings, Hejinian explicitly engages with fragmentation as a foundational feature of her poetics. At the level of form, Hejinian's fractured, discontinuous sentences are comparable to the Derridian notion of differance in how they push the reader to pursue, through each seemingly distinct sentence, the kind of fixed meaning which invariably never arrives. Instead, the reader finds a kind of circular and indefinite movement towards meaning through the repetitions and briefly intelligible threads Hejinian weaves together in creating a work that is fundamentally about the relational. Each sentence suggests the possibility of a meaning which is then deferred and substituted by another sentence which again withholds meaning in a type of play, an “infinite field of substitutions,” which opens up the text in a type of movement, which is not, as Jameson suggests of the postmodern text generally, a-temporal, but rather, inconclusive (“Structure, Sign, and Play” 99). It is a temporal relationship without a narrative thread – or rather, a spatiality with a movement in time. It is a movement propelled not simply by the logically temporal structure of a sentence, but by the

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conventional expectation of specific meaning; the habitual sense that if we move through the text and push on in a linear direction, definitive meaning will appear in a fixed totality. This expectation of meaning is actively worried in Hejinian's text:

A word is an expectation. A shooting star is something happening in the sky, as the lion that finally roars is something happening in the zoo. When you speak you play a language. The obvious analogy is with music. What the mad made. The dog digs dirt. It is always funny when the expectation matches the event. (116)

Hejinian acknowledges that the expectation of meaning in "a word is an expectation," but thwarts it, conveying in the fragmented sentences only something *like* meaning. That is, she conveys the suggestion of meaning, or rather, the possibility of a plurality of meanings that never completely settles as the poem generates an atmosphere of perpetual expectation. In considering the role of meaning within the work, Hejinian suggests that "a work like my *My Life* challenges our inclination to isolate, identify, and limit the burden of meaning given to an event (the sentence or line)" (*The Language of Inquiry* 12).

Hejinian achieves this simultaneous extension and disruption of meaning through the numerous, seemingly arbitrary, repetitions of specific sentences such as the sentence "the obvious analogy is with music," repeated multiple times throughout the text, or the sentence "a pause, a rose, something on paper," also repeated multiple times throughout the text. Repetition functions as an integral poetic technique in *My Life*. Writing about this technique in *The Language of Inquiry*, Hejinian notes that "the initial reading is adjusted; meaning is set in motion, emended and extended, and the rewriting that repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely" (44). Thus, the repeated sentences are dynamic: no one meaning given to them in a particular context within the work is stable: the sentence, continually disrupted and then put into "motion" both by the repetition itself and the changing context, never settles. Hejinian's reflection on this technique seems inseparable from some general tenants of poststructuralist theory in that she posits a perpetual opening up of the text and a de-stabilizing of the implied meanings contained within the

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language of that text. When Hejinian writes in *My Life* that “we never wanted more than something beginning which was worth continuing which remained unended,” it is as if she is articulating the experience of reading *My Life* (100). The frustration a reader may experience upon beginning the prose poem often falls away and the desire to continue reading arguably stems from the enjoyment of the linguistic play and the infinite multiplicity of meanings that remain open in a poem that seems to extend into infinity.

This commitment to the unending is highlighted in the process Hejinian went through in writing her poem and adding to it eight years later. The first version, written when she was 37, contains 37 sections, each 37 sentences long. The following version contains eight new sections, each 45 sentences long, and 8 more sentences were randomly added to each of the previous 37 sections. Hejinian is clearly conscious of the temporal in this work, which, although she has not added to it since 1987, suggests the possibility of being added to; there is no way to tell if, or when, it will come to an end (other than with her death, presumably). Again, it seems that Jameson confuses the open ended temporal relationship found in the open texts of Language poetry with a complete and total “breakdown in temporality” (31). The temporal hasn’t broken down entirely, it has instead been re-defined within the context of an open text. Of course, the arbitrary is an inherent part of Hejinian’s aesthetic, and a feature of this postmodern “schizophrenia” that Jameson clearly takes issue with when he critiques the “random” qualities of Language poetry. However, the decision to incorporate the “random” (to use Jameson’s term) is anything but random, and is instead a conscious effort to thwart our traditional or conventional expectations about narrative, and perhaps incorporate some of the randomness of the everyday.

There is, indeed, a certain “arbitrary” quality to the formal organization of Hejinian’s text. By incorporating the arbitrary in this open text, Hejinian subverts the mystique and power of her role as the Author of *My Life*. This obvious influence of Barthes upon Language poetry reveals itself most in Hejinian’s own musings over “the open text” in *The Language of Inquiry*:

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The open text, by definition, is open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader ... it speaks for writing that is generative rather than directive. The writer relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a principle and control as a motive. (43)

Consequently, Hejiniian's text demands a high level of engagement from a reader, and is itself a focus of activity –something that seems to complicate Jameson's shortsighted contention that the fragmentation found in Language poetry produces sentences which "fall apart into random and inert passivity" (31). The opposite would actually seem to be true. In other words, provided one actively engages with the open text, the sentences become places of an active, generative potential to be "written" by the reader. The general problem of "passivity," at least from a Barthesian perspective, exists most within what he defines as "readerly texts," which put the reader in the position of passively consuming the static, "single theological meaning" that constitutes "the message of the Author-God" ("The Death of the Author" 148). For example, the ambiguity of sentences like "I laugh as if my pots were clean" or "My Life is a permeable constructedness" (89) only become passive and disorienting if one refuses to engage with them and take up the task or "burden" of creating the possible meanings. In "My life is a permeable constructedness," there is clearly a rather ironic, self-reflexive ambiguity at work which leaves the reader to pursue both meanings of "My life," but more importantly, whichever meaning one chooses to pursue will inevitably have to be complicated or re-adjusted as the text progresses.

Interestingly, in critiquing the fragmented aesthetic in postmodernism, Jameson, in providing the example of Language poetry, directly compares it to the work of John Cage. In commenting on hearing Cage's music, Jameson describes it as a painfully fractured experience in which "a cluster of material sounds (on the prepared piano for example) is followed by a silence so intolerable that you cannot imagine another sonorous chord coming into existence and cannot imagine remembering the previous one well enough to make any connection with it if it does" (28). From Jameson's perspective, Cage's chords, like the sentences found in Language poems (he specifically provides Bob Perelman's "China" as an example) fall into

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a state of overall disunity and passivity through the stylistics of fragmentation.

Cage's own theorizing of his work provides an interesting counter perspective on this general problem of passivity through which one may re-evaluate the charge of passivity Jameson directs at Hejinian's work ("the obvious analogy is with music," Hejinian so aptly says). In commenting on trying to counter the feeling of passively receiving a piece of music, Cage argues that "we must arrange our art, we must arrange everything, I believe, so that people realize that they themselves are doing it, and not that something has been done to them" (qtd. in Nyman 24). Here, Cage echoes Barthes and Hejinian's comments on the agency of readers to assert themselves actively in the process of creating a text. Thus, the text is only a source of passivity if one doesn't do "the work" and engage with it. Putting it another way, Cage writes that "if we have done nothing then they will have everything to do" (qtd. in Nyman 25). This last comment seems to hit on the project underway within the aesthetics of Language poetry – through withholding the normal narrative threads one may cling to in passively consuming a text, the writer shifts the burden of "organizing" the text to the reader; the tyranny of Authorship is displaced. The writer sets up the possibility for pluralities of meaning and the infinite realm of linguistic play which is "taken up" and pursued through each reader. This "de-throning" of the fixed, tyrannical Author goes hand in hand with the de-stabilizing of fixed, tyrannical meaning.

However, Jameson is clearly not convinced by the project of Language poetry. The very traits that seem to register aptly and articulate the profound de-stabilizing and de-centering of language (and the whole of Western metaphysics couched in that language) register, for Jameson, a type of illness, namely a "decorative" example of "schizophrenic fragmentation" which tries to displace or ignore the temporal (30). The aesthetics of postmodern fragmentation reveal works which are "no longer unified or organic, but now a virtual grab bag...of disjointed subsystems" (31). What I call the reader-centered aesthetic of the open, fragmented Language poem, Jameson deems "schizophrenic," and it seems that we reach a critical impasse. That is, regardless of Jameson's mischaracterizing of Language poetry, in order to see this "schizophrenia" as a healthy skepticism of the "unity" of a

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totalizing and reductive conceptual framework, one has to make the leap to question the apparent unity of certain conceptual frameworks in the first place; otherwise, it seems impossible that one would see this “schizophrenia” in an essentially positive light and “get” the aesthetics of Language poetry.

