

## *OSCILLATION ::: O TEMPO*

*Festival Reader*

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Oscillation :: o tempo is built around the topic of time. The memory of a performance which took place during the festival in 2019 was one of the incentives: Aki Onda, Akio Suzuki, Rie Nakajima, and David Toop activated the hangar of La Senne over four hours, and the observation of temporal experience during that afternoon was for many in the public extraordinary. As Rie Nakajima expressed it: it was an experience of space transforming into time. But also in our residency program, we have met many artists playing with questions of time, experimenting with duration, questioning what is a beginning and an end, and how to communicate about such questions with their listeners.

While we might think that time and sound are almost a tautology, there is a large amount of possibilities to negotiate the topic in musical creation. Rhythm, pulse, silence or repetition, for example, have a structuring function for the experience of listening. Since the advent of technologies which can reproduce sound, during the last hundred years, the possibilities of musical forms has been extended, and the behaviours of listeners have changed with them. Lines of temporality have been crossed, such as between installation and extended performance, or with the active role the audience takes during a

DJ set – varying the frameworks for spending time together under the auspices of music.

As organisers, such reflections confronted us with the question how to wrap experiments with temporal elements into the constraints of a festival. We have done so along four axes: the outer form of duration and simultaneity; the inner form of structure such as rhythm, silence, repetition; the larger temporal arch of memory or projection into the future; and the very subjective present moment experienced in improvisation.

The philosophy of time is a very large field of research and the rise of post-colonial studies has nourished it by putting forward other concepts of time than the linear Western model. Time can be understood as simultaneous, multi-dimensional, and reversible. In music, such models of time get practically experimented with, particularly since the technological possibility of “writing” sound which allows to repeat what before was ephemeral and existing only in real time.

These are dimensions we wanted, together with some of the invited artists, to address in this reader, with fragments of texts stemming both from music and from adjacent fields such as sciences or literature. They witness time in a historical perspective, in other-than-human fields, offer ideas like deep time, thick time, losing or wasting time, or non-Western approaches to the function of time in music. They prove of the malleability of time concepts spanning between and over many different fields.

Music can raise questions here: how long is the present? What is measure, regularity, repetition? What is early, what late? Music has the force of bringing back the past or suggesting a leap into an unknown future. Sonic and musical approaches to the matter of time are generally intuitive and idiosyncratic. When we listen to music we can sometimes feel like a blind passenger on somebody else's journey. And although there are mostly no clear answers to these questions, some of the texts in this reader might make the questions richer. We are ourselves in a position of marvelling amateurs in this large field of phenomenology, and are trying with this reader to provide some food for thought, alongside the music.

— Julia Eckhardt, Henry Andersen, and  
Caroline Profanter



## *Life underground*

During the two months I spent underground in the depths of the Scarasson Cavern, I kept a diary in which I noted down everything that happened during my physiological days—that is to say, between my periods of waking and sleeping. To begin with, I had hoped to write every evening (more accurately, at the end of every period of activity) a detailed account of what I had done. Soon, however, I found that by the time I was ready to go to sleep I could not at all remember what I had done, although the period of activity (my “day”) had seemed very short. I was therefore obliged to keep my diary by setting down frequent notes shortly after doing anything worth recording. This loss of memory became so pronounced that it was sometimes hard for me to remember what I had done a few minutes before. In any case, when I became sleepy, I had no least desire to go on suffering from the damp cold for the sake of keeping a diary, and I got into my sleeping bag as quickly as possible. Sometimes it was only the next “day,” after my breakfast, that I recorded the last minutes of the preceding day.

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We now know, as we learned in the physical checkup given me at the end of the experiment, that my metabolism was greatly slowed down and that my condition of torpor ("hypothermia") was that of semihibernation, which explains the relative lethargy of my mind.

Another thing needs to be explained in regard to my diary. I was surprised, when I read it after returning to the surface, at how detailed it is in regard to trifling incidents, the food I ate, the fretting over cold and damp and darkness, and how almost entirely lacking in thoughts of a higher order, although I recall having many long meditations of a philosophical nature. This indicates, I believe, how preoccupied my mind was with the essential thing: survival. But it also indicates the hurried and uncomfortable conditions in which I wrote the diary, always suffering from cold, anxious to get into the relatively warm sleeping bag.

Occasionally the diary reads in such a way that we are not sure whether the event recorded took place that "day" or the previous day. This can be explained: toward the end of my stay underground I was too exhausted to keep my diary regularly. It was sometimes impossible to hold a pen in my numbed fingers, or to remain sitting at the table, suffering as I was from severe back pains. At such times I dictated to the tape recorder (which I could do lying down in my sleeping bag) the events of the previous day, or sometimes the events that had just occurred. Then when I felt stronger I forced myself to copy off the tape recordings, so that some written document would remain to testify to this adventure of mine in the depths of the earth.

Most curious of all, time seemed to pass very quickly. As my diary shows, I thought it was August 20 when I was told that my experiment had lasted two months and that the date was actually September 17. Time passed without my being aware of it in the darkness and silence.

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I felt I was on another planet; for the most part I dwelt neither in the past nor in the future, but in the hostile present. In that environment everything was against me: the rocks that crashed down from time to time; the damp, chill atmosphere; the darkness. I waged a ceaseless combat with myself to surmount these terrors by sheer will power, and I owe my survival to that incessant battle.

From the minute I woke up, the torments began. In that glacial air it took courage to reach out of the more or less warm sleeping bag to turn on the light—an electric bulb of weak voltage clamped to the metal head of my camp bed. Usually I lay in the darkness for a while, gathering courage, hoping I might fall asleep again. Perhaps it was still the middle of the night; I had no way of knowing. Then, resolutely, I would reach out and press the button, shattering the dense darkness. My next duty took still more courage. According to our arrangements, I was to telephone the surface when I awoke, when I was ready to eat a meal, and when I was about to go to sleep; in this way, my hazarded time of day could be checked against the actual time which those on guard must never tell me. I kept a chart of my subjective "time" and they kept a chart of the actual time. Thus we were able to calculate the length of my periods of repose and activity in the course of twenty-four hours, and the quantitative extent to which I lost my sense of time. I have already stated this, but I repeat: throughout the time I spent in the Scarasson Cavern, I had no means whatsoever of knowing the day of the month or the hour of the day, and those on surface were strictly forbidden to reveal them to me. My only way of estimating time was by means of my physiological functions, and these functions in man have been conditioned since the beginning of his existence on earth by the regular alternation of night and day, so we thought.

As it turned out, little by little a new biological rhythm

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was set up, similar to the rhythm to which astronauts of the future may be subjected in their long interplanetary voyages. Until this experiment of mine in 1962, experiments in voluntary isolation in conditions excluding variations of light and darkness (as in the training of American and Soviet spacemen) had never exceeded one week.\* A longer period is needed to determine the evolution of the nychthemeral rhythm for human beings (the periodic duration of waking and sleeping periods within twenty-four hours as measured by the rotation of the earth). Perhaps it will be possible to extend the experiment beyond the two months that I held out without causing the crises of depression which have interrupted previous experiments.

The first words I pronounced on the telephone were the date and hour I presumed it to be and the amount of time I presumed had elapsed since my previous call. During the first days I had the impression that I slept a great deal—from twelve to thirteen hours; later on, I believed I was sleeping for shorter periods, six or seven hours.

I was sure when I went underground that the perpetual night in which I would live would cause a more or less important upsetting of my nychthemeral rhythm; but I did not know whether it would be positive or negative, that is, if I would feel that lapses of time were longer or shorter than they actually were. If the former, it would be rather tragic for me, since it would have the effect of prolonging my ordeal. If the latter, I would believe that I must endure living on the glacier much longer than was actually the case. Not only did I keep a graph of my estimated subjective time in the twenty-four-hour cycle; I frequently tried to estimate short lapses of time, lapses of a minute or two.

\* See mention of General Electric experiment, in footnote in second chapter.—Editor.



## The Architecture of Silence (1998)

There is a music in which the time-space of sound and the time-space of silence appear in their own particular realms. Even when the sounds are often very soft, the music is not about falling into silence. The sounds are clear, direct, and precise. Because they have left musical rhetoric behind, there is instead a sensitivity for the presence of sound and for the physicality of silence. There are long time spans for the presence of sound, and long time spans for the absence of sound. The two together form the “time present” of the piece.

In the silence a space is opened which can only be opened with the disappearance of sound. The silence which is then experienced, derives its power from the absence of the sounds we have just heard. Thus the time-space of silence comes into being, and then comes the physicality of silence.

Permeability, which is the physicality of silence itself, consists of the impossibility of saying anything about its content. Sounds can approach this permeability, but cannot achieve it. Sounds always occur as a formation or a shaping. They come into being by crossing a border which divides them from all others. At this border, everything formed becomes particular. Silence does not know this border. There is no silence through production. Silence is just there, where no sound is.

There are pieces in which the absence of sound has become a fundamental feature. The silence is not uninfluenced by the sounds which were previously heard. These sounds make the silence possible by their ceasing and give it a glimmer of content. As the space of silence stretches itself out, the sounds weaken in our memory. Thus is the long breath between the time of sound and the space of silence created. Silence can also be present in the sounds. In order to have silence in sounds, one must let go of everything which gets in the way of this silence. This sound is a sound without the idea of what it can mean or how it should be used. This sound achieves a hint of permeability, which otherwise belongs only to silence. This sound is the *Da-sein* (being there) of sound. Its presence and charisma make themselves felt in the composition. Silence requires one decision: sound or no sound. Sound requires a great many more decisions. These shape the sound and give it its quality, feeling and its content. Thus silence, in its comprehensive, monolithic presence always stands as one against an infinite number of sounds or sound forms. Both stamp time and space, in that they come into appearance, in an existential sense. Together they comprise the entire complexity of life.

