

TWO

Issue 02:

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Inner Traces

TWO

Editorial

Reductive journal TWO presents the theme inner traces, which shapes a framework for five contributions from Christine Sun Kim, Heather Frasch, Joseph Clayton Mills, Manfred Werder and Patrick Farmer. inner traces refers to the internal counterpoint embedded throughout the text-sounds, as found in these contributions. The diverse approaches observe silent traces of text-sound inter-permeations. Text and sound co-arise in listening, reading, experiencing, perceiving, receiving etc. The use of language and audio material qualifies music as a particular environmental experience that challenges the inner listening.

Christine Sun Kim's work articulates her understanding of musical symbols in a drawing series that investigates the dynamics of loudness and quietness. Sun Kim's work represents the impossibility of absolute silence and embodies the recognition of sound perception. Sun Kim's approach is complemented by Manfred Werder's contribution 2014/3, a series of text scores which provide a 'field' for listening. His texts are 'found' objects that provoke thoughts or ideas, which are performed by various artists in non-musical and musical situations. Heather Frasch and Jesus Acosta's sound and image collaboration In-Between, examines the residual

energy of abandoned spaces, by documenting the transitional decay between structures and environmental forces. The project traces a connection between outside spaces and the inner resonances of the audience. The Process, a collaboration between Joseph Clayton Mills and Marvin Tate, weaves together a fragmented and improvisatorial audio diary, into a fixed form that still pulsates with life. The stories become retold, initially from the poet, reinterpreted by the composer, and finally residing in the memory of the listener. In Patrick Farmer's He was quite blank / he assured me, extracted from the reading, the poetic writing furthers notions of music, memory and place. His discerningly detailed story offers aural imaginations. The character, 'in an attempt to avoid silence', talks, writes and hears, and all memories are simultaneously informed as music in a reading response.

These works manifest awareness. How do we perceive text that listens to sound? How do we listen to texts that are not spoken? How is sound animated from text that intends silence? The questions continue and observe further creation.

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Christine Sun Kim

How To Measure ...

I was born deaf in both ears; 95 decibels in my right ear and 115 decibels in my left. Sound and silence have a mathematical side, which I've never been able to fully grasp - just like taxes. In an attempt to confront this aspect, I created a series of drawing pieces called *How to measure...*, which are based on a collection of lists of my own personal interpretations of ways to measure sound. Such lists include: how to measure pauses, loudness and quietness in sound. One such piece, entitled *How to Measure Pauses* is about how a pause would spatially travel from one note to another, depending on your sense of time. In another example, I was influenced by the similarities and subtle differences between the lists for loudness and quietness.

I employ musical symbols in my drawings as a way to effectively engage with diverse and broad audiences. I do not consider myself a musician but rather an artist who hijacks music formats to communicate ideas. The musical symbols that describe the state of sound/silence in the drawings are:

ppp = pianissimo; the number of p's is unlimited.

pp = pianissimo; the more p's the quieter the performance gets.

p = piano; a note that indicates a tone-down.

mp = mezzo piano; half piano, used as a calibration point.

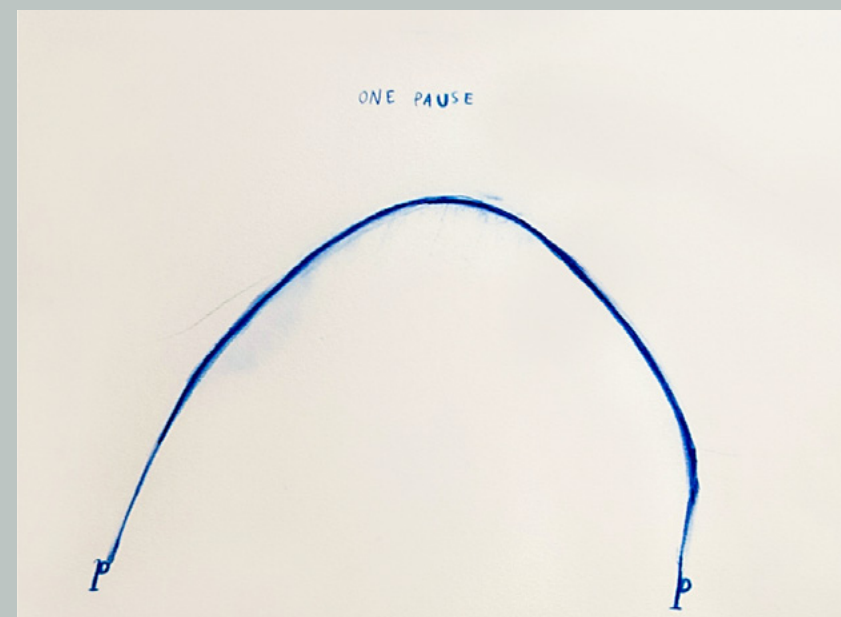
mf = mezzo forte; half forte, used as a calibration point.

f = forte; a note to indicate a tone-up.