At this point, it seems helpful to turn briefly to Deleuze and Guattari, as they illuminate any discussion of postmodern schizophrenia and fragmentation, and propose a radically different understanding of schizophrenia than Jameson employs in his critique of postmodern fragmentation. Deleuze and Guattari do not conceive of schizophrenia in the traditional pathological sense, but, departing from Lacan, see it in more ambiguous (potentially positive) terms. While it is impossible to do justice to their dizzyingly obscure concept here, it can be said that, in part, they define “schizophrenia” as a type of experimenting with the process of “becoming” –in which the normal distinctions of “self and non-self, outside and inside, no loner have any meaning whatsoever” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 2). Above all, schizophrenia is not a pathological *state*, but a *process* that breaks down the normal binaric distinctions between things, and displaces meaning or cohesion as a goal in the process of becoming –displaces all goals in the process of becoming. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they discuss the stylistics of literature as manifesting this schizophrenic process: “That is what style is or rather the absence of style –asynactical, agrammatical. The moment when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but what causes it to move, to flow” (133). Through displacing and playing with the normal relationship between the signifier and the signified and displacing Meaning as a goal, Hejinian’s text manifests something closer to Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of schizophrenia as a *process* than to Jameson’s definition of it as a “morbid” pathological *state*. What is important in Hejinian and Deleuze and Guattari is the emphasis on an open type of *process* that resists a definitive end point.

Hejinian’s text is perpetually “becoming,” and plays with and complicates the conventional relationship between the signifier and signified in the process. That is, any given sentence fails to signify any obvious meaning (but opens the possibility for multiple significations), flowing forward into another sentence which opens up more ambiguous

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meanings, and so on and so on. For example, in *My Life* she writes: “Such displacements alter illusions, which is all-to-the-good. Such diction is used in discourse to put it possibly. Yet better left unsaid if I could have. A pause, a rose, something on paper. Waiting for sleep, sleep waits. Sleep in its bubbling sock” (88). The language in Hejinian’s text is not “defined by what it says,” but rather by a dynamic openness and ambiguity, and a desire to corrupt and complicate the more conventional understanding of the relationship between language and meaning through a “schizophrenic” aesthetic. In “Such displacements alter illusions,” is Hejinian referring to what occurs in *My Life*, or in her life, or in language as a system? The potential significations or referents can run on and on, and do as part of the text’s “becoming.”

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the “rhizome” offers a particularly interesting vehicle through which to view the aesthetics of Language poetry generally. As they explain, a rhizome is unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point...it brings into play very different regimes of signs” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 21). The concept of the rhizome resists eschatological and teleological perspectives on culture, while at the same time emphasizing the systemic connections between things in a way that seems somewhat comparable to Derrida’s notion of a “de-centered” system. Deleuze and Guattari argue that “American literature, and already English literature, manifests this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). In an odd way, it seems possible that *My Life* could have just as easily worked under the title: “the logic of the AND.” That is, the sentences in *My life* are being continually extended, but lack narrative cohesion –their multiplicities of meaning are found only in their linkages, in their relationality.

These multiplicities initially suggested in a sentence are often taken up and played with at a different point in the text. For example, the sentence “But sometimes –I think because of, not despite, all the activity –I felt as serene as when I had studied all the irregular and slightly undependable patterns of the kitchen tiles as a child, to which I had so happily resigned myself when trying to find the place at which

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the pattern repeats” (*My Life* 68), is taken up by Hejinian again 20 pages later, embedded seemingly arbitrarily in the text: “A translator must try and keep all of the most interesting words. Is it a pattern that we see or only a random placement of the stupid little tiles. Or a place by water in early spring” (*My Life* 88). Thus does the first sentence concerning the “tiles” open up the potential multiplicities of meaning, but the way in which this image/idea is taken up again and changed or elaborated on, and the way in which the changed or elaborated image/idea relates to the previous use of the image/idea keeps on extending the possibilities. The effect is much the same as the repetition of specific sentences in different contexts. Virtually all of the images or ideas are taken up multiple times, and expanded on, contradicted, etcetera. Hejinian displaces the conventional narrative model of a text for a type of systemic model forged out of the multiple connections and linkages one makes between the ambiguous sentences, challenging Jameson’s contention that the sentences in Language poems “exist in free-standing isolation” (28).

Hejinian’s own discussion of the logic of connectivity working within her work is illuminating:

There are logics of irrationality, impossibility, and a logic of infinite speed. All of these logics make connections, forge linkages. That, indeed is the function of logics; they motivate the moves from one place to another...emphasis in poetry is on the moving rather than on the places. Poetry follows pathways of thinking and it is that that creates patterns of coherence. (*The Language of Inquiry* 2)

This discussion of the movement of poetry seems comparable to Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the “rhizomatic direction.” While both frameworks put a considerable emphasis on the spatial through their discussion of *relation*, both suggest a “movement” or a “direction” which necessarily implicates the temporal.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphatically write that they “no longer believe in the dull gray outlines of a dreary, colorless dialectic of evolution, aimed at forming a harmonious whole out of heterogeneous bits by rounding off their rough edges” (42). Likewise, the entire “postmodern” aesthetic is a resistance to the illusion of organic unity and neat teleological visions of history and

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cultural evolution; there is arguably an awareness that ordered conceptual frameworks leave out so much, and an underlying sense that it is better to have a disordered aesthetic of heterogeneity and “schizophrenic” fragmentation than a misleading belief in invented frameworks of cultural organization.

However, in his discussion of Language poetry, Jameson doesn't just take issue with the apparently “a-temporal” schizophrenic aesthetic as a whole, but also with the enjoyment of this aesthetic presumably experienced by the writer and reader. He attempts to show how “schizophrenic disjunction or *écriture*, when it becomes generalized as a cultural style, ceases to entertain a necessary relationship to the morbid content we associate with terms like schizophrenia and becomes available for more joyous intensities” (29). This comment moves into the dangerous realm of putting prescriptions on art by arguing what it is “necessary” art “should” do. Jameson takes this prescriptive element to the point where the “joyous intensities” of cultural productions represent an amoral failure. There is an indirect suggestion that Language poetry is somehow perverse in how it reveals an enjoyment in playing with language and structure, something Hejinián, for example, took from the work of modernist Gertrude Stein. What in Jameson's view separates the work of the high modernists like Stein and that of Language poets is that fragmentation has “become a cultural norm” (29). In other words, it is no longer removed enough from the rest of culture to serve a critical function –the dialectic between “*morbid*” and healthy has been eroded. Thus, art, if not a place of adequate Marxist political praxis, becomes an aesthetic failure.

It certainly makes sense as to why Jameson doesn't find postmodern fragmentation or Language poetry aesthetically successful: by Jameson's logic, in failing politically language poetry fails aesthetically. Language poetry has blurred too many lines, and has participated in questioning the reductive system of binaries, origin, and teleology. Marxist Utopian potential can't exist without a narrative, and, through undoing and playing with narrative, postmodern textuality undermines the entire Marxist project insofar as it is traditionally conceived. Such a project is dependent on a specific aesthetic that fits into a highly specific, and, arguably, utilitarian critical function. Stephen Greenblatt, in his essay “Towards a poetics of culture,” begs

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an important question in response to Jameson's conception of aesthetics when he asks if we would "really find it less alienating to have no distinction at all between the political and the poetic - the situation, let us say, during China's Cultural revolution?" Although this might seem like a politically charged cheap shot, it expresses most importantly the dangerous reductiveness of a totalizing aesthetic that collapses any possible distinctions between aesthetics and politics.

However, even more pertinent to this discussion are Greenblatt's comments concerning the specific role of literature within such a totalizing view; art is discussed insofar as it succeeds at offering, or fails to offer Utopian political potential, and "literature is invoked at once as the dark token of fallenness and the shimmering emblem of the absent transfiguration" ("Towards A Cultural Poetics" 2). Thus, literature is discussed only in terms of the totalizing reductiveness of a binary system (which poststructuralist theory has thoroughly complicated), as a representation of "fallenness" or a "shimmering emblem," and aesthetics seem to fall by the wayside.

My goal here has not been to defend the politics of Language poetry, but it seems necessary to suggest that perhaps what looks to Jameson like an eroding of the dialectic is in reality a symptom (speaking in a positive sense) of skepticism concerning the totalizing dualistic system of binaries (including those between the temporal and the spatial) which Jameson's dialectic depends on. That is, perhaps fragmentation is really, in part, an attempt to complicate such binaric divisions, for example, between signifier and signified, or between author and reader –as Hejinian writes in *My Life*: "It isn't a small world, but there are many ways of dividing it into small parts. Reason looks for two, then arranges it from there" (84).

Logically, this type of fragmented aesthetic doesn't fit into a narrowly conceived of and reductive prescriptive political project of any sort (although Language poetry certainly has political potential). However, this resistance to the reductive world of binaries can equally be looked at as an aesthetic success, a de-mystifying and dislocating of the misleading conceptual frameworks which, imposed upon language, have been all too limiting for all too long. In poetry, this was a project started, in part, by Stein, and carried through with Hejinian –but it is not a project, like Marxism, that orients itself towards a fixed and

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totalizing end. I would argue that this “open” quality is what makes Language poetry generally, and *My Life* specifically, such compelling sites of aesthetic innovation.