This is the poem ‘Now’ by Scottish filmmaker Margaret Tait. I came across it in the context of the recent film homage to her life and work by Luke Fowler, *Being in a Place*. This verse seemed to sum up something for me about time as we experience it versus recorded time perceived through the ‘lens’ of another medium. Something that holds equally true in the realm of sound.

— Mark Vernon

Now (1959)

*I used to lie in wait to see the clover open  
Or close,  
But never saw it.  
I was too impatient,  
Or the movement is too subtle,  
Imperceptible  
And more than momentary.  
My five-year-old self would tire of waiting  
And when I looked again  
– All closed for the night!  
I missed it  
Once more.*

*Cinematographically  
I have registered the opening of escholtzia  
On an early summer morning.  
It gave me a sharp awareness of time passing,  
Of exact qualities and values in the light,  
But I didn't see the movement  
As movement.  
I didn't with my own direct perception see the petals  
moving.  
Later, on the film, they seemed to open swiftly,  
But, at the time,  
Although I stared  
And felt time not so much moving as being moved in  
And felt  
A unity of time and place with other times and places  
Yet  
I didn't see the petals moving.  
I didn't see them opening.*

## Margaret Tait

*They were closed,  
And later they were open,  
And in between I noted many phases,  
But I didn't see them moving open.  
My timing and my rhythm could not observe the  
rhythm of their opening.*

*The thing about poetry is you have to keep doing it.  
People have to keep making it.  
The old stuff is no use  
Once it's old.  
It comes out of the instant  
And lasts for an instant.  
Take it now  
Quickly  
Without water.*

*There!*

*Tomorrow they'll be something else.*

**Margaret Tait, "Now" from *Margaret Tait: poems, stories and writings*, edited with an introduction by Sarah Neely (Carcanet Press, 2012). Originally published in *origins and elements* (1959)**

POETRY AS PHILOSOPHY.

Poetry written at the edge of the end of a civilization must differ in its aims from the poetry written from within the assumptions of its own unquestioned center.

Poetry forces a beginning by systematically thematizing the end. The end of philosophy. The end of the word and of the discourse on Aristotelian categories.

Each poem is a projection of the Empty Word, and the silence that follows it is its denotation.

The denotation is the Empty Sound, the inaudible sound from which all sounds follow, from which the world of sounds is fallen.

Each piece of writing represents a witness of a singularity, a map of a catastrophe suffered by its author.

Like gravity, sounds and writings (when we think of them as meaningful), warp the university around us. The visible universe (the celestial geometry), when considered meaningful, is as warped, or "curved," as the geometry of sound or the conceptual geometry of the philosopher. Contrary to the common assumption, the dialectical triangle obtaining between these geometrical universes commutes only with considerable difficulty (the "warpings" are not sufficiently symmetrical).

Semantics as a peculiar form of gravity both pulls on and deforms an otherwise undivided and undisturbed whole. (Cf. Clifford's theory of gravitation.)

The beginning cannot take place before the end is completed. Needless to say, this completion lays wholly outside the scope of poetry. Hence, the *epoché* is only delivered as unspeakable hints operating exclusively in the space *between* the poems themselves. There can be no last poem of poetry, but the (momentarily) last poem has *no successor*. It leaves the reader in a vortex of the world for which he (usually) lacks an adequate *notation*. Only the predecessor(s) of the last poem remain(s) as a reminder of what a notation for silence can look like. The poems are silent worlds which can only be recovered by the full cooperation of the human mind—they don't speak for themselves. Their fragilities are exemplary.

Only the logic of silence can explain the coherence of their intrinsic, i.e., *interior*, meaning. The meaning is only accidentally grafted on to the transient world; the poems function as *reminders* of wordless algorithms for recovering them.

Poetry as a notation for possible worlds, the material notation standing for the objectification of their possibility.

This is the method of philosophy in poetry.

Each poem presents a problem (which is not necessarily unique), the difficulty of the problem being its *degree of unsolvability*.

The poem is a code for a possible world which is stored up in the semantics of its terms. (The injection of meaning into a (syntactically) ordered set of terms must always be conceived of as an act of *sorcery* and *destabilization*. (Cf. René Thom's (unsuccessful) *catastrophe theory*.<sup>1</sup>)).

As any instrument designed to probe the content of the universe, the description/code itself alters the world as soon as its possibility is created. Hence, the semantics of its terms also alters continuously, and, ultimately, decays as the poem unfolds in time. Each world yields slowly into a projection of some properties attributable to a rising possible world. Its mental image becomes the meaning for which the poem is unique notation and, simultaneously, a code.

## Catherine Christer Hennix

Poetry as philosophy. The theme is an old one, both its subject terms being antedated by their written inscriptions (as explained more fully in the surviving works of Heraklitus and Parmenides).

### PHILOSOPHY. THE PROBLEM. FIRST APPROXIMATION.

My immediate reality is not authentically transmitted by the propositional content of a discourse. To try to bind the thought content of my mind to the format of discourse is, as it were, to try to draw from one perspective everything I see in a room on one and the same piece of paper; the closer an object is to me, the more distorted or left out it becomes, the more inaccessible it becomes to being transmitted by the format of notation provided for by the technique of drawing.

The more immediate, the more "authentic" an encounter with reality becomes, the less can be anticipated by that encounter. To bring any system of beliefs to bear on the course of such an encounter would be the same as annihilating its entire potentiality. Its "freshness" depends on its incorruptibility, on its immunity to beliefs about the course of the future, in fact, on its immunity to any form of organized knowledge, be it past, present, or future.

### POETRY. THE PROBLEM. FIRST APPROXIMATION.

#### *Historical Remarks.*

The inseparability of poetry from philosophy. (Heraklitus, Parmenides, Brouwer, Wittgenstein.) The inseparability of notation from philosophy. (Euclid, Leibniz, Frege, Cantor.)

*The inseparability of language from notation.*

(End of historical remarks.)

A poem is an undivided whole—and so is its meaning. The poem is a notation for its meaning.

The meaning of a poem is a function of the meaning of its parts (Frege). After understanding the meaning of the parts, we understand that the meaning of the whole is more than all the possible meaning of its parts. Functionality is always erratic. Meaning remains essentially multiple and complex. *Typical ambiguity* (Specker) is not a phenomenon of our times alone.

Thus, the poem remains a notation for its meaning. By constructing a text out of notations for other meanings, a new notation is put together expressing a new meaning not yet revealed by the other meanings taken by themselves or in a different order. The new meaning is possible as a result of operating on an assemblage of meanings established in independence and anonymity by more fundamental notational operations originating with even stronger independence and anonymity. And so on, until, again, an undivided whole, an atomic unanalyzable act, becomes the meaning of an indecomposable sign or *parameter*.

There are no primitive notations reserved for poetry alone. Each poem constructs its meaning from a notation with an intractable semantic prehistory.

Hence, in order, to rescue any possible (formal) meaning for poetry, it can only be conceived of as a conceptual notation for a *distinguished type* of expressions.



## Catherine Christer Hennix

Thus, a poem expresses, ultimately, a fragment of an *uninterpreted* calculus which is employed for the purpose of capturing the expressions of the distinguished type. (Cf. L.E.J. Brouwer.)

Poetry, like music, is an art of composed silence. Its distinguished type of expression is the *empty word*,  $\Lambda$ , a parameter to which corresponds an experience (denotation) of *epoché*, i.e., an experience of a presuppositionless world governed only by languageless “laws” of pure intuition. Only in this sense does a poem trigger a philosophical investigation, or *teisho*, which carries with it its own intrinsic difficulties or *degrees of unsolvability*.<sup>2</sup>

The ultimate silence created by a poem’s decaying afterimage makes a boundary situation of human existence, i.e., a situation in which the possibility of being guided by conventional meaning of cultural artifacts, including the anonymous powers of science, breaks down. The meaning of words ceases to be verifiable, only fragments of a private language remain in circulation.

GRAMMATICA SPECULATIVA. GRAMMATICA POETICA.  
GRAMMATICA NONSENSIA.

“  
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### POETRY AS NOTATION.

*A Mental Problem; The Problem of Dying Civilizations.*  
*The Final Mix; Grammatica Abraxas.*

We have repeatedly noted that man compulsively organizes the meanings imposed on the events of his consciousness by means of some *notation*, i.e., symbolic forms available to operate on according to directions originating in some mind(s).

For this purpose, man has invented two (incompatible) cognitive kinds of symbolic forms: viz. (i) the symbolic forms of the *internal* notation, considered present as *immaterial* symbolic forms, and (ii) the symbolic forms of the *external* notation, considered present as *material* symbolic forms, i.e., present as evidence of *public* cosmological principles and ostensibly *tangible* to the senses. The mythology laid down in the invention of these forms extends to them from embodying purported *existence proofs*. Thus, here is inevitably the point where the method of philosophy in poetry reenters. Everything must now be mixed together.

Before dealing with the end of philosophy, however, it pays to take a quick look at its beginning again. It must be understood that the possibility of the philosophical method depends on a reexamination of the possibility of poetry as a logical notation, as a *Begriffsschrift* (in the sense of Frege).

*Rg Veda*. The first systematic conversion of poetry to philosophy. The sanskrit alphabet—the notation for all meaningful sounds—and all words formed from it—all of it reduces to the cosmological principle of the universal sound “ॐ”, present even in the deepest of silence, out of which the *rag* is spun. The silence of *Soma*. ॐ.