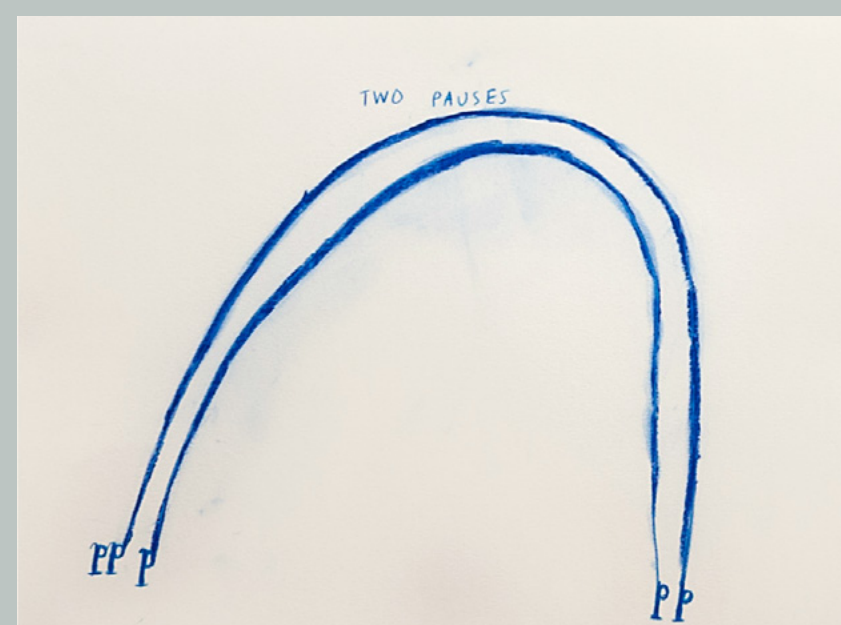
ff = fortissimo; exactly the opposite of pianissimo.

fff = fortissimo; the number of f's is unlimited.

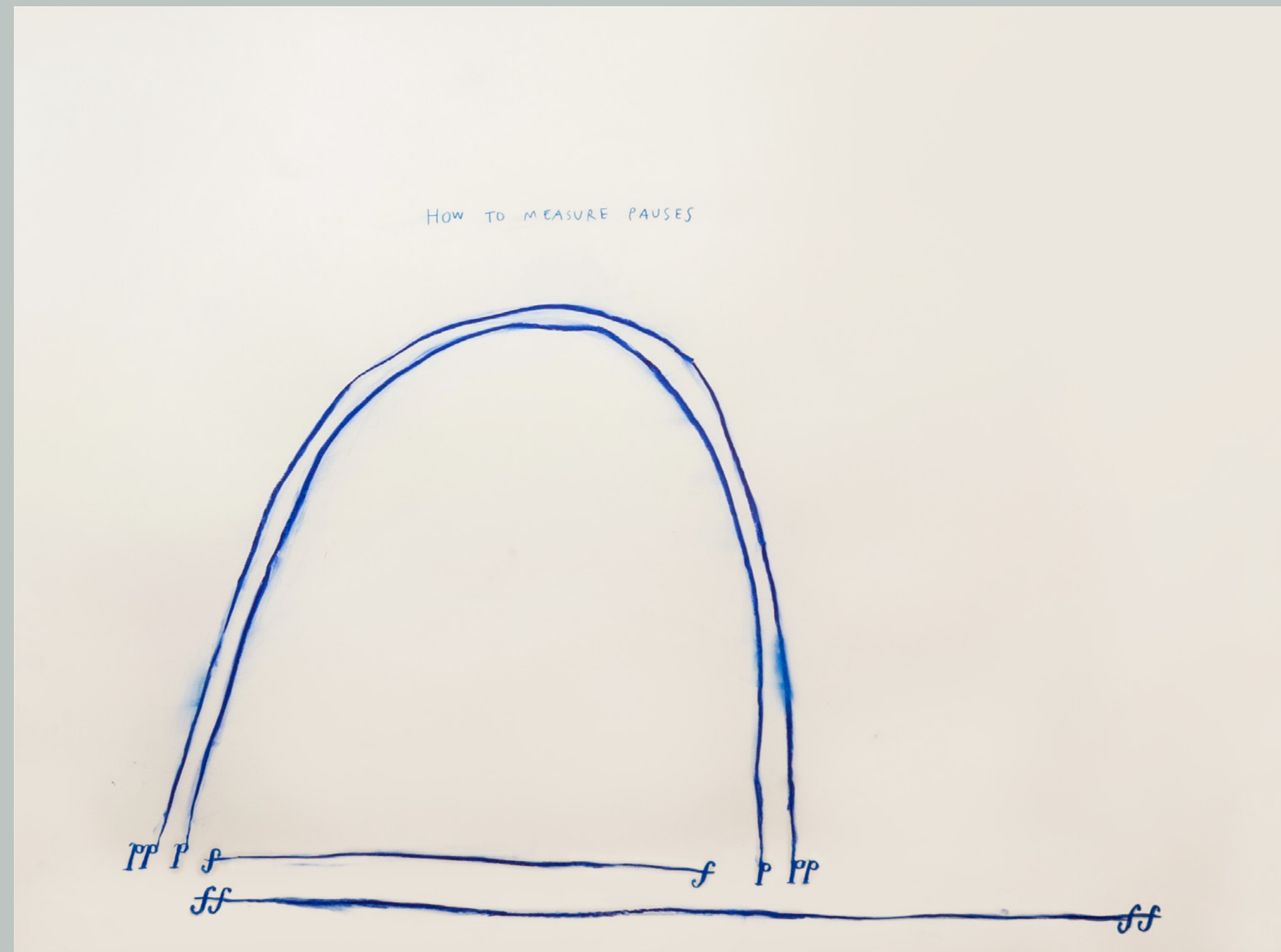
How to Measure Quietness is my current and closest definition of what people call "silence", which is a highly subjective, overloaded and murky term. People use sound to shape silence and vice versa. I inhabited this concept without questioning it whilst growing up. However, now as an artist, I'm in the progress of re-framing silence, which I often perceive as a kind of sound and full of noises. Hence, the quietness in my work replaces silence.