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Potentialities of Meaning

Adam Basanta

A work of electroacoustic music can often be perceived as an odd conglomeration of sounds, reproduced without performance through a loudspeaker to a passive audience. I would like to challenge these preconceptions through various frameworks found within the field of performance studies, and attempt to suggest alternate readings of both the acts of composition and reception-of-the-listener *as texts*. This investigation is undertaken with the hope that it could offer both compositional strategies to composers, as well as a heightened engagement with the produced work on the part of the listener. This results in a keener awareness, on both parts, of the negotiation for the *potentialities of meaning* which are undertaken through any presentation of an electroacoustic composition. Throughout the paper, I will provide various examples using my own work *Écologie Matérielle*, provided for your consideration alongside program notes and an interpretive score.

I will begin with a brief general discussion of some aspects of the medium which are central to my essay, but may not be apparent to those unfamiliar with the intricacies of the medium.

As suggested by Landy, I consider the field of electroacoustic music to be a subsection of “sound art:” that is, an aural experience which uses the unit of the individual sound as opposed to note as its smallest unit, or building block (Landy 5). Furthermore, I agree, as suggested by Chion, that the result of music which uses recorded sound as its base material, and then proceeds to manipulate it in various ways, is a form of “cinema pour l’oreille” – “cinema for the ears.” That is to say, our perception of sound, whether recognizable or not, often results in a mental image, and therefore the result of a work that deals entirely with the aural field is quite imagistic. This immediately offers up the notion of “enhanced listening” (to which I will return in detail), that is, a listening in which the listener actively engages with the aural product through internal visualization.

There has, of course, been great debate within the discourse of electroacoustic music in regards to the presentation of works. As most (though not all) works are “fixed-time compositions” – in the sense that

they are composed and fixed on a CD, or other media, then played back at the concert setting, and thus do not vary from performance to performance (as would be the case in instrumental works, or even interactive or otherwise indeterminate electroacoustic works) – it seems that the sole “performative” aspect of the presentation of any given piece is the practice of “diffusion,” which consists of the composer’s “moving around” the sound within the space. Though this practice is one with a rich history, and certainly offers composers a new dimension to the presentation of their work as well as a new form of performance virtuosity (Harrison 121), the emergence of multi-channel composition, that is, the composition and fixing of three-dimensional spatial information, opens up the question once more; is an electroacoustic concert, with its lack of human performers, a “performance?” We will return to this question.

As suggested in the introduction, my re-reading of the conventions and inherent assumptions found within the medium revolve around two paradigms: the composer’s intent and the listener’s reception. In order to challenge each paradigm in a way that does not isolate one from the other, as I feel that they are in fact linked in a multitude of ways, I will employ Pavis’ notion of “Vectorization” in order to maintain a constant link between the two. In *Which Theory for Which Mise-en-scene?*, Pavis argues for a practice-theory that uses semiotic principles *in relation* to the “energetics of displacement,” the various invisible parameters of the Mise-en-scene, which is neglected by the classical, static system of structural semiotics (Pavis 97). Thus, Pavis proposes a mode of “integrated semiotics,” in which semiotic structures employed by the composer interact with mise-en-scene elements through various vectors (etymologically, a “carrier”), which “remain open” and allow the listener to negotiate which vector is dominant at any particular moment (Pavis 98, 99). I find this notion quite appealing, as it seems to suggest an open and dynamically changing field of textuality, a constant negotiation between composer, composition, and listener.

I feel that an examination of the compositional paradigm, specifically related to my own practice, must revolve around the concept of structural semiotics. This is because “what is natural to mankind is not oral speech but the faculty of constructing a language,”

that is, a system of relations between signs and ideas of meaning (Hawkes 10) – though I would like to propose a looser relationship, after Pavis, between sign and signification than the classical structuralist model. Thus, just as Levi-Strauss applied structural semiotics to anthropological research of culture, I propose using this framework in order to better understand the various considerations and intentions of the composer of electroacoustic music.

As I argued previously, I find that every sound manifests itself imagistically, and thus the practice of composition must take into account the referential qualities of each sound-image. Thus, I propose looking at a work of electroacoustic music as a text, and as a language, as it is a “complex system or structure of correspondence between distinct signs and distinct ideas of meaning” (Hawkes 10). Moreover, I feel that this view of electroacoustic music presents an opportunity to the composer, in the sense that the referential qualities inherent in the sound material and the referential qualities projected onto the sound through various sound-manipulation processes can, as proposed by Wishart, be used as a compositional framework (Wishart 165).

Briefly expanding on Wishart’s concept of the sound-image in relation to structural semiotics, I would like to propose two kinds of sound-image signification: the representational sound-image and the phenomenological sound-image. The representational sound-image employs a recognizable sound (or one that appears recognizable), that functions as a sign to our index of possible representational sounds. For example, the use of a bird call in the opening phrase of *Écologie Matérielle* (00:05) refers indexically to our experience of real-world sounds, and is identified as a bird, with all the possible associative (Hawkes 13) connotations attached to such a sign (in relation to *Écologie Matérielle*, these associations may include nature, animal life, natural beauty). The phenomenological sound-image uses the physicality of the sound, as well as the phenomena of perceiving the sound, as a sign. For example, the unnaturally jagged spatial motion, unstable amplitude, and overall spectral manipulation of the “synthetic” materials (see program notes) in the second section of *Écologie Matérielle* (2:00 – 2:12) acts as a sign, enhancing the notion of “processed,” as opposed to “natural,” materials. These two kinds of semiotic indicators can also be combined, as seen in the climax at 3:07,

which works as a representational sound-image through the image of the breaking and falling over of a tree, while simultaneously using the phenomenological sound-image of a heightened intensity resolving itself through rupture.

Following the structuralist model, it is apparent that we do not extrapolate meanings (note the plurality) from signs exclusively through their associative connotations, but also through their syntagmatic relationships between one another, that is, through the perceived difference between signs (Hawkes 11). I believe that this notion of syntagmatic relationship becomes particularly relevant in relation to the practices of electroacoustic music, with its potential for direct representation (the use of an “actual” bird-call as unaltered sound material – akin to the direct representation of a bird in photography as opposed to the *portrayal* of a bird in painting), as well as its potential for a manipulation of “directly represented” sound material. I argue that in relation to a syntagmatic negotiation of meaning, and Pavis’ notion of integrated semiotics, the electroacoustic composer can use processing of directly representational sound material to move fluidly between the “axis of displacement[s],” “mimetic, realistic” aesthetic, and the “axis of condensation[s],” “nonrealist, symbolist, poetic” aesthetic (Pavis 98). Thus, the composer can dynamically change the meaning of a certain semiotic sign or sound-image through its syntagmatic relationships. In *Écologie Matérielle*, I have attempted to do just that, by using the direct representation of the bird call to set the context of a natural environment in the first half of the piece, only to problematize that sound-image by progressively integrating increasingly processed versions of bird-calls (culminating in the entirely processed section at 6:45) throughout the rest of the piece.

It is through this view of integrated semiotics within electroacoustic music that I, and others (Wishart 164), suggest a reading of electroacoustic music through Levi-Strauss’ proposed framework for the reading of Myth in “primitive” societies. This kind of reading, Levi-Strauss suggests, depends on the concept of “Bricolage” (Hawkes 36) – that is, the use of “‘logic’ which is not our own” by the “non-literate, non-technical mind” as a way of responding to their environment, resulting in the “[establishment of] homologies and analogies” in order to “satisfactorily ‘explain’ the world” (Hawkes

36). If we apply this method to electroacoustic music, the “non-literate,” inexperienced listener must construct a kind of mythology in order to make sense of the non-realistic sonic events that are taking place, in a manner somewhat akin to the interpretation of surrealist paintings or poetry.

In relation to *Écologie Matérielle*, I would like to explore several sonic metaphors that are emblematic of the metaphorical opposition found throughout the piece, from the point of view of bricolage. One such metaphor is the sonic transformation between the “crinkling” of synthetic material and the sound-image of rain (3:20 - 5:00), while another can be seen in the various quick transformations between the bird call and the “crumpling” of a piece of paper (0:05, as well as 7:15-9:05). A third metaphorical opposition, though lacking a sonic transformation, is the prevalence of the sound of “ripping paper” in conjunction with the implied “natural soundscape” (2:45-3:15, 7:15-9:05).

In these three cases, the notion of unrealistic metamorphosis or juxtaposition between natural and artificial, animate and inanimate, confounds customary logic. However, approached by a listener with an awareness of the intentional use of semiotics in the act of composition and equipped with the notion of bricolage, a meaningful narrative may emerge. The transformation from bird to paper, or the juxtaposition of violent paper-ripping sounds within a natural soundscape environment, may symbolize our use and abuse of natural materials through various means of extraction and processing. Conversely, the transformation between synthetic material and rain may symbolize our potential to remedy some of these abuses through the use of technology. Regardless of the precise meaning arrived at, the importance is placed on the heightened engagement on the part of the listener with the poiesis (Landy ix, 199) of semiotic structures employed by the composer.