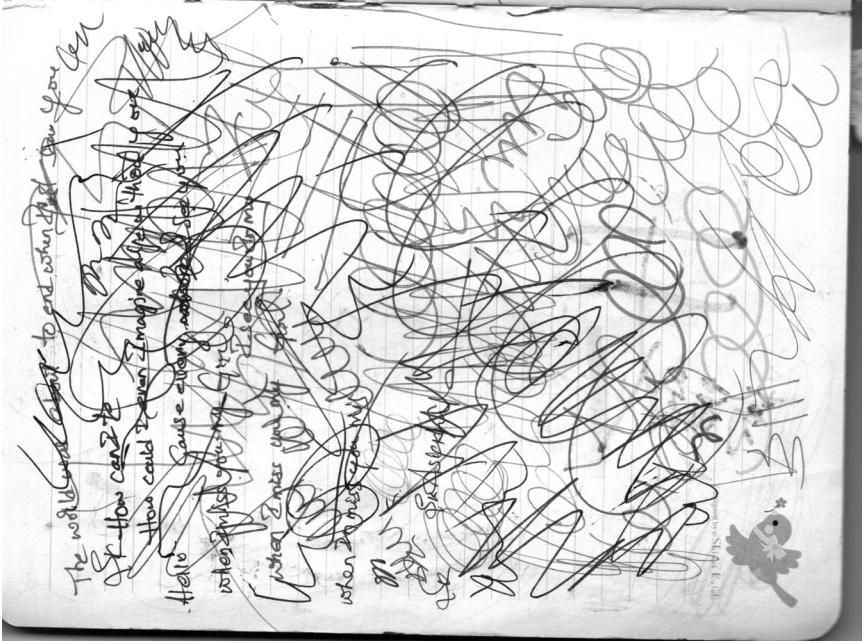
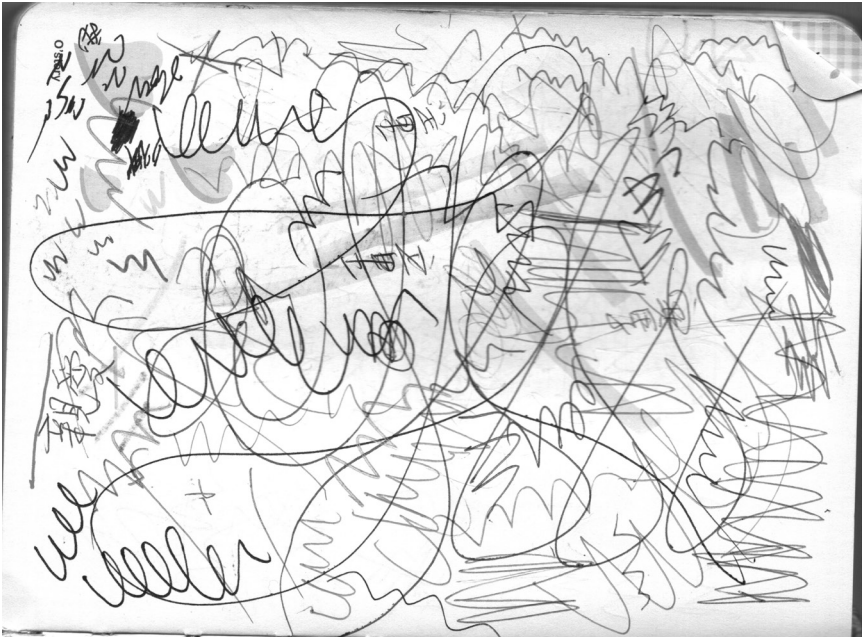
from Catherine Christer Hennix, “Poetry as Philosophy” in Catherine  
Christer Hennix, *Poësy Matters and Other Matters* (New York, Blank Forms, 2019)

I scanned some image here. This is just a small part of my doodle art collection. You know how stationery stores often have a lot of pencils & marker with test papers to check their inks? I have been collecting them for over 20 years now, and it is already quite a huge collection.

The reason I am interested in collecting these papers is that the drawings on these test papers are very interesting in that they are written by the unconscious scribbles of many people. The collective unconsciousness of these many people creates one great drawing. This is a perspective that also applies to my musical works.

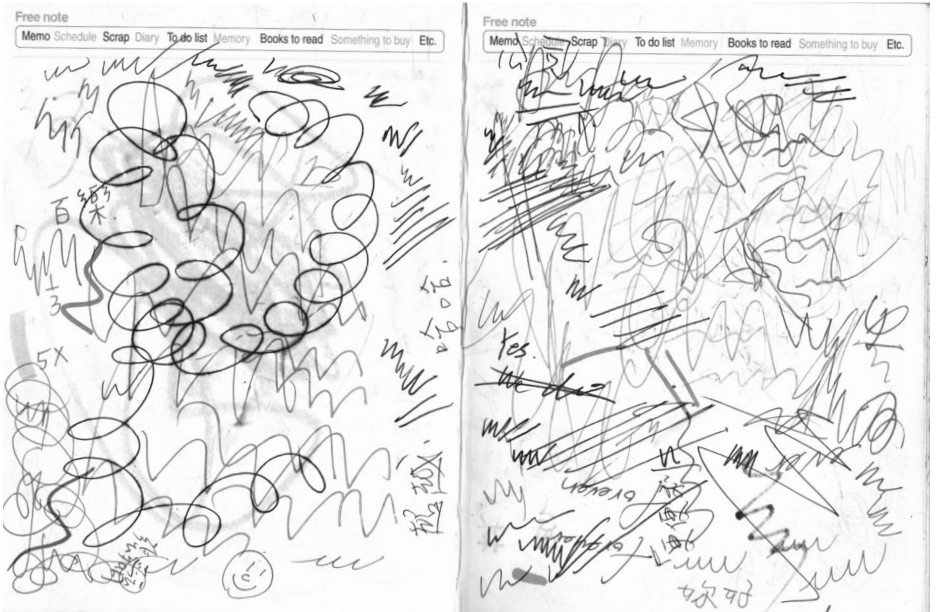
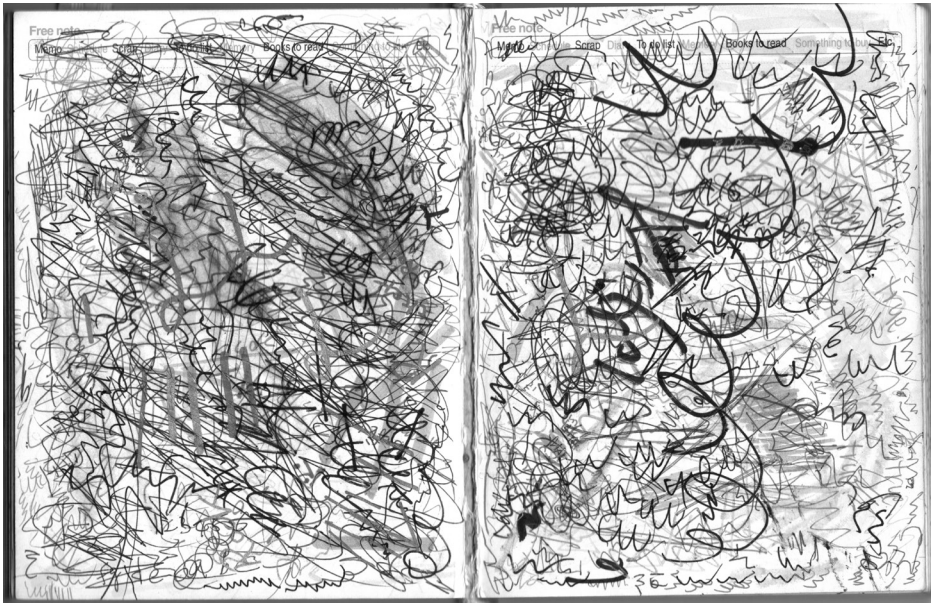
—ASUNA











Mansur Al-Hallaj (c.858 — March 26, 922) was a Persian mystic, writer and teacher. His full name was Abu al-Mughith al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj. He was born around 858 in Tur, Iran to a wool seller. Al-Hallaj's grandfather may have been a Zoroastrian. This is an 'alchemical' poem of his that I have often re-worked in my compositions.

— Younes Zarhoni

Köpr. 1620-III, v. 1, 3<sup>e</sup> + 2<sup>e</sup>, 7. Gümüşbkkânî, Jâmi' al-usûl, 224, v. 1-10.

C. *Texte arabe.* — Rime : sin, mètre : wâfir :

وَعَلَّمَ نَم وَجَدُ نَم رَمَسْ <sup>(2)</sup>	سَكُوتُ نَم صَمْتُ نَم خَرَسْ <sup>(1)</sup>
وَبَرَدُ نَم ظَلُّ نَم شَمَسْ <sup>(2)</sup>	وَطِينُ نَم نَارُ نَم نَوْرُ <sup>(1)</sup>
وَنَهْرُ نَم بَحْرُ <sup>(1)</sup> نَم يَبْسُ	وَحَزْنُ نَم سَهْلُ نَم قَفْرُ
وَقَرَبُ نَم وَفَرُ <sup>(1)</sup> نَم أُنْسُ <sup>(2)</sup>	وَسُكْرُ نَم مَحْوُ نَم شَوْقُ
وَفَرَقُ نَم جَمْعُ نَم طَمَسْ	وَقَبْضُ نَم بَسَطُ نَم مَحْوُ
وَوَصَفُ نَم كَشَفُ نَم لَبَسْ	وَأَخَذُ نَم رَدُّ نَم جَذْبُ <sup>(1)</sup>
لَدَيْهِمْ هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا وَفَلَسْ <sup>(1)</sup>	عِبَارَاتُ لِقَوَامِ تَسَاوَتْ
عِبَارَاتُ الْوَرَى فِي الْقَرَبِ هَسْ	وَأَصْوَاتُ وَرَاءَ الْبَابِ لَكِنْ
إِذَا بَلَغَ الْمَدَى حَظًا وَنَفَسْ	وَأَخْرَمَا يَتَوَلَّى إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ
وَحَقُّ الْحَقِّ فِي التَّحْقِيقِ قُدْسْ	لَاقِنَ لِلْخَلْقِ خَدَامُ الْإِمَانِ

D. *Variantes.* — V. 1. <sup>(1)</sup> K., Köpr. : هَسْ ; Yáf., T. : حرص. <sup>(2)</sup> K., Köpr. : وليد نَم. — 2. <sup>(1)</sup> Yáf., T., intervertit. <sup>(2)</sup> K., Köpr. : طمس. — 3. Güm. : زخر ; K., Köpr. intervertissent. — 4. <sup>(1)</sup> Yáf., T. : صبح. — 5. Yáf., M. : بعد. <sup>(2)</sup> Yáf., M. : حبس. — 6. <sup>(1)</sup> Yáf., T. : حدث. — 7. <sup>(1)</sup> Proverbe classique (Tawhîdî, *Ṣadāqa*, 46).