One Pause



Two Pauses



How To Measure Pauses

HOW TO MEASURE LOUDNESS



How to Measure Loudness

HOW TO MEASURE QUIETNESS

pppppppp	PANIA
pppppppp	SILENT TREATMENT
pppppppp	ANXIETY
pppppppp	HEART BURN
pppppp	GRAND PAUSE
pppp	MOMENT OF SILENCE
ppp	UNIMPORTANCE
pp	SHRUG
p	DEAF BREATH
mp	SLEEP

How to Measure Quieness

Heather Frasch & Jesus Acosta Rodriguez

In-between

Organic movement, the raw energy of the earth, growing constantly, seemingly chaotic to the human eye. *Structures* created to keep these forces at bay. Cold and immutable, they are clean and quiet receptacles of supreme efficiency. Then, forgotten – *abandoned* – but not destroyed. No longer kept alive by their inhabitants, they began to fade like shadows. These structures continue to vibrate in the emptiness. Their quiet resonance is heard in the stillness.

Peacefully moving. The powerful force of nature beginning to infiltrate the decay. Movement that goes unnoticed. Yet, its unhurried pulsations continue, slowly permeating the space, and growing stronger inch by inch, day by day and year by year. These two energies, one in decay and the other invading, mix and resonate together, creating something new, a dance between what is dying and what thrives in its place.

“In-Between” is a collaborative project by Jesus Acosta Rodriguez and Heather Frasch. They both, one through images and the other with sound, try to explore these “in- between” moments, these combined energies that resonates in different spaces and times. The final artistic project resonates in the personal *inner spaces* of those that watch and listen. It is not there, and no longer here, but somewhere “in-between.”



Joseph Clayton Mills & Marvin Tate

The Process

The Process is an excerpt from an ongoing collaboration between myself and Marvin Tate, who is a poet, singer, artist, and long-time figure on Chicago's cultural scene. Despite having many friends and acquaintances in common, Marvin and I didn't actually meet one another until the summer of 2013. I saw him perform at a local music venue, and the intimacy and immediacy of his performance that night – part storytelling, part poetry, and part song—made a strong impression on me.

A few days after that initial meeting, Marvin called me to discuss the possibility of collaborating. I had long been interested in working at the intersection of text and sound but had never directly collaborated with a poet; Marvin had often combined his poetry and spoken word performances with traditional song structure, but he was eager to explore something more experimental and challenging. We were both curious to see what we'd be able to come up with ("let's see what's behind door number three," as Marvin put it). The distance between our respective musical backgrounds seemed as if it would pose an obstacle to working together, but we quickly confirmed that our fundamental assumptions and approaches were very much in line with one another. Moreover, for each of us, a shared sense of



connection to Chicago, its neighborhoods, and its history—musical, social, and political—was another important area of overlap.