Having followed Pavis’ and Landy’s rationale that an understanding of the process of creation of a work can contribute to the understanding of said work by both analyst and listener (Pavis 106, Landy 38), I would now like to turn our attention to questioning some assumptions regarding the presentation practice of electroacoustic compositions.

The opening up of the concept of “performance,” as suggested

by Schechner and others, resulting in the definition of performance as “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed” (Schechner 1), seems to indicate clearly that the presentation of electroacoustic compositions in a concert setting *is* a performance. This is in opposition to assumptions held by the general public, in which the lack of physical performer (in the vein of the solo instrumentalist), the empty stage and lack of visual stimulation, as well as the emergence of all sounds coming from the loudspeaker, are all elements indicating that an electroacoustic concert is *not* a performance. Though some within the electroacoustic community may dispute this claim by invoking the role of the “diffuser” performer in stereo (as opposed to multi-channel) works (a claim which I would regard as semi-cogent, as the diffusion of the work certainly affects the perception of the work in a concert setting, but not nearly to the degree of an instrumental performer), I, rather, propose a more radical re-reading of the entire presentation practice of an electroacoustic concert *as a text*.

Viewed from this perspective, the paradigm of the static and passive audience member subjected to a fixed, precise “work” (Worthern 12), lacking a performer or visual stimulation is flipped on its head; the lack of sanctified “performers” on the stage, as well as the lack of visual stimulation allows us to re-read each individual listener as the central element in the performance context. In other words, the listener should be seen as a central, active interpreter of the work, and thus, an *internal performer* of their interpretation through mental visualization. This echoes the Cageian concept of the listener as restructuring the sound events occurring around them, and thus, constructing their own individual, valid “meaning” of a given composition (qtd. in Nyman 24). In short, this notion of an interpretive listener, around which everything revolves (literally, in the case of sound diffusion, and metaphorically, in the sense that the concert setting is dependent on, and meant for, the listener) invites each listener to become an “active listener,” the centerpiece of the concert setting; a venue for an internal performance involving a negotiation between the individual interpretation and the experiential sound phenomena.

Of course, this view of an electroacoustic concert directly challenges the assumption of the fixed electroacoustic composition as an authoritarian, fixed “work” in the Barthesian sense, instead situating

any given performed composition as a text to be interpreted by the listener (Worthern 12). However, I find that this idea should be carried further, as the notion of “interpretation by the listener” seems to assume a singular correct meaning communicated by the composer, a belief that seems improbable as one considers the many variables within Pavis’ model of vectorization. Rather, the composer, using integrated semiotics in relation to variables of the *mise-en-scene*, should be seen to create *potentialities of meaning*, to be negotiated differently upon each listening by the listener.

An important part of this negotiation occurs through the relationship between the listener and the multiple variables of the *mise-en-scene*. Undoubtedly, listeners listen differently based on the context of the listening environment; my listening to an electroacoustic composition at an SFU concert is affected by my knowledge of the educational context of the event, as well as, perhaps, my personal knowledge of the composer. While Pavis does not specifically detail these variables, beyond acknowledging that they are as important as the semiotic networks used by the artist (Pavis 99), Linda Kaastra’s adaptation of Joint Activity Theory (Kaastra 2), a literary theory, similar to the notion of vectorization in its exploration of a complex linking of variables found both within and outside the artwork, provides other contextual variables which may be of use. Some of these variables include, as I previously suggested, the physical setting/positioning (sitting at the back of the concert hall), but also the official/unofficial context (recital/private listening at one’s home), the listener’s company, as well as the degree of familiarity of the listener with the setting, context, and pieces being presented (Kaastra 4). Moreover, these contextual variants do not affect the listener’s negotiation of meaning in a mutually exclusive way, rather they are interlinked (similarly to Brinner’s constellation in relation to JAT), much like a mobile. In this sense, within the listener’s negotiation of meaning, the listener’s company may affect their perception of the official or unofficial context of the performance, which in turn may affect the degree of familiarity or alienation from the piece itself.

The effect of different listening contexts, as well as the difference between specialist and non-specialist listeners, can be seen clearly in relation to the different reactions of listeners to the

presentation of *Écologie Matérielle*. When the piece was presented in private studio listening sessions, to instructors and colleagues, the emphasis of their responses revolved around the technical production of the piece. When the piece was heard by colleagues in the privacy of their own homes (without the company of the composer), their responses revolved around the observed “cinematic quality” of the work, as well as the understanding that a semiotic network, or a network of sound-symbols, was utilized in some way. In the piece’s public presentation at the Festival d’Orford, Quebec, the non-specialist crowd, who incidentally reacted quite negatively to other works in the program, displayed a visceral, positive reaction to the “rain sequence” (4:00-6:30). Other non-specialist listeners who heard the piece in the context of a private listening session also reacted strongly to this single image, but expressed concern about the ambiguity of the semiotic networks involved in the piece, as they felt that they did not “understand” the piece’s “meaning.” This is due to their approach of the composition as a “work” with fixed meaning, a notion I encouraged examination of previously.

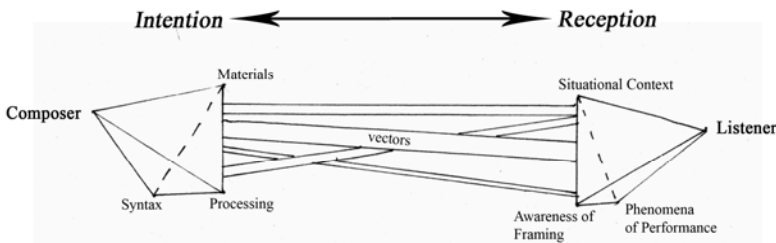
This examination of the composition and reception practices in electroacoustic music is undertaken as more than an academic exercise, but rather, in order to promote an active awareness among listeners and composers of these variables and their effect on the negotiation of meaning in any given piece. This is because just as the negotiation of meaning is affected by both semiotic structures employed by the composer and contextual variants implicit in any presentation, the structures and variables themselves are affected by the listener’s positioning and awareness of both the compositional and presentational stages (Pavis 99). This creates a dynamic feedback system, connected by vectors, between the listener, the composer’s intent and the variables of the *mise-en-scène*, in which each element affects each other, and is consequently affected itself. This sort of model is analogous to the basic framework found in Joint Activity Theory: “language [or electroacoustic music] as emergent property of coordinated joint action [action of composer, action of listener, action of context]” (Clark 319).

In a sense, I find that “Brinner’s constellation,” the interconnected model used in JAT, is no more than a detailed version of

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Pavis' model of vectorization, in which the vectors are specified, rather than being "left open" (Pavis 98). Adapted for our purposes, the interconnected model is applied as follows: as the listener perceives one semiotic sign as the central sign to which others relate syntagmatically, he is changing the "meaning" of the piece, which in turn may lead him to view the "central" sign differently, which affects the syntagmatic relationship to other signs, and on and on. Similarly, as the listener becomes aware of the *mise-en-scene* components (for instance, the official nature of the context), this awareness will change the listener's relationship with the semiotic networks and consequently the perceived "meaning" of the piece, which in turn affects the listener's awareness of various *mise-en-scene* components. Thus, "meaning," in the sense of the lasting affect on the listener, is negotiated through an interlinked and interdependent feedback mechanism, acting as vectors between, as Pavis suggests, the composer, the phenomena of the performance in relation to the *mise-en-scene*, and the listener (Pavis 104).

My proposed model, synthesized from Pavis' model of vectorization, Brinner's constellation in JAT, as well as Paul Rudy's "Triangulation of the Listener," attempts to represent just this sort of relationship in which the two paradigms – composer and listener, represented by pyramids – are connected through an infinity of vectors.



Each paradigm has its central vertex – respectively, the composer and the listener – and its closer relationships. In the case of the composer, the relationship between materials, processing, and syntax constitutes the components needed to create a semiotic network

(Rudy 1). In the case of the listener, the negotiation of meaning is created through the relationship between the phenomena of experience (the aural product which encompasses any semiotic relationships invoked by the composer), the situational context, and the listener's awareness of, and positioning to the framing of the performance.

These variables, on both the composer's and listener's respective pyramids, are always in relation to the positioning of the main vertex – the composer or the listener – as well as in relation to one another, through the lines of the pyramid. Furthermore, the various vertices are connected through infinite vectors: the use of processing on the part of the composer will affect the phenomena of performance and situational context of the listener, which will in turn cause the listener to change his positioning in relation to the materials used in the piece (for example, additional processing may alienate some listeners, as the sounds will sound more “foreign”). The result is a dynamic relationship between any given variable or vertex, in relation to the vertices of the composer and listener, creating a three-dimensional, mobile-like networking, in which the movement of any vertex affects all surrounding relationships, and hence, affects the total process of negotiation of potential meanings between composer, composition, and listener.