E. *Traduction :*

(1) C'est le recueillement, puis le silence; puis l'aphasie et la connaissance; puis la découverte; puis la mise à nu. (2) Et c'est l'argile, puis le feu; puis la clarté et le froid; puis l'ombre; puis le soleil. (3) Et c'est la rocaïlle, puis la plaine; puis le désert, et le fleuve; puis la crue; puis la grève. (4) Et c'est l'ivresse, puis le dégrisement; puis le désir, et l'approche; puis la jonction; puis la joie. (5) Et c'est l'étreinte, puis la

détente; puis la disparition et la séparation; puis l'union; puis la calcination. (6) Et c'est la transe, puis le rappel; puis l'attraction et la conformation; puis l'apparition (divine); puis l'investiture (de l'élection). (7) Phrases (que tout cela), accessibles à ceux-là seuls pour qui tout ce bas monde ne vaut pas plus qu'un sou. (8) Et voix de derrière la porte, mais l'on sait que les conversations des hommes, dès que l'on se rapproche, s'assourdissent en un murmure. (9) Et la dernière idée qui se présente au fidèle, en arrivant au terme, c'est « mon lot » et « mon moi ». (10) Car les créatures sont serves de leurs penchants, et la vérité, sur Dieu, quand on Le trouve, c'est [qu'il est] saint.

## QASÍDA V.

## SUR LA DISCIPLINE DE L'ARCANE.

A. *Commentaire*. — C'est un des plus anciens témoignages à ce sujet (cf. Abū 'I-Atābiya, 135), et Ibn al-Jawzi l'a critiquée pour cela. Sulami (*via* Abū Ahmad b. 'Isā, Zakariyā al-Hashaṣī, Muḥammad b. Husayn al-'Alawī, + 281/894; cf. P., 445, n. 8) n'en nomme pas l'auteur (*ba'dhum*), dont Ibn 'Arabi (*Muḥ.*, II, 316) fait un disciple de Dhū 'l-Nūn; les autres sources la restituent à Hallaj : Ibn al-Sā'ī la lui fait dire en extase de lévitation.

B. *Sources*. — Sulami, *Uṣūl al-malāmatiya*, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>, v. 1, 3-9 (base). Taq. (ms. L, fol. 323<sup>r</sup>, v. 3, 4, 6, 9, 10; et fol. 332<sup>r</sup>, v. 1-2; K, p. 84, v. 1<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>, 5, 9, 2 vers aberrants, 10). Ibn al-Jawzi, *Talbīs*, 409, v. 6<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>. Jawharī, *Kashf*, fol. 12<sup>r</sup>, v. 6<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>, 4 (= Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Mukhtasar*, 75). Baqīl, *Tafsīr*, XVI-46, v. 1<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>, 5<sup>a</sup> + 4<sup>a</sup>, 9; V-101, v. 4-9. 'Alī b. Wabb Rabbī, selon Shattānawfī, *Bahja*, 231, v. 6<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>, 5<sup>a</sup> + 4<sup>a</sup>, 9 (= Tādhifī, *Qalā'id*, 94). Ibn 'Arabi, *Futūḥāt*, II, 388, v. 1, 5<sup>a</sup> + 4<sup>a</sup>, 9; *Muhādḍarāt*, II, 316. 'Izz Maqdisī, *Sharḥ ḥal al-awliyā*, fol. 252<sup>r</sup>, v. 6<sup>a</sup> + 3<sup>a</sup>, 4.

## Introduction to 'The Left Hand of Darkness' (1976)

Science fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative. The science fiction writer is supposed to take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now, purify and intensify it for dramatic effect, and extend it into the future. 'If this goes on, this is what will happen.' A prediction is made. Method and results much resemble those of a scientist who feeds large doses of a purified and concentrated food additive to mice, in order to predict what may happen to people who eat it in small quantities for a long time. The outcome seems almost inevitably to be cancer. So does the outcome of extrapolation. Strictly extrapolative works of science fiction generally arrive about where the Club of Rome arrives: somewhere between the gradual extinction of human liberty and the total extinction of terrestrial life.

This may explain why many people who do not read science fiction describe it as 'escapist,' but when questioned further, admit they do not read it because 'it's so depressing.'

Almost anything carried to its logical extreme becomes depressing, if not carcinogenic.

Fortunately, though extrapolation is an element in science fiction, it isn't the name of the game by any means. It is far too rationalist and simplistic to satisfy the imaginative mind, whether the writer's or the reader's. Variables are the spice of life.

This book is not extrapolative. If you like you can read it, and a lot of other science fiction, as a thought-experiment. Let's say (says Mary Shelley) that a young doctor creates a human being in his laboratory; let's say (says Philip K. Dick) that the Allies lost the second world war; let's say this or that is such and so, and see what happens. . . In a story so conceived, the moral complexity proper to the modern novel need not be sacrificed, nor is there any built-in dead end; thought and intuition can move freely within bounds set only by the terms of the experiment, which may be very large indeed.

The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was used by Schrodinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future—indeed Schrodinger's most famous thought-experiment goes to show that the 'future,' on the quantum level, *cannot* be predicted—but to describe reality, the present world.

Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive.

Predictions are uttered by prophets (free of charge); by clairvoyants (who usually charge a fee, and are therefore more honored in their day than prophets); and by futurologists (salaried). Prediction is the business of prophets, clairvoyants, and futurologists. It is not the business of novelists. A novelist's business is lying.

The weather bureau will tell you what next Tuesday will be like, and the Rand Corporation will tell you what the twenty-first century will be like. I don't recommend that you turn to the writers of fiction for such information. It's none of their business. All they're trying to do is tell you what they're like, and what you're like—what's going on—what the weather



is now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look! Open your eyes; listen, listen. That is what the novelists say. But they don't tell you what you will see and hear. All they can tell you is what they have seen and heard, in their time in this world, a third of it spent in sleep and dreaming, another third of it spent in telling lies.

'The truth against the world!'—Yes. Certainly. Fiction writers, at least in their braver moments, do desire the truth: to know it, speak it, serve it. But they go about it in a peculiar and devious way, which consists in inventing persons, places, and events which never did and never will exist or occur, and telling about these fictions in detail and at length and with a great deal of emotion, and then when they are done writing down this pack of lies, they say, There! That's the truth!

They may use all kinds of facts to support their tissue of lies. They may describe the Marshalsea Prison, which was a real place, or the battle of Borodino, which really was fought, or the process of cloning, which really takes place in laboratories, or the deterioration of a personality, which is described in real textbooks of psychology; and so on. This weight of verifiable place-event-phenomenon-behavior makes the reader forget that he is reading a pure invention, a history that never took place anywhere but in that unlocalisable region, the author's mind. In fact, while we read a novel, we are insane—bonkers. We believe in the existence of people who aren't there, we hear their voices, we watch the battle of Borodino with them, we may even become Napoleon. Sanity returns (in most cases) when the book is closed.

Is it any wonder that no truly respectable society has ever trusted its artists?

But our society, being troubled and bewildered, seeking guidance, sometimes puts an entirely mistaken trust in its artists, using them as prophets and futurologists.

I do not say that artists cannot be seers, inspired: that the *awen* cannot come upon them, and the god speak through them. Who would be an artist if they did not believe that that happens? if they did not *know* it happens, because, they have felt the god within them use their tongue, their hands? Maybe only once, once in their lives. But once is enough.

Nor would I say that the artist alone is so burdened and so privileged. The scientist is another who prepares, who makes ready, working day and night, sleeping and awake, for inspiration. As Pythagoras knew, the god may speak in the forms of geometry as well as in the shapes of dreams; in the harmony of pure thought as well as in the harmony of sounds; in numbers as well as in words. But it is words that make the trouble and confusion. We are asked now to consider words as useful in only one way: as signs. Our philosophers, some of them, would have us agree that a word (sentence, statement) has value only in so far as it has one single meaning, points to one fact which is comprehensible to the rational intellect, logically sound, and—ideally—quantifiable.

Apollo, the god of light, of reason, of proportion, harmony, number—Apollo blinds those who press too close in worship. Don't look straight at the sun. Go into a dark bar for a bit and have a beer with Dionysios, every now and then.

I talk about the gods, I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth. The only truth I can understand or express is, logically defined, a lie. Psychologically defined, a symbol. Aesthetically defined, a metaphor.



## Ursula K. Le Guin

Oh, it's lovely to be invited to participate in Futurological Congresses where Systems Science displays its grand apocalyptic graphs, to be asked to tell the newspapers what America will be like in 2001, and all that, but it's a terrible mistake. I write science fiction, and science fiction isn't about the future. I don't know any more about the future than you do, and very likely less.

This book is not about the future. Yes, it begins by announcing that it's set in the 'Ekumenical Year 1490-97,' but surely you don't *believe* that?

Yes, indeed the people in it are androgynous, but that doesn't mean that I'm predicting that in a millennium or so we will all be androgynous, or announcing that I think we damned well ought to be androgynous. I'm merely observing, in the peculiar, devious, and thought-experimental manner proper to science fiction, that if you look at us at certain odd times of day in certain weathers, we already are. I am not predicting, or prescribing. I am describing. I am describing certain aspects of psychological reality in the novelist's way, which is by inventing elaborately circumstantial lies.

In reading a novel, any novel, we have to know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it. Finally, when we're done with it, we may find—if it's a good novel—that we're a bit different from what we were before we read it, that we have been changed a little, as if by having met a new face, crossed a street we never crossed before. But it's very hard to say just what we learned, how we were changed.