The implications of this view of composition are wide reaching. As composers, this model allows us to use semiotic networks, while acknowledging that while these are effective compositional strategies, their potential to communicate is dependent on other “invisible” networks, Pavis' “energetics,” or the multiple variables of the *mise-en-scene* (Pavis 97). However, this critique still allows us to create dense webs of semiotic structures using recognizable material, and thus create *multiple potentialities of meaning to be negotiated by the listener*. The challenging of the inherent assumptions of the framing of electroacoustic concerts in relation to the notion of performance and to the role of the listener, and the communication of these re-readings of performance roles to potential listeners may foster awareness of the compositional use of semiotic structures as well as potential listening modes for negotiating these structures. In turn, this awareness of the composer's intents and vocabularies, coupled with the new freedoms and responsibilities which come with the role of *audience as active*,

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integral, central interpreter, audience as internal performer, may further engage listeners to negotiate some of the potential meanings we are suggesting compositionally (Landy ix, Pavis 106).

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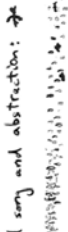
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"Écologie Matérielle" Adam Basanta sept 2008 Notes on Score

This analysis/diffusion score is an attempt at exploring + bridging between the aesthetic experience perceived by the listener and the poet's considerations central to the conception of the work.

As sound images + transformations of sound images are the building blocks of the composition (poetically speaking), I decided to use times use certain symbols instead of spectro-morphological representations. This is to highlight the fact that sounds (and their developments) are meant to be perceived as referential + metaphorical sound images.

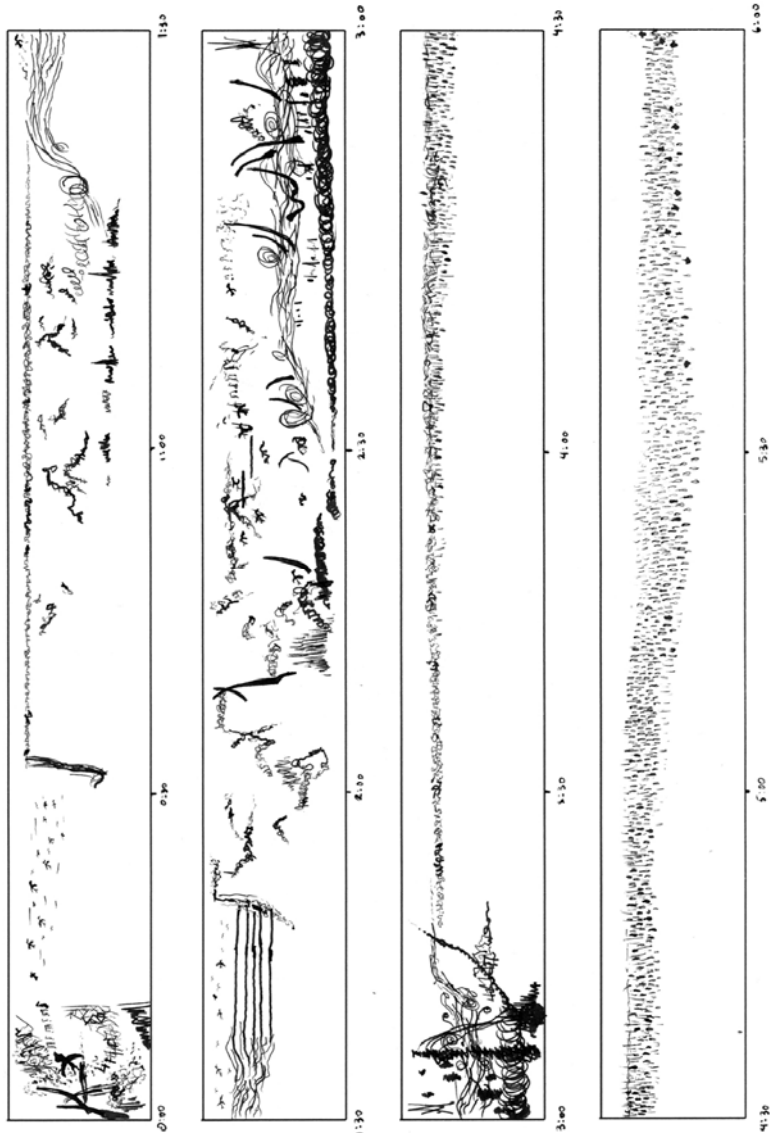
On the other hand, other sounds, whose compositional function is less referential are portrayed in a more descriptive (spectrally, formally, internal motion) manner using the usual frequency (y-axis) + duration (x-axis) paradigm.

At times, the two approaches overlap, as in some of the transitions between bird song and abstraction:  as well as the transition between foil to rain, or manipulated bird song: 

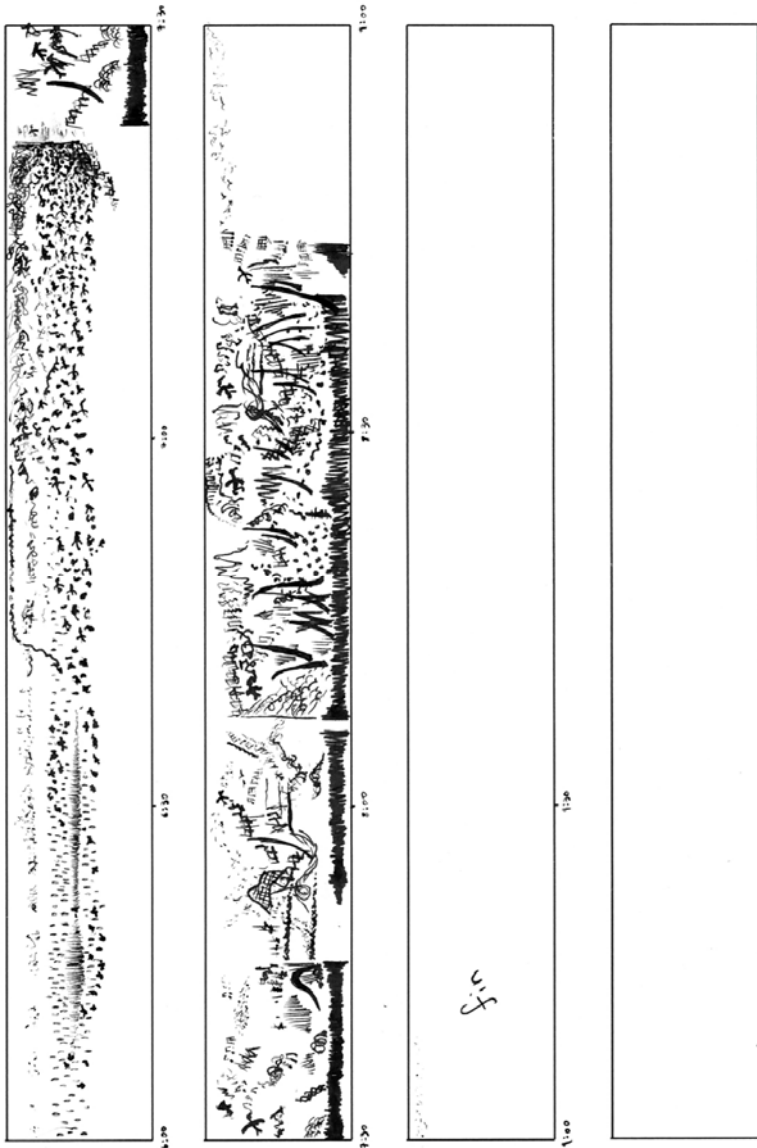
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-  wind
-  environmental bird ambience
-  paper crumpling
-  plastic bag
-  foil/plastic wrappers crinkling
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Nietzsche Contra Holden: Nietzschean Duality in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*

Samuel Wiebe

He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, cannot only afford the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation. In his case, what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

In *Ecce Homo*, Friedrich Nietzsche provides a useful summary of his contributions to philosophical thought: "The affirmation of passing away *and destroying*, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; *becoming*, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of *being*--all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date" (*Basic Writings* 729-730). The most notable difference between Nietzsche's Dionysian philosophy and an exclusively nihilistic philosophy is Nietzsche's recognition of an Apollonian counter-force, a "becoming," predicated on Dionysian erasure. Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian; Or, The Evening Redness in the West* (1985) is often called both "Nietzschean" and "nihilistic." The novel's extreme violence and uneasy resolution seems to substantiate claims of nihilism. While there is definite overlap between Nietzscheanism and nihilism, *Blood Meridian* is a profoundly *Nietzschean* text, one that situates itself predominantly in an Apollonian-Dionysian duality. While the internecine struggles of the Glanton gang form the bulk of the narrative, with the kid and the Judge seemingly on opposite sides of an ideological divide, this essay argues that the true duality in *Blood Meridian* stems from the Dionysian function which the entire gang performs, counterbalanced by the Apollonian reordering hinted at in the novel's cryptic epilogue.

The Apollo-Dionysus duality is at its core an elaboration on Heraclitus' statement, "From the strain of binding opposites comes harmony", and at his most salient, Nietzsche advocates a return to and reappraisal of Heraclitean values (Heraclitus 46). Apollo and Dionysus are "bound up" together yet are not Manichean counterparts (Nietzsche, *Basic Writings* 33). Apollo is associated with order, sculpture, poetry

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and dreams, while Dionysus, the god of intoxication through music and wine, is the inspiration for the Bacchanalia –drunken revelry through which individual identity was displaced and, Nietzsche believed, through which the essential chaos of the world could be glimpsed. Their duality is not a stable equilibrium but a process:

these two art drives must unfold their powers in a strict proportion, according to the law of eternal justice. Where the Dionysian powers rise up as impetuously as we experience them now, Apollo, too, must already have descended among us, wrapped in a cloud; and the next generation will properly behold his most ample beautiful effects. (*Basic Writings* 143-144)

The “art drive” is not dependent on any human activity, but exists in nature, though the “harmony” which Heraclitus refers to is, for Nietzsche, Attic tragedy, the art form of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Attic tragedy allowed an Apollonian civilization a glimpse of its chaotic underpinnings: “it becomes necessary to level the artistic structure of the *Apollonian culture*, as it were, stone by stone, till the foundations on which it rests become visible” (*Basic Writings* 41). The “strain of binding opposites” showcased in Attic Tragedy made Greek civilization aware that its organizing principles were artificial constructs rather than binding eternal truths. The relationship between Dionysus and Apollo is thus complimentary in its opposition; destructive yet regenerative.

McCarthy gives the entirety of *Blood Meridian* over to this process of Dionysian erasure (with the exception of the epilogue, discussed later). The novel begins with the early life of “the kid,” whose mother dies in childbirth. At fourteen, the kid, already with “a taste for mindless violence,” runs away from his schoolmaster father who “quotes from poets whose names are now lost” (McCarthy 3). The kid then embarks on a career of violence, first as a professional bar-fighter, then a filibuster, and most significantly as a member of the Glanton gang, a regiment of scalphunters whose murderous sprees are coaxed by the demonic Judge Holden. The marauding bands of Apaches are wiped out by the Glanton gang, who soon become less discriminating in their intended victims. The novel ends with an ambiguous depiction of Holden either murdering or violating the kid.

From his inception to his (apparent) death, the kid embodies the Dionysian instinct of destruction, of “mindless violence.” He flees a father versed in the Apollonian art of poetry in favour of companions who nurture his bloodlust. The death of the kid’s mother and the supposed death of the kid bookend a narrative filled with the destruction of entire towns and tribes. American and Mexican authorities are cowed by the gang’s superior firepower and propensity to violence, and their ignorance of any law save force. The destruction wreaked by the Glanton gang encompasses scores of villages and tribes, women and children, but also the trappings of civilization. They destroy laws, communities, services, and even history itself: the Judge sketches artifacts and fossils into his book and then destroys the originals. The actions of the Glanton gang accomplish a destruction of civilization and its values in keeping with the Dionysian impulse.

In *Blood Meridian*, a horse, disfigured and rabid from snakebite, is likened to “some fabled equine ideation out of an Attic tragedy” (McCarthy 115). Perhaps this alludes to the inevitable fate of the kid, poisoned by the Judge’s reasoning, or perhaps it is merely an ironic comment by McCarthy on his narrative intentions. In either case, it is McCarthy who first broaches the connection. Leo Daugherty likens *Blood Meridian* to Attic tragedy in his essay, “Gravers False and True: *Blood Meridian* as Gnostic Tragedy.” He states that “*Blood Meridian* elicits the same human responses as Greek tragedy” because it sets up a similar dynamic between a tragic hero and the Fates: “all that’s needed is a dumb kid possessed of a spark of the divine who’s outside the will of some Yahweh or other and meets his or her fate at said nemesis’ hands” (Daugherty 171). In Daugherty’s analysis the kid plays the part of the hero who defies the capricious and wrathful Holden. This would seem to pit the kid and Holden at cross-purposes, yet Nietzsche observed that the result of this conflict was the propulsion of the Dionysian art drive. According to Nietzsche the earliest hero in Attic Tragedy was Dionysus himself. Nietzsche contends that the heroes of Aeschylus and Sophocles, such as Prometheus and Oedipus, “are mere masks of their original hero, Dionysus”, who at the end of the Bacchanalia was torn into pieces (*Basic Writings* 73). Dionysus both inspires Attic tragedy and is alluded to by its object of sacrifice, the tragic hero –in a sense, making the kid and Judge allies.

The Judge bears several prominent similarities to Nietzsche's Dionysus, by which I mean the ideas and concepts that Nietzsche has projected, accurately or not, onto the Greek god. Holden is described either as a "great shambling mutant" (McCarthy 309) or a "great ponderous djinn" (McCarthy 96), and while Holden is never explicitly referred to as a god, Sara Spurgeon notes that "as the novel progresses, the figure of the judge becomes increasingly godlike" (Spurgeon 79). Holden mirrors Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus in his two chief pursuits, war and dance.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states, "I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all" (*Gay Science* 228). Holden's ideas of honour and courage differ greatly from Nietzsche's, but both conceive of war as the ultimate tool of human definition. Holden is committed to war, since war is a "forcing of the unity of existence," and goes even further by stating that "war is god" (McCarthy 249). War is Holden's occupation, and he bends all his knowledge, whether of scientific advancement or legal codicil, to its service. As the Judge famously states, "If war is not holy man is but antic clay" (McCarthy 307). In this both Nietzsche and Holden echo another fragment of Heraclitus, quoted by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*: "War is the father of all" (145). Holden's rifle bears the inscription *Et In Arcadia Ego*, a grim *memento mori* spoken as if by death personified.

Yet Holden is also an accomplished dancer. As the ex-priest Tobin tells the kid, "You wouldn't think to look at him that he could out dance the devil himself now would ye? God the man is a dancer, you'll not take that away from him" (McCarthy 123). To dedicate oneself to both dancing and warfare is to Holden and Nietzsche no contradiction or quirk of character, but each the rightful extension of the other. Holden tells the kid, "Only that man who has offered up himself entire to the blood of war, who has been to the floor of the pit and seen horror in the round and learned at last that it speaks to his inmost heart, only that man can dance" (McCarthy 331). For Holden, dancing is not merely, as Nietzsche called it, a way of "discharging the emotions, of purifying the soul, of easing the *ferocia animi*" (*Gay Science* 139). Dancing becomes an Apollonian cycle at the mercy of the Dionysian man, a brief respite from chaos in an ordered system: "As the dance is the thing with

which we are concerned and contains complete within itself its own arrangement and history and finale there is no necessity that the dancers contain these things within themselves as well" (McCarthy 329). Nietzsche states, "I would not know what the spirit of a philosopher might wish more to be than a good dancer" (*Gay Science* 346), and Holden echoes with, "What man would not be a dancer if he could" (McCarthy 327).

If, as Daugherty states, *Blood Meridian* alludes to early Greek tragedy, then the Judge fulfills the role of the Fates, rewarding men when they do his will, punishing them when they defy him. The Fates "judge and avenge," and sometimes "just do whatever they want" (Daugherty 171). Yet the Judge is also a participant in the narrative; he is not the leader of the Glanton gang but a member, and his actions blend into the actions of the gang. Holden embodies the contradiction in the roles of Dionysus towards Attic tragedy: the tragic hero is a masked version of Dionysus, yet the Dionysian impulse also presides over the tragedy's inception.

In the novel, the nefarious actions committed by the gang are often not ascribed to any particular member: "Travelers were beaten and their arms and goods appropriated and they were sent destitute and beggared into the desert...Horses were taken and women violated and bodies began to drift past the Yuma camp downriver" (McCarthy 262). The gang seems to act as a unit, with all personalities incorporated into one essence. In this way, the Glanton gang functions similarly to a Dionysian chorus. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche states: "being the objectification of a Dionysian state, [the chorus] represents not Apollonian redemption through mere appearance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being" (*Birth of Tragedy* 65). Through the medium of the gang/chorus, conflicting personalities are merged into an organism with a singular will, so that the kid, for example, is not himself beating travelers or violating women, but the gang is doing it independent of his will. The goal of the chorus is "to see oneself transformed before one's own eyes and to begin to act as if one had actually entered into another body, another character" (Nietzsche *Birth of Tragedy* 65). The atavism and cruelty of the gang is attributed only to the gang as a whole, and not to the individual gang

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members. As gang members die, new members are recruited to take their place, without significantly altering the gang dynamic.