The artist deals with what cannot be said in words.

The artist whose medium is fiction does *this* in words. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words.

Words can be used thus paradoxically because they have, along with a semiotic usage, a symbolic or metaphoric usage. (They also have a sound—a fact the linguistic positivists take no interest in. A sentence or paragraph is like a chord or harmonic sequence in music: its meaning may be more clearly understood by the attentive ear, even though it is read in silence, than by the attentive intellect).

All fiction is metaphor. Science fiction is metaphor. What sets it apart from older forms of fiction seems to be its use of new metaphors, drawn from certain great dominants of our contemporary life—science, all the sciences, and technology, and the relativistic and the historical outlook, among them. Space travel is one of these metaphors; so is an alternative society, an alternative biology; the future is another. The future, in fiction, is a metaphor.

A metaphor for what?

If I could have said it non-metaphorically, I would not have written all these words, this novel; and Genly Ai would never have sat down at my desk and used up my ink and typewriter ribbon in informing me, and you, rather solemnly, that the truth is a matter of the imagination.

*from Ursula K. Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness (New York: Ace Books, 1969). The introduction was added to the second edition in 1976.*

## Clarice Lispector

and sleepwalking reality, creates me. And all of me rolls and as I roll on the ground I add to myself in leaves, I, anonymous work of an anonymous reality only justifiable as long as my life lasts. And then? then all that I lived will be a poor superfluity.

But for the time being I am in the centre of everything that screams and teems. And it's subtle as the most intangible reality. For now time is the duration of a thought.

This contact with the invisible nucleus of reality is of such purity.

I know what I am doing here: I am telling of the instants that drip and are thick with blood.

I know what I am doing here: I'm improvising. But what's wrong with that? improvising as in jazz they improvise music, jazz in fury, improvising in front of the crowd.

It's so odd to have exchanged my paints for this strange thing that is the word. Words—I move cautiously among them as they can turn threatening; I can have the freedom to write this: "pilgrims, merchants and shepherds led their caravans toward Tibet and the roads were difficult and primitive." With that phrase I made a scene be born, as in a photographic flash.

What does this jazz that is improvisation say? it says arms tangled with legs and the flames rising and I passive like meat that is devoured by the sharp hook of an eagle that interrupts its blind flight. I express to me and to you my most hidden desires and achieve an orgiastic confused beauty. I tremble with pleasure amidst the novelty of using words that form an intense

thicket. I struggle to conquer more deeply my freedom of sensations and thoughts, without any utilitarian meaning: I am alone, I and my freedom. Such is my freedom that it could scandalize a primitive but I know that you are not scandalized by the fullness I achieve and that is without perceptible borders. This capacity of mine to live whatever is rounded and ample—I surround myself with carnivorous plants and legendary animals, all bathed in the coarse and twisted oblique light of a mythical sex. I proceed in an intuitive way and without seeking an idea: I am organic. And I don't question myself about my motives. I plunge into the almost pain of an intense happiness—and to adorn me leaves and branches spring up in my hair.

I don't know what I'm writing about: I am obscure to myself. I only had initially a lunar and lucid vision, and so I plucked for myself the instant before it died and perpetually dies. This is not a message of ideas that I am transmitting to you but an instinctive ecstasy of whatever is hidden in nature and that I foretell. And this is a feast of words. I write in signs that are more a gesture than voice. All this is what I got used to painting, delving into the intimate nature of things. But now the time to stop painting has come in order to remake myself, I remake myself in these lines. I have a voice. As I throw myself into the line of my drawing, this is an exercise in life without planning. The world has no visible order and all I have is the order of my breath. I let myself happen.

I am inside the great dreams of the night; for the right-now is by night. And I sing the passage of time: I am still the queen of the Medes and of the Persians and am also my slow evolution that throws itself like a drawbridge into a future whose milky



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fogs I already breathe today. My aura is mystery of life. I surpass myself abdicating myself and am therefore the world: I follow the voice of the world, I myself suddenly with a unique voice.

The world: a tangle of bristling telephone wires. And the brightness however is still dark: that is I facing the world.

A dangerous balance, mine, mortal danger for the soul. The night of today looks at me with torpor, verdigris and lime. I want inside this night that is longer than life, I want, inside this night, life raw and bloody and full of saliva. I want this word: splendidness, splendidness is the fruit in its succulence, fruit without sadness. I want distances. My wild intuition about myself. But my main thing is always hidden. I am implicit. And when I make myself explicit I lose the humid intimacy.

What color is the spatial infinity? it is the color of air.

We—faced with the scandal of death.

Listen only superficially to what I say and from the lack of meaning a meaning will be born as from me a high and light life is inexplicably born. The dense jungle of words thickly envelops what I feel and live, and transforms everything I am into some thing of mine that remains outside me. Nature is enveloping: it entangles me entirely and is sexually alive, just that: alive. I too am ferociously alive—and I lick my snout like a tiger who has just devoured a deer.

I write to you now, at the very moment itself. I unfold only in the now. I speak today—not yesterday or tomorrow—but today and at this actual perishable instant. My small and boxed-in

## Clarice Lispector

freedom joins me to the freedom of the world—but what is a window if not the air framed by right angles? I am rudely alive. I am leaving—says death without adding that he's taking me along. And I shiver in panting breath because I must go with him. I am death. Death takes place in my very being—how can I explain to you? It's a sensual death. Like a dead person I walk through the high grass in the greenish light of its blades: I am Diana the Huntress of gold and all I can find are heaps of bones. I live from an underlying layer of feelings: I am barely alive.

But these high summer days of damnation whisper to me the need for renunciation. I renounce having a meaning, and then the sweet and painful weakness grips me. Round and round shapes cross in the air. It's a summer heat. I navigate in my galley that braves the winds of a bewitched summer. Crushed leaves remind me of the ground of my childhood. The green hand and the golden breasts—that is how I paint the mark of Satan. They who fear us and our alchemy stripped witches and sorcerers in search of the hidden mark that was almost always found though it could only be known on sight for that mark was indescribable and unpronounceable even in the darkness of the Middle Ages—Middle Ages, thou art my dark subagency and in the glare of the bonfires the marked ones dance in circles riding branches and foliage which are the phallic symbol of fertility: even in the white mass blood is used and there it is drunk.

Listen: I let you be, therefore let me be.

But eternally is a very hard word: it has a granitic "t" in the middle. Eternity: for everything that is never began. My small ever so limited head bursts when thinking about something that doesn't begin and doesn't end—for that is the eternal.

This excerpt is from Hildegard of Bingen and Huw Lemmey's novel *Unknown Language*. I came across this book while I was doing research for '13 Visions'. This apocalyptic novel integrates Hildegard of Bingen's visions in a way it's hard to tell who is actually writing. This is what I tried to do for '13 Visions', merging Pauline Oliveros and Hildegard of Bingen's idioms in a way you can't distinguish their inputs. This paragraph addresses the difficulties met with verbal language to convey the sublime. It seems to me that both Hildegard of Bingen and Pauline Oliveros found with music an adequate way to share the non-relatable in an universal way.

On the next page, a speculative dialogue between Pauline Oliveros and Hildegard of Bingen. Olivero's score 'Thirteen Changes' is intertwined with chosen monodies from the mystic.

— Clara Lévy



The story came to me in two parts, in two manners. Firstly, I witnessed with my body; by this I mean when I say I *saw* things, I mean I saw them, with my own outward-looking eyes. Secondly, I witnessed with my soul – that is, with my inner eyes, for with them I knew what He said. Regardless, both visions were induced in me. I recall them here; we are vehicles for stories of the other. This is what will happen in the city.

There is no way to *describe* a vision. Our mortal words are not enough to translate the mysteries of existence. When I try to describe a vision and say I *saw* a dog, for example, I do not mean to say that I *imagined* this dog, nor that I *saw* a dog, a perception. What I mean to say is *there was a dog*, inside my experience – not a mirage, but a dog whose presence I registered no less clearly than the dog that now sits at my feet. ‘Vision’ is an insufficient word to describe such contact with the divine; *seeing* is the smallest part of it. I write down what happened now, long after the fact, in order to explain both what I *saw* and what I *experienced*. Words are only ever signals from the experience of living and dying. Nothing I write is written to persuade you, but rather in the search for an unknown language through which to share what I witnessed with the entirety of my being. A fool’s errand. Yet we persist.

## 13 Changes

Pauline Oliveros

### Excerpts from Antiphons, Responsory & Hymns Hildegard Von Bingen

1. Standing naked in the moonlight—Music washing the body  
*And so his garments were washed and cleaned.*
2. Atomic imagery—Rotating molecules—Instantaneous particles dancing—  
Vanshing  
*O bloody red that flowed from up that height.*
3. Solar winds scorching the returnings comet's tail.  
*From the rising of the sun to the ends of the earth,*
4. Elephants mating in a secret grove.  
*Upon a daughter's beauty gazed—an eagle turns his eye into the sun,*
5. Airborn carriers of transparent seedlings.  
*the life that's all things moving, the root in all created being*
6. Song of ancient mothers among awesome rocks.  
*O voice of ruminating fire, forerunner of the whetstone, the Rock that over-  
throws th' abyss*
7. A single egg motionless in the desert.  
*Love abounds in all*
8. Rollicking monkeys landing on Mars.  
*as heaven gleams with rubied light and echoes gladsome shouts of praise.*
9. A singing bowl of perfect soup.  
*To pilgrims lend your aid.*
10. Tiny mites circling one hair of a polar bear.  
*where too you are the lushest garden, the fragrances of all its ornaments.*
11. A solitary worm in an empty coffin.  
*yet from it gleams within the dawn*
12. A sip of midnight well water.  
*For that golden troop so chaste has crossed the sea with virgin tresses.*
13. Directionless motion—Unquiet stillness—A moment with millions of people—  
—Calming the waters—The aura of a black bird.  
*you are a brilliant light within the darkest shadows*



## The Tyranny of the Clock (1972)

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like soap or sultanas. And because, without some means of exact time keeping, industrial capitalism could never have developed and could not continue to exploit the workers, the clock represents an element of mechanical tyranny in the lives of modern men more potent than any individual exploiter or than any other machine. It is therefore valuable to trace the historical process by which the clock influenced the social development of modern European civilization.