The kid, then, takes on the role of the tragic hero who transgresses the social covenant embodied by the chorus. As the gang is pursued across the desert, the kid is charged with the task of killing a wounded gang member, Dick Shelby. The kid lets Shelby live, knowing he will only be tortured by the gang's pursuer Elias for information. The kid also displays charity to the ex-priest, Tobin, refusing to leave him as they escape from the Yumas. After the gang has been massacred by the Yumas, and the kid and Tobin are being pursued by the Judge across the desert, Holden castigates him:

No assassin, called the judge. And no partisan either. There's a flawed place in the fabric of your heart. Do you think I could not know? You alone were mutinous. You alone reserved in your soul some corner of clemency for the heathen. (299)

The kid is not guilty for acting against the gang, but for thinking independently of the gang. The Dionysian Judge holds sway over the chorus, and the kid disrupts this. Nietzsche believed that Euripides was guilty of ruining Attic tragedy by inserting morality and rationality: "Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage and thus qualified him to pass judgment on the drama" (*Basic Writings* 79). This is the same charge the judge levels at the kid, namely, bringing personal morality into the jurisdiction of the Dionysian chorus: "You sat in judgment on your own deeds...each was called upon to empty out his heart into the common and one did not" (McCarthy 307). Taken this way, the kid's transgression is more severe than the exhibition of charity or mercy.

Thirty years later, the kid again defies Holden. Meeting again at a saloon, the Judge and the kid have the following exchange:

As war becomes dishonored and its nobility called into question those honorable men who recognize the sanctity of blood will be come excluded from the dance, which is the warrior's right, and thereby will the dance become a false dance and the dancers false dancers. And yet there will be one there always who is a true dancer and can you guess who that might be?

You aint nothin.

You speak truer than you know. (331)

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Harold Bloom finds in this remark the essence of the tragic hero:

Knowing he is no match for the Judge, the Kid nevertheless defies Holden, with laconic replies playing against the Judge's rolling grandiloquence...To have known Judge Holden, to have seen him in full operation, and to tell him that he is nothing, is heroic. (537-538)

The kid may defy Holden, but he lacks any counter-ideology, any way of articulating the flaw in the judge's arguments. Sara Spurgeon writes, "The kid has turned his back on the new myth he helped bring into being, but it is too late to revive the old ones" (Spurgeon 87). The kid is helpless before the judge, echoing Nietzsche's conception of the tragic hero as a Dionysian sacrifice.

While the kid is the most obvious heroic figure in the novel due to his opposition of Holden, Steven Shaviro offers up a compelling substitute candidate as the tragic hero/sacrifice of *Blood Meridian*: Glanton, the murderous gang leader. Shaviro observes that Glanton "resolves to be equal to his destiny; without the moralistic playacting usually present in such cases, he lays claim to the absurd existential nobility of the tragic hero" (Shaviro 150). In one of the brief moments of interiority in *Blood Meridian*, we see that Glanton's idea of himself fits with this conception:

He'd long foresworn all weighing of consequence and allowing as he did that men's destinies are given yet he usurped to contain within him all that he would ever be in the world and all that the world would be to him and be his charter written in the urstone itself he claimed agency and said so. (243)

Glanton's death scene is, if not heroic, reminiscent of heroic stoicism in its acknowledgment of impending death: "Hack away you mean red nigger, he said, and the old man raised the axe and split the head of John Joel Glanton to the thrapple" (McCarthy 275). Though Glanton does not break with the gang as the kid does, he goes to his death with a similar combination of tragic defiance.

What passes for nihilism in *Blood Meridian* is more properly termed the Dionysian destruction of order. In *The Achievement of Cormac McCarthy*, the first major treatise on McCarthy's work, scholar Vereen Bell describes *Blood Meridian* as "haunted by the very nihilis-

tic logic that it gives representation to” (Bell 128). Bell states that the Judge is “an older contemporary of Nietzsche’s and can’t very well have read him” (Bell 120). Daugherty believes “Nietzsche...clearly would not have approved of the theology” (Daugherty 170) of *Blood Meridian*. Dana Phillips recognizes the Nietzschean influence, but believes *Blood Meridian*’s “nihilism” is “just what one would expect from a writer who has fed on such corrosive, demystifying influences” (Phillips 20). Phillips also calls the Judge’s speeches “Nihilistic compounds of Nietzschean and Spenglerian rhetoric” yet admits the Judge is “not a nihilist” (Phillips 27). Nietzsche’s works contain vigorous critiques of nihilism, though they share with nihilism an aversion to stable conceptions of order and meaning. Judge Holden performs a Dionysian function—overturning values, mocking religion, introducing new innovations and technology, and laying bear the chaos and horror of the world sans Apollonian illusion: “Your heart’s desire is to be told some mystery. The mystery is that there is no mystery” (McCarthy 252). Critics confuse Holden’s purpose in the novel with nihilism because the Judge destroys without offering an alternative, without rebuilding. He razes Indian, Mexican and European society alike, without instituting any replacement. Holden’s function in the novel is destructive, yet categorically Dionysian, since he is counter-balanced with the Apollonian figure of the epilogue.

The job of creating a new societal framework, a new Apollonian illusion, falls to the mysterious rock-striking figure in *Blood Meridian*’s cryptic final paragraph:

In the dawn there is a man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground. He uses an implement with two handles and he chucks it into the hole and he enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put there. On the plain behind him are the wanderers in search of bones and those who do not search and they move haltingly in the light like mechanisms whose movements are monitored with escapement and pallet so that they appear restrained by a prudence or reflectiveness which has no inner reality and they cross in their progress one by one that track of holes that runs to the rim of the visible ground and which seems less the pursuit of some continuance than the verification of a principle, a validation of sequence and causality as if each round and perfect hole owed its existence to the one before it there on that prairie upon which

there are the bones and the gatherers of bones and those who do not gather. He strikes fire in the hole and draws out his steel. Then they all move on again. (337)

With regard to the rock-striking figure, scholarly opinion varies widely. He is perhaps the Judge (Arnold 65), or a “new Prometheus” (Bloom 538), or even an avatar of McCarthy “reading of himself as writer” (Daugherty 170). Yet while the figure’s work and his two-handed implement are sketchily detailed, his function in the text is to situate Holden in a Dionysian-Apollonian duality. The rock-striking figure performs an act of order, evidenced by the array of holes left behind him, “a validation of sequence and causality.” This causality is not indigenous, but inscribed by the figure’s actions; the holes are a testament to an order that the rock-striking figure bestows or releases. This figure symbolizes the Apollonian imposition of order, of civilization, of value. The fire he strikes from the rock indicates violence, but also a cleansing, a concept familiar to Nietzsche through Heraclitus: “Fire of all things is the judge and ravisher” (Heraclitus 26). The followers, “the gatherers of bones and those who do not gather,” rearrange the landscape to suit themselves, either participating in order or taking advantage of order. The rock-striking man lifts Holden’s actions from mere nihilism into the destructive wash of the Dionysian erasure. It is in the epilogue that the reader glimpses the opposition to Holden’s ideology, and the true ideological scope of the novel. Grasping this, the charges of nihilism levied against *Blood Meridian* must be countermanded.

While McCarthy draws from influences as varied as Faulkner, Melville, Dostoevsky, Joyce, the King James Bible and Shakespeare, *Blood Meridian* is philosophically a Nietzschean text. The novel alludes to many of the dominant themes within Nietzschean discourse: anti-clericalism, martial enthusiasm, and the frustrating, life-affirming struggle to face the world without illusion. More than that, the novel captures the harmony created by the opposition of destructive and creative forces. The bulk of the novel describes the Dionysian arc of the duality at the heart of Nietzsche’s philosophy. The judge and the kid both perform a Dionysian function, yet only the judge seems to understand or accept this. Holden goads the Glanton gang into a murderous intoxication which defeats individuality in a manner similar to the ano-

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nymity of Bacchic revelry. While the narrative ends with Judge Holden triumphant over the kid, the epilogue reveals a figure moving across the desert, rekindling a new Apollonian order in the spaces that the judge has razed. *Blood Meridian* is a violent book, yet its violence is ultimately in service of a new order, and the novel functions as Nietzsche believed Attic tragedy should—by stripping away the pretense of an immutable civilization, and providing a glimpse of the horror and chaos that underpin existence.