It is a frequent circumstance of history that a culture or civilization develops the device that will later be used for its destruction. The ancient Chinese, for example, invented gunpowder, which was developed by the military experts of the West and eventually led to the Chinese civilization itself being destroyed by the high explosives of modern warfare. Similarly, the supreme achievement of the craftsmen of the medieval cities of Europe was the invention of the clock which, with its revolutionary alteration of the concept of time, materially assisted the death of the Middle Ages.

There is a tradition that the clock first appeared in the eleventh century, as a device for ringing bells at regular intervals in the monasteries which, with the regimented life they imposed on their inmates, were the closest social approximation in the Middle Ages to the factory of today. The first authenticated clock, however, appeared in the thirteenth century, and it was not until the fourteenth century that clocks became common as ornaments of the public buildings in German cities.

These early clocks, operated by weights, were not particularly accurate, and it was not until the sixteenth century that any great reliability was attained. In England, for instance, the clock at Hampton Court, made in 1540, is said to have been the first accurate clock in the country. And even the accuracy of the sixteenth-century clocks is relative, for they were equipped only with hour hands. The idea of measuring time in minutes and seconds had been thought out by the early mathematicians as far back as the fourteenth century, but it was not until the invention of the pendulum in 1657 that sufficient accuracy was attained to permit the addition of a minute hand, and the second hand did not appear until the eighteenth century. These two centuries, it

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assigns her. Mind would be delivered from perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. Each would assist the enquiries of all.

## THE TYRANNY OF THE CLOCK

GEORGE WOODCOCK  
(From *The Rejection of Politics*, 1972)

In no characteristic is existing society in the West more sharply distinguished from the earlier societies, whether of Europe or the East, than in its conception of time. To the ancient Chinese or Greek, to the Arab herdsman or Mexican peon of today, time is represented by the cyclic processes of nature, the alternation of day and night, the passage from season to season. The nomads and farmers measured and still measure their day from sunrise to sunset, and their years in terms of seedtime and harvest, of the falling leaf and the ice thawing on the lakes and rivers. The farmer worked according to the elements, the craftsman for as long as he felt it necessary to perfect his product. Time was seen as a process of natural change, and men were not concerned in its exact measurement. For this reason civilizations highly developed in other respects had the most primitive means of measuring time: the hour glass with its trickling sand or dripping water, the sun dial, useless on a dull day, and the candle or lamp whose unburnt remnant of oil or wax indicated the hours. All these devices were approximate and inexact, and were often rendered unreliable by the weather or the personal laziness of the tender. Nowhere in the ancient or medieval world were more than a tiny minority of men concerned with time in the terms of mathematical exactitude.

Modern, Western man, however, lives in a world which runs according to the mechanical and mathematical symbols of clock time. The clock dictates his movements and inhibits his actions. The clock turns time from a process of nature into a commodity that can be measured and bought and sold

should be observed, were those in which capitalism grew to such an extent that it was able to take advantage of the techniques of the industrial revolution to establish its economic domination over society.

The clock, as Lewis Mumford has pointed out, is the key machine of the machine age, both for its influence on technics and for its influence on the habits of men. Technically, the clock was the first really automatic machine that attained any importance in the life of man. Previous to its invention, the common machines were of such a nature that their operation depended on some external and unreliable force, such as human or animal muscles, water or wind. It is true that the Greeks had invented a number of primitive machines, but these were used, like Hero's steam engine, either for obtaining 'supernatural' effects in the temples, or for amusing the tyrants of Levantine cities. But the clock was the first automatic machine that attained public importance and a social function. Clock-making became the industry from which men learnt the elements of machine-making and gained the technical skill that was to produce the complicated machinery of the Industrial Revolution.

Socially the clock had a more radical influence than any other machine, in that it was the means by which the regularization and regimentation of life necessary for an exploiting system of industry could best be assured. The clock provided a means by which time – a category so elusive that no philosophy has yet determined its nature – could be measured concretely in the more tangible terms of space provided by the circumference of a clock dial. Time as duration became disregarded, and men began to talk and think always in 'lengths' of time, just as if they were talking in lengths of calico. And time, being now measurable in mathematical symbols, was regarded as a commodity that could be bought and sold in the same way as any other commodity.

The new capitalists, in particular, became rabidly time-conscious. Time, here symbolizing the labour of the workers, was regarded by them almost as if it were the chief raw material of industry. 'Time is money' was one of the key slogans of capitalist ideology, and the timekeeper was the most significant of the new types of official introduced by the

capitalist dispensation.

In the early factories the employers went so far as to manipulate their clocks or sound their factory whistles at the wrong times in order to defraud the workers of a little of this valuable new commodity. Later such practices became less frequent, but the influence of the clock imposed a regularity on the lives of the majority of men that had previously been known only in monasteries. Men actually became like clocks, acting with a repetitive regularity which had no resemblance to the rhythmic life of a natural being. They became, as the Victorian phrase put it, 'as regular as clockwork'. Only in the country districts where the natural lives of animals and plants and the elements still dominated existence, did any large portion of the population fail to succumb to the deadly tick of monotony.

At first this new attitude to time, this new regularity of life, was imposed by the clock-owning masters on the unwilling poor. The factory slave reacted in his spare time by living with a chaotic irregularity which characterized the gin-sodden slums of early nineteenth-century industrialism. Men fled to the timeless worlds of drink or Methodist inspiration. But gradually the idea of regularity spread downwards and among the workers. Nineteenth-century religion and morality played their part in proclaiming the sin of 'wasting time'. The introduction of mass-produced watches and clocks in the 1850s spread time-consciousness among those who had previously merely reacted to the stimulus of the knocker-up or the factory whistle. In the church and the school, in the office and the workshop, punctuality was held up as the greatest of the virtues.

Out of this slavish dependence on mechanical time which spread insidiously into every class in the nineteenth century, there grew up the demoralizing regimentation which today still characterizes factory life. The man who fails to conform faces social disapproval and economic ruin – unless he drops out into a nonconformist way of life in which time ceases to be of prime importance. Hurried meals, the regular morning and evening scramble for trains or buses, the strain of having to work to time schedules, all contribute, by digestive and nervous disturbances, to ruin health and shorten life.

Nor does the financial imposition of regularity tend, in the long run, to greater efficiency. Indeed, the quality of the product is usually much poorer, because the employer, regarding time as a commodity which he has to pay for, forces the operative to maintain such a speed that his work must necessarily be skimped. Quantity rather than quality becoming the criterion, the enjoyment is taken out of the work itself, and the worker in his turn becomes a 'clock-watcher', concerned only with when he will be able to escape to the scanty and monotonous leisure of industrial society, in which he 'kills time' by cramming in as much time-scheduled and mechanical enjoyment of cinema, radio and newspaper as his wage packet and his tiredness will allow. Only if he is willing to accept the hazards of living by his faith or his wits can the man without money avoid living as a slave to the clock.

The problem of the clock is, in general, similar to that of the machine. Mechanized time is valuable as a means of co-ordinating activities in a highly developed society, just as the machine is valuable as a means of reducing unnecessary labour to a minimum. Both are valuable for the contribution they make to the smooth running of society, and should be used in so far as they assist men to co-operate efficiently and to eliminate monotonous toil and social confusion. But neither should be allowed to dominate men's lives as they do today.

Now the movement of the clock sets the tempo of men's lives – they become the servants of the concept of time which they themselves have made, and are held in fear, like Frankenstein by his own monster. In a sane and free society such an arbitrary domination of man by man-made machines is even more ridiculous than the domination of man by man. Mechanical time would be relegated to its true function as a means of reference and co-ordination, and men would return again to a balanced view of life no longer dominated by time-regulation and the worship of the clock. Complete liberty implies freedom from the tyranny of abstractions as well as from the rule of men.

George Woodcock, "The Tyranny of the Clock" in  
George Woodcock (ed.) *The Anarchist Reader* (Great  
Britain: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977)

Getting lost is as important as staying focused. For me, this is a clear vital principle. Good music, or any art, is able to do both, simultaneously, to itself and to the people involved. In ‘The Blue of Distance’, Rebecca Solnit speaks about the beauty of scattered light getting lost, the tremendous longing that a colour can produce, ‘the next beyond’ that we are trying to address, of love, distance, and desire. All that, including the quality of ‘blue’ itself is somehow so familiar to my solo *le temps*, that I chose this excerpt as my selection for the reader. In my solo, however, these elements are put together totally different from Rebecca’s sentences, and do take on other perspectives.

— Katharina Ernst

## *The Blue of Distance*

The world is blue at its edges and in its depths. This blue is the light that got lost. Light at the blue end of the spectrum does not travel the whole distance from the sun to us. It disperses among the molecules of the air, it scatters in water. Water is colorless, shallow water appears to be the color of whatever lies underneath it, but deep water is full of this scattered light, the purer the water the deeper the blue. The sky is blue for the same reason, but the blue at the horizon, the blue of land that seems to be dissolving into the sky, is a deeper, dreamier, melancholy blue, the blue at the farthest reaches of the places where you see for miles, the blue of distance. This light that does not touch us, does not travel the whole distance, the light that gets lost, gives us the beauty of the world, so much of which is in the color blue.