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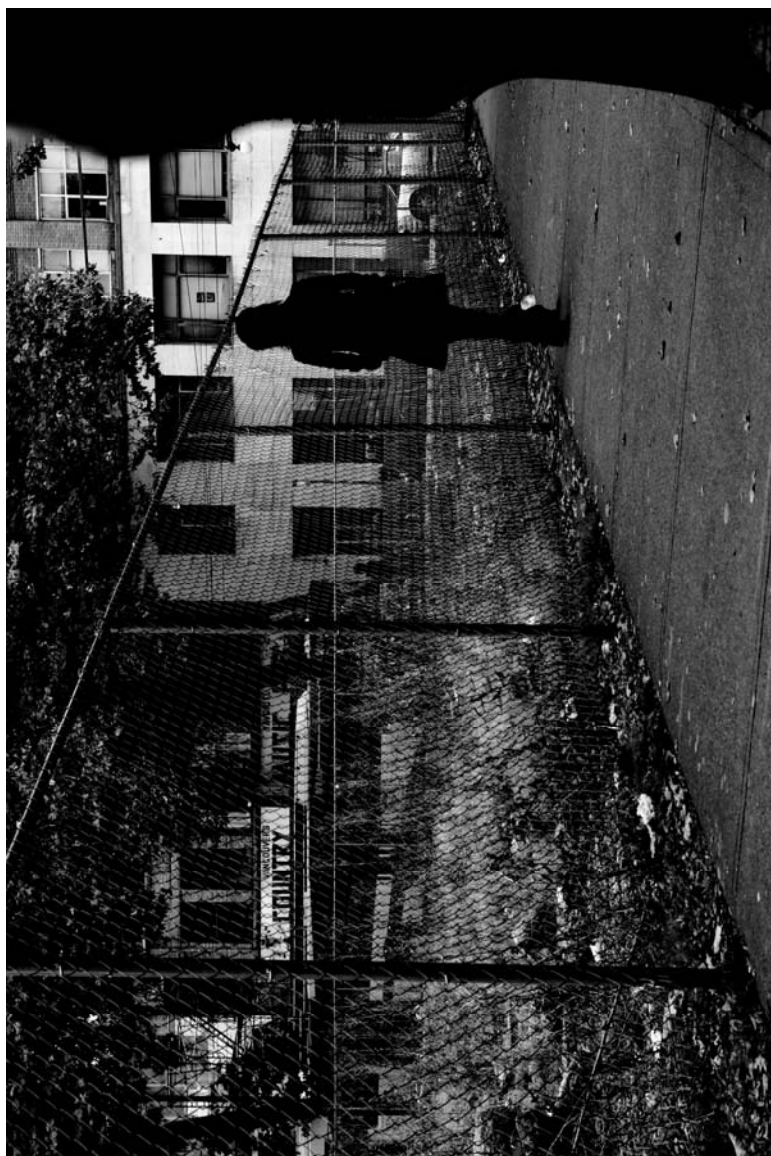
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Notes of a Music curator *or* Why did I receive a CD with weird music on it as part of a Humanities journal?

Adam Basanta

Hidden in the depths of the Theatre and Communications department are SFU's electroacoustic studios. Its users are a disheveled lot; they all have messy hair, and bags under their eyes indicate their tendency to stay working in the studio in front of computers until the early hours of the morning. They emerge occasionally, primarily for multi-channel surround sound concerts or for the "collecting" of sounds, recorded with microphones and portable recorders. They are also notoriously uncommunicative about their endeavors, resulting in a virtual anonymity of the medium or its production within SFU and the wider community.

This brings me to the reason for the inclusion of a CD of recent electroacoustic works by SFU composers in a Humanities journal: as a forum for expression of inter and multi-disciplinary thought on issues of art and criticism, my hope is that this CD will generate both awareness of the medium *and* a critical discussion of the medium in which we can all participate.

Electroacoustic music can be generally defined as music composed using technological means (historically, using the medium of magnetic tape and analog equipment, and of late using computers and other digital technologies) and presented with the aid of loudspeakers. It has been an emerging field in contemporary music since its inception in early 1950's French radio station studios.

It is neither "electronica" nor is it "new music;" it is neither sound effects nor soundtracks for scary movies; rather, it is simultaneously concerned with aesthetic, theoretical and technical aspects of sound and sound production, encompassing Western classical compositional methods, Soundscape theory, Cageian ideas of sound-as-music, as well as the abstract treatment of sound material.

With SFU's School of Contemporary Arts' music department representing the largest production and research centers of electroacoustic music in Western Canada, it seems natural to present some of the present, hybridized approaches to the medium.

This compilation provides evidence of the variety of approaches within the medium, as well as within the SFU community.

Works by Chris Grigor ("Paws") and James O'Callaghan ("Cuts") use text as their primary sound source, and use electroacoustic techniques in order to process and rearrange text material. However, the disparity of text in each work (a poem versus politically charged quotations) result in very different approaches to composition; Grigor favors aesthetic treatment of the poetic material, while O'Callaghan favors contextual processing and is committed to the de-construction and re-construction of meaning via re-arranging and juxtaposing materials.

Works by Elliot Vaughan ("menacious") and Peter Bowles ("Outside the Innermost Squall") explore abstract aesthetics of the medium, although Vaughan's work continually relates to the sound-identity and hyperextension of the piano into the electroacoustic realm, while Bowles unabashedly explores abstract aesthetics as a means to suggest an internal, perhaps imaginary journey on the part of the listener.

Sammy Chien's work ("Landing, Immanent Particles in the Air, Recollecting...") and my own work ("Écologie Matérielle") explore ways in which abstract sound can interact with recognizable sound identities. In Chien's piece, this exploration is contained within a loose, first-person narrative addressing issues of memory, embodiment and cultural identity. In my own work, on which I have written in this journal, the interaction between sounds-as-symbolic-units and their various processing, mutations and surrealistic transformations into different symbolic units provide a sense of multiple potentialities of meaning to be negotiated by the listener.

These various methods indicate just some of the thought and research continually developing within the music department and within the

larger community of the School of Contemporary Arts. However, it is important to note that we are in no way presenting manifestos. Rather, we are suggesting new ways in which contrasting influences and approaches can be combined, de-constructed, and re-assembled in the hope that further discourse between the School of Contemporary Arts and the Department of Humanities will yield a continuation of this process.

Two last thoughts, with the first being a final comment for you, the listener: electroacoustic music, like much contemporary music, as well as (believe it or not) critical essays, requires a degree of commitment and stamina which often can only be acquired with some time and practice. It may prove impossible to listen to the CD start to finish in one sitting, as some of the music may involve concentrated listening quite different than the kind we are used to. Nevertheless, I would encourage the perspective of listening as an exploratory process, and you, the listener, as a protagonist charting new waters. Enjoy where it might take you.

On a slightly more bureaucratic note, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement, accommodation and financial support of both the Humanities and Music student unions.

Program Notes

SFU Student Composers

recent electroacoustic works

Adam Basanta – *Écologie Matérielle*

Between the natural environment and the consumer products which are derived from it (paper/plastic bags and wrappers/foil) lies a sonic and metaphoric continuum. Within this scope, I chose to explore variations on the theme of extraction and re-deposition of one sound image to another, as well as to create an evolving musical interplay between the ecological organization characteristics of each sound world.

Chris Grigot – *Paws*

Paws is inspired and composed of readings from Dale Pendell's *Pharmako* series of books, which have been described as "elegant tapestries of accurate chemistry, pharmacology, and botany, interwoven with a rich poetical imagery." The images I have used from the text could be describing any number of elusive experiences. As such, I have omitted any direct reference to the original subject matter of the source chapter, which is entitled "Existentialia" and can be found in the first book of three, *Pharmako/Poeia*. Mr. Pendell's text is used with the kind permission of the author and his publisher, Mercury House, San Francisco, California.

Elliot Vaughan – *menacious*

Some nights, we find ourselves inside pianos with duct tape and other adhesives, a heightened sense of disassembly, motors, microphones and assorted friends and sticks. Other nights, sense of disassembly still lingering, the resulting recordings are shattered and rehashed, then planed, filed, sanded and buffed. Such nights end with menacious.

James O'Callaghan – *Cuts*

"Cuts" here acts as a double-entendre; as the piece jointly explores the formal qualities of montage editing and specifically the funding cuts made by the Conservative government in Canada in 2008. Montage is used as a method of reconstructing semantic meaning through the

juxtaposition of text-fragments. Culled from various media sources are the voices of Stephen Harper, Jack Layton, Stephane Dion, Gilles Duceppe, Elizabeth May, Atom Egoyan, Colm Fiore, Wendy Crewson and Jian Ghomeshi.

Sammy Chien – *Landing, Immanent Particles in the Air, Recollecting...*

If we understand the body to be the apparatus that mediates us between the inside and outside world, then its sounds provide the necessary aural paths to bridge the two. Though breathing is largely non-cognitive in nature — we are unaware of it, as it were — I understand it as an incessantly corporeal embodiment with the outside world. In this piece I sought to explore an embodied auralty in order to unfold what is immanent within us. It is my hope that this universal and bodily form of language will permit the listener to take in the imaginative journey of another. As we listen closely to how our body whispers, we can begin to conceive in ever-vivid ways, human embodiment in all its bewildering yet subtle facets.

Peter Bowles – *Outside the Innermost Squall*

The composer invites you to close your eyes and let the music guide you on a journey. This journey is not limited by the physical boundaries of your head, and you might shrink yourself to the micro level and escape into an infinite playground (or battleground) which is yours to discover or overcome. On this micro level, you realize that your very being, just like everything else, is subject to the all too powerful and uncontrollable elements of nature. So whether you're sailing upwind a light breeze of introspection, falling into a refreshing pool of epiphany, or suddenly caught in a storm of regret, with any luck this journey will help put us in our little place and evoke a new sense of harmony in nature. This piece takes its source material from a Tibetan singing bowl.