For many years, I have been moved by the blue at the far edge of what can be seen, that color of horizons, of remote mountain ranges, of anything far away. The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not. And the color of where you can never go. For the blue is not in the place those miles away at the horizon, but in the atmospheric distance between you and the mountains. "Longing," says the poet Robert Hass, "because desire is full

of endless distances.” Blue is the color of longing for the distances you never arrive in, for the blue world. One soft humid early spring morning driving a winding road across Mount Tamalpais, the 2,500-foot mountain just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, a bend reveals a sudden vision of San Francisco in shades of blue, a city in a dream, and I was filled with a tremendous yearning to live in that place of blue hills and blue buildings, though I do live there, I had just left there after breakfast, and the brown coffee and yellow eggs and green traffic lights filled me with no such desire, and besides I was looking forward to going hiking on the mountain’s west slope.

We treat desire as a problem to be solved, address what desire is for and focus on that something and how to acquire it rather than on the nature and the sensation of desire, though often it is the distance between us and the object of desire that fills the space in between with the blue of longing. I wonder sometimes whether with a slight adjustment of perspective it could be cherished as a sensation on its own terms, since it is as inherent to the human condition as blue is to distance? If you can look across the distance without wanting to close it up, if you can own your longing in the same way that you own the beauty of that blue that can never be possessed? For something of this longing will, like the blue of distance, only be relocated, not assuaged, by acquisition and arrival, just as the mountains cease to be blue when you arrive among them and the blue instead tints the next



beyond. Somewhere in this is the mystery of why tragedies are more beautiful than comedies and why we take a huge pleasure in the sadness of certain songs and stories. Something is always far away.

The mystic Simone Weil wrote to a friend on another continent, “Let us love this distance, which is thoroughly woven with friendship, since those who do not love each other are not separated.” For Weil, love is the atmosphere that fills and colors the distance between herself and her friend. Even when that friend arrives on the doorstep, something remains impossibly remote: when you step forward to embrace them your arms are wrapped around mystery, around the unknowable, around that which cannot be possessed. The far seeps in even to the nearest. After all we hardly know our own depths.

Rebecca Solnit, “The Blue of Distance”, from *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (New York: Viking Press, 2005).

## The Sufi Teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan (1926)

### CHAPTER VI RHYTHM

Motion is the significance of life, and the law of motion is rhythm. Rhythm is life disguised in motion, and in every guise it seems to attract the attention of man; from a child who is pleased with the moving of a rattle and is soothed by the swing of its cradle, to a grown person whose every game, sport and enjoyment has rhythm disguised in it in some way or another, whether it is a game of tennis, cricket or golf, as well as boxing and wrestling. Again, in the intellectual recreations of man, both poetry and music, vocal or instrumental, have rhythm as their very spirit and life. There is a saying in Sanskrit that tone is the mother of nature, but that rhythm is its father. An infant once given the habit of a regular time for his food demands it at that time, although he has no idea of time. This is accounted for by the fact that the very nature of life is rhythm. The infant begins his life on earth by moving its arms and legs, thus showing the rhythm of its nature, and illustrating the philosophy which teaches that rhythm is the sign of life. The inclination to dance shown by every man illustrates also that innate nature of beauty which copes rhythm for its expression. [...]

In the Hindu science of music there are five different rhythms which are generally derived from the study of nature;

1. Chatura, the rhythm of four beats, which was invented by Devas or divine men.
2. Tisra, the rhythm of three beats, invented by Rishis or saints.
3. Khanda, the rhythm of five beats, invented by the rakshasas.
4. Misra, the rhythm of seven beats, invented by the people.
5. Sankrian, the rhythm of nine beats, invented by the commercial class.

Mahadeva, the great Lord of the Yogis, was the dancer of Tandeva Nrutya and his consort Parvati danced the Lassia Nrutya.

The traditions of the Hindus have as a most sacred record the mystical legend of Shri Krishna dancing with the Gopis. The story relates how Krishna, the charming youthful Lord of the Hindus, was moving among the dwellings of the cowherds, and every maiden attracted by his beauty and charm asked him to dance with her. He promised every maiden that asked him to dance with him that he would dance with her on the full moon. On the night of the full moon there assembled sixteen hundred Gopis, and the miracle of Krishna was performed

## Hazrat Inayat Khan

when he appeared as a separate Krishna to each Gopi and all of them danced with their beloved Lord at one and the same time.

There is a tradition in Islam, where music, dancing, and all amusements and light occupations are strictly prohibited, that on one occasion, it being a holiday, the Prophet called his wife Ayesha to look at the dance and listen to the music of some street musicians. In the meantime his great Khalif happened to come by and was shocked to seeing the Prophet who had prohibited such things himself permitting music in front of his house. When he stopped the music of the street players, pointing out to them that it was the house of the Prophet, Mohammad requested that they might continue, saying that it was a holiday and that there is no heart that does not move with the motion of rhythm.

In the traditions of the Sufis Raqs, the sacred dance of spiritual ecstasy which even now is prevalent among the Sufis of the East, is traced to the time when contemplation of the Creator impressed the wonderful reality of his vision so deeply on the heart of Jelal-ud-Din Rumi that he became entirely absorbed in the whole and single immanence of nature, and took a rhythmic turn which caused the skirt of his garment to form a circle, and the movements of his hands and neck made a circle; and it is the memory of this moment of vision which is celebrated in the dance of dervishes. Even in the lower creation, among beasts and birds, their joy is always expressed in dance; a bird like the peacock, when conscious of his beauty and of the beauty of the forest around him, expresses his joy in dance. Dance arouses passion and emotion in all living creatures.

In the East, and especially in India where the life of the people for centuries has been based on psychological principles, in the royal processions or at Durbars an impression of kingly grandeur is made upon the minds of people by the beating of drums; and the same beating of drums takes place at wedding ceremonies and at the services in the temples.

Sufis, in order to awaken in man that part of his emotional nature which is generally asleep, have a rhythmic practice which sets the whole mechanism of body and mind in rhythm. There exists in all people, either consciously or unconsciously, a tendency toward rhythm. Among European nations the expression of pleasure is shown by the clapping of the hands; a farewell sign is made by the waving of the hand which makes rhythm.

All labor and toil, however hard and difficult, is made easy by the power of rhythm in some way or other. This idea opens to the thinker a means for a still deeper study of life.

Rhythm is every guise, be it called game, play, amusement, poetry, music or dance, is the very nature of man's whole constitution. When the entire mechanism of his body is working in a rhythm, the beat of the pulse, of the heart, of the head, the circulation of the blood, hunger and thirst, all show rhythm, and it is the breaking of rhythm that is called disease. When the child is crying and the mother does not know what ails it, she holds it in her arms and pats it on the back. This sets the circulation of the blood, the pulsation's and the whole mechanism of the body in rhythm; in other words sets the body in order, and soothes the child. [...]

Rhythm plays a most important part not only in the body, but in the mind also; the change

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from joy to sorrow, the rising and fall of thoughts and the whole working of the mind show rhythm, and all confusion and despair seem to be accounted for by the lack of rhythm in mind.

In ancient times healers in the East, and especially those in India, when healing a patient of any complaint of a psychological character, known either as an obsession or an effect of magic, excited the emotional nature of the patient by the emphatic rhythm of their drum and song, at the same time making the patient swing his head up and down in time to the music. This aroused his emotions and prompted him to tell the secret of his complaint which hitherto had been hidden under the cover of fear, convention, and forms of society. The patient confessed everything to the healer under the spell produced by the rhythm and the healer was enabled to discover the source of the malady.

The words ‘thoughtful’ and ‘thoughtless’ signify a rhythmic or unrhythmic state of the mind; and balance, which is the only upholding power in life, is kept by rhythm. Respiration, which keeps mind and body connected and which links the mind and soul, consists in keeping rhythm every moment when awake or asleep; inhaling and exhaling may be likened to the moving and swinging of the pendulum of a clock. As all strength and energy is maintained by breath, and as breath is the sign of life, and its nature is to flow alternately on the right and left side, all this proves rhythm be of the greatest significance in life. [...]

A keen observation shows that the whole universe is a single mechanism working by the law of rhythm; the rise and fall of the waves, the ebb and flow of the tide, the waxing and waning of the moon, the sunrise and the sunset, the change of the seasons, the moving of the earth and of the planets, the whole cosmic system and the constitution of the entire universe are working under the law of rhythm. Cycles of rhythm, with major and minor cycles interpenetrating, uphold the whole creation in their swing. This from the motionless life, and that every motion must necessarily result in a dual aspect. As soon as you move a stick, the single movement will make two points, the one where it starts and the other where it ends, the one strong and the other weak; to these a music conductor will count ‘one, two,’ ‘one, two,’ a strong accent and a weak accent: one motion with two effects, each distinct and different from the other. It is this mystery that lies hidden under the dual aspect of all phases and forms of life; and there reason, cause, and significance of all life is found in rhythm.

There is a psychological conception of rhythms used in poetry or music which may be explained thus: every rhythm has a certain effect, not only upon the physical and mental bodies of the poet, on him for whom the poetry is written, on the musician, or on him to whom the song is sung, but even upon their life’s affairs. The belief is that it can bring good or bad luck to the poet and musician or to the one who listens. The idea is that rhythm is hidden under the root of every activity, constructive or destructive, so that on the rhythm of every activity the fate of the affair depends. Expressions used in everyday speech such as, ‘he was too late’, or, ‘it was done too soon’, or ‘that was done in time’, all show the influence of rhythm upon the affair. Events such as the sinking of the Titanic, and the amazing changes that took place during the late war, if keenly studied can be accounted for by rhythm work-

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ing in both mental and physical spheres.

There is a superstition among Indians that when somebody yawns, someone else who is present must either snap his fingers or clap his hands. The hidden meaning of this is that a yawn is significant of the slowing down of rhythm, and that by clicking the fingers or clapping the hands one is supposed to bring the rhythm back to the original state. A Muslim child when reading the Qua'an moves his head backwards and forwards; this is popularly supposed to be a respectful bow to the sacred words that he reads; put psychologically speaking it helps him to memorize the Qua'an by regulating the circulation and making the brain a receptive vehicle, as when filling a bottle one sometimes shakes it in order to make more room. This also may be seen when a person nods the head in accepting an idea when he cannot take it in.

The mechanism of every kind of machinery that works by itself is arranged and kept going by the law of rhythm; and this is another proof of the fact that the whole mechanism of the universe is based on the law of rhythm.



## In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective (2011)

Imagine you are falling. But there is no ground.

Many contemporary philosophers have pointed out that the present moment is distinguished by a prevailing condition of groundlessness. We cannot assume any stable ground on which to base metaphysical claims or foundational political myths. At best, we are faced with temporary, contingent, and partial attempts at grounding. But if there is no stable ground available for our social lives and philosophical aspirations, the consequence must be a permanent, or at least intermittent state of free fall for subjects and objects alike. But why don't we notice?

Paradoxically, while you are falling, you will probably feel as if you are floating—or not even moving at all. Falling is relational—if there is nothing to fall toward, you may not even be aware that you're falling. If there is no ground, gravity might be low and you'll feel weightless. Objects will stay suspended if you let go of them. Whole societies around you may be falling just as you are. And it may actually feel like perfect stasis—as if history and time have ended and you can't even remember that time ever moved forward.

As you are falling, your sense of orientation may start to play additional tricks on you. The horizon quivers in a maze of collapsing lines and you may lose any sense of above and below, of before and after, of yourself and your boundaries. Pilots have even reported that free fall can trigger a feeling of confusion between the self and the aircraft. While falling, people may sense themselves as being things, while things may sense that they are people. Traditional modes of seeing and feeling are shattered. Any sense of balance is disrupted. Perspectives are twisted and multiplied. New types of visuality arise.

This disorientation is partly due to the loss of a stable horizon. And with the loss of horizon also comes the departure of a stable paradigm of orientation, which has situated concepts of subject and object, of time and space, throughout modernity. In falling, the lines of the horizon shatter, twirl around, and superimpose.

### A Brief History of the Horizon

Our sense of spatial and temporal orientation has changed dramatically in recent years, prompted by new technologies of surveillance, tracking, and targeting. One of the symptoms of this transformation is the growing importance of aerial views: overviews, Google Map views, satellite views. We are growing increasingly accustomed to what used to be called a God's-eye view. On the other hand, we also notice the decreasing importance of

a paradigm of visibility that long dominated our vision: linear perspective. Its stable and single point of view is being supplemented (and often replaced) by multiple perspectives, overlapping windows, distorted flight lines, and divergent vanishing points. How could these changes be related to the phenomena of groundlessness and permanent fall?

First, let's take a step back and consider the crucial role of the horizon in all of this. Our traditional sense of orientation—and, with it, modern concepts of time and space—are based on a stable line: the horizon line. Its stability hinges on the stability of an observer, who is thought to be located on a ground of sorts, a shoreline, a boat—a ground that can be imagined as stable, even if in fact it is not.

The horizon line was an extremely important element in navigation. It defined the limits of communication and understanding. Beyond the horizon, there was only muteness and silence. Within it, things could be made visible. But it could also be used for determining one's own location and relation to one's surroundings, destinations, or ambitions.

Early navigation consisted of gestures and bodily poses relating to the horizon. "In early days, [Arab navigators] used one or two fingers width, a thumb and little finger on an outstretched arm, or an arrow held at arm's length to sight the horizon at the lower end and Polaris at the upper." The angle between the horizon and the Pole star gave information about the altitude of one's position. This measurement method was known as *sighting* the object, *shooting* the object, or *taking a sight*. In this way, one's own location could be at least roughly determined.

Instruments like the astrolabe, quadrant, and sextant refined this way of gaining orientation by using the horizon and the stars. One of the main obstacles with this technology was the fact that the ground on which sailors stood was never stable in the first place. The stable horizon mostly remained a projection, until artificial horizons were eventually invented in order to create the illusion of stability.

The use of the horizon to calculate position gave seafarers a sense of orientation, thus also enabling colonialism and the spread of a capitalist global market, but also became an important tool for the construction of the optical paradigms that came to define modernity, the most important paradigm being that of so-called linear perspective.

As early as 1028, Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham (965–1040), also known as Alhazen, wrote a book of visual theory, *Kitab al-Manazir*. After 1200, it became available in Europe and spawned numerous experiments in visual production between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, which culminated in the development of linear perspective.

In Duccio's *Last Supper* (1308–1311), several vanishing points are still evident. The perspectives in this space do not coalesce into a horizon line, nor do they all intersect in one single vanishing point. But in *Miracle of the Desecrated Host (Scene I)* (1465–69), painted by Paolo Uccello, who was one of the most ardent experimenters in the development of linear perspective, the perspective is aligned to culminate in one single vanishing point, located on a virtual horizon defined by the eye line.

Linear perspective is based on several decisive negations. First, the curvature of the Earth is typically disregarded. The horizon is conceived as an abstract flat line upon which

## Hito Steyerl

the points on any horizontal plane converge. Additionally, as Erwin Panofsky argued, the construction of linear perspective declares the view of a one-eyed and immobile spectator as a norm—and this view is itself assumed to be natural, scientific, and objective. Thus, linear perspective is based on an abstraction, and does not correspond to any subjective perception. Instead, it computes a mathematical, flattened, infinite, continuous, and homogenous space, and declares it to be reality. Linear perspective creates the illusion of a quasi-natural view to the “outside,” as if the image plane was a window opening onto the “real” world. This is also the literal meaning of the Latin *perspectiva*: to see through.

Hito Steyerl, “In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective”.  
E-flux journal #24, April, 2011.

## The Mushroom at the End of the World (2015)

The concept of *assemblage* is helpful. Ecologists turned to assemblages to get around the sometimes fixed and bounded connotations of ecological “community.” The question of how the varied species in a species assemblage influence each other—if at all—is never settled: some thwart (or eat) each other; others work together to make life possible; still others just happen to find themselves in the same place. As-

semblages are open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making. For my purposes, however, I need something other than organisms as the elements that gather. I need to see lifeways—and non-living ways of being as well—coming together. Nonhuman ways of being, like human ones, shift historically. For living things, species identities are a place to begin, but they are not enough: ways of being are emergent effects of encounters. Thinking about humans makes this clear. Foraging for mushrooms is a way of life—but not a common characteristic of all humans. The issue is the same for other species. Pines find mushrooms to help them use human-made open spaces. Assemblages don't just gather lifeways; they make them. Thinking through assemblage urges us to ask: How do gatherings sometimes become “happenings,” that is, greater than the sum of their parts? If history without progress is indeterminate and multidirectional, might assemblages show us its possibilities?

Patterns of unintentional coordination develop in assemblages. To notice such patterns means watching the interplay of temporal rhythms and scales in the divergent lifeways that gather. Surprisingly, this turns out to be a method that might revitalize political economy as well as environmental studies. Assemblages drag political economy inside them, and not just for humans. Plantation crops have lives different from those of their free-living siblings; cart horses and hunter steeds share species but not lifeways. Assemblages cannot hide from capital and the state; they are sites for watching how political economy works. If capitalism has no teleology, we need to see what comes together—not just by prefabrication, but also by juxtaposition.

Other authors use “assemblage” with other meanings.<sup>8</sup> The qualifier “polyphonic” may help explain my variant. Polyphony is music in which autonomous melodies intertwine. In Western music, the madrigal and the fugue are examples of polyphony. These forms seem archaic and strange to many modern listeners because they were superseded by music in which a unified rhythm and melody holds the composition together. In the classical music that displaced baroque, unity was the goal; this was “progress” in just the meaning I have been discussing: a unified coordination of time. In twentieth-century rock-and-roll, this unity takes the form of a strong beat, suggestive of the listener's heart;



we are used to hearing music with a single perspective. When I first learned polyphony, it was a revelation in listening; I was forced to pick out separate, simultaneous melodies *and* to listen for the moments of harmony and dissonance they created together. This kind of noticing is just what is needed to appreciate the multiple temporal rhythms and trajectories of the assemblage.

For those not musically inclined, it may be useful to imagine the polyphonic assemblage in relation to agriculture. Since the time of the plantation, commercial agriculture has aimed to segregate a single crop and work toward its simultaneous ripening for a coordinated harvest. But other kinds of farming have multiple rhythms. In the shifting cultivation I studied in Indonesian Borneo, many crops grew together in the same field, and they had quite different schedules. Rice, bananas, taro, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, palms, and fruit trees mingled; farmers needed to attend to the varied schedules of maturation of each of these crops. These rhythms were their relation to human harvests; if we add other relations, for example, to pollinators or other plants, rhythms multiply. The polyphonic assemblage is the gathering of these rhythms, as they result from world-making projects, human and not human.

The polyphonic assemblage also moves us into the unexplored territory of the modern political economy. Factory labor is an exemplar of coordinated progress time. Yet the supply chain is infused with polyphonic rhythms. Consider the tiny Chinese garment factory studied by Nellie Chu; like its many competitors, it served multiple supply lines, constantly switching among orders for local boutique brands, knock-off international brands, and generic to-be-branded-later production.<sup>9</sup> Each required different standards, materials, and kinds of labor. The factory's job was to match industrial coordination to the complex rhythms of supply chains. Rhythms further multiply when we move out of factories to watch foraging for an unpredictable wild product. The farther we stray into the peripheries of capitalist production, the more coordination between polyphonic assemblages and industrial processes becomes central to making a profit.

As the last examples suggest, abandoning progress rhythms to watch polyphonic assemblages is not a matter of virtuous desire. Progress felt great; there was always something better ahead. Progress gave us the "progressive" political causes with which I grew up. I hardly know how

to think about justice without progress. The problem is that progress stopped making sense. More and more of us looked up one day and realized that the emperor had no clothes. It is in this dilemma that new tools for noticing seem so important.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, life on earth seems at stake. Chapter 2 turns to dilemmas of collaborative survival.

**Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015).**



**Before time was invented**



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