Soon after we began discussing the possibility of working together, Marvin handed me a cheap, hand-held digital recorder, saying "This is my mind; listen to it, see what you think." He told me that he had carried the recorder with him everywhere for the past several years, always recording and never erasing. When I listened to it, I discovered that it held hours and hours of material: fragmentary ideas for poems and songs, conversations with his wife, arguments between students in his classroom, birthday party sing-a-longs, band rehearsals, memories, and jokes. It was an encyclopedic document, but one

without any order or pattern other than the chronology of Marvin's life. It was a palimpsest in which moments recorded on impulse (and sometimes by accident) were juxtaposed with notes and sketches that would evolve, over time, from inspiration into finished poems. Some snippets of sound would last only a second or two, whereas other recordings would stretch on for ten or fifteen minutes. Sometimes the context was obvious, but it was just as often mysterious and impenetrable. Listening to this material was like trying to assemble an auditory jigsaw puzzle from which half of the pieces were missing.

This document – this dense, fractured audio text—would become the source of our future collaboration. My own initial role was merely to listen attentively; then, having listened to this mass of material as closely as possible, I tried to draw out the threads of images and ideas that ran through it. In editing and rearranging Marvin's words and voice, framing and contrasting his sounds with my own, I worked to give form to what was a largely inchoate body of material. Working



with Marvin's recordings, in turn, raised the possibility of engaging with a broader field of social and historical signification than I'd been able to address before, incorporating issues of race, class, and violence that are rarely explicitly touched on in experimental music, but which are an everyday reality in Chicago.

This archive, constantly revised, reconfigured, and supplemented, has formed the raw material for an ongoing series of performances in which Marvin and I have improvised with and within a series of texts: the lines of his poems, the story of his life, and the fragmentary recordings through which he negotiates the transformation of one into the other. In those performances, my goal is often simply to allow Marvin to listen to himself; to interrupt him with his own memories and confront him with the sound of his own words. His recordings become a text to be read and reread together in performance, just as certain points in his life become, through memory and language, the subject of constant revisiting and re-interrogation. In *The Process*, however, the intention is to distill those improvisatory moments into a fixed aesthetic form that nonetheless retains the texture of lived experience.

Our collaboration hinges in large part on Marvin's awareness of the transformative capacity of language. In his writing and performance, his biography is refracted through a series of characters and adopted voices in which the lines between history, memory, and imagination dissolve. He opens himself to a similar process when he entrusts his stories to me to retell. He understands how one can take possession of a story—his own or another's—and live through it, or

hide inside of it. One of the stories told in *The Process* is of how, on a schoolyard playground, Marvin made the Gwendolyn Brooks poem “We Real Cool” his own and, through that first experience with poetry, opened up the path that he is still on. He understands the power of turning one’s life into a text; it allows you or another to rearrange and refashion it until it makes some kind of sense. The past can be rewritten in the present, and ones’ story could always be retold in another voice. The aporias that emerge from such juxtapositions are the explicit subject of this piece.

“When you start remembering stuff, you don’t know whether it’s fabricated or not anymore.” To “fabricate” is to lie, but it also means to assemble something, to build a structure, to weave together from disparate strands. In this sense, *The Process* is a deliberate fabrication, but one being constantly taken apart and put back together again. Traversing the gap between text and sound, turning each into the other, is one way to assert that the world is not simply given. Instead, it is constituted by acts of interpretation and enunciation. Our memories, language, history, and judgments—*aesthetic and ethical*—are how we fabricate the world and our place within in. We make ourselves through what we choose to forget and what we remember, what we say and what we leave silent.

The Process

Joseph Clayton Mills (electronics, field recordings)

Marvin Tate (voice, field recordings)

Additional material provided by Jason Stein and Deanna Varagona.



Manfred Werder
2014/3

collision of transparencies, traversing
fall, we are not
much more than a membrane

recurrence of encounter, abundance,
redundancy
worlds are
submerging, and
emerging
worlds
lost
found

ideas

MW, Seoul, Oct 19, 2014

anticipation
August 17, 2014

punctum
August 20, 2014

zwetschge
August 30, 2014

Süßkartoffel
September 2, 2014

turbulentia
September 4, 2014

eucalipto
October 4, 2014

clivo
October 5, 2014

physics
October 6, 2014

caffe
October 7, 2014

Patrick Farmer

He was quite blank / he assured me^{*}

You have to see him from above.

Whenever he was a young boy he spent most of his life outside; dreaming of suits of armour amongst immense plantations of ears on giant woodcutters taking it out on the chessboard. His organs revolved secretly as inside planets avoiding company. Weightlessly rubbing and expelling his transparency, edges were removed from things.

Motionless, in the bed his ears roamed in invisible circles.

I forced myself to glance at the few photos he sent to me.

A small bed, small enough to plant in the dirt, a quiet metal frame pushed up against a damp west-facing wall separating his mother's room from his own, a toy box the size of a swamp the size of the letter I with a nail in its foot, red as pig eyes before the slaughter, slapped up in stark contrast to the dark white wall, flailing in dull-sight of the soft mediocrity of external logic.

Screwed on the back of a photo, in a hand I no longer recognise.

... by touching I can't remember this room, swear there wasn't much. Cut It Down. Lichen. I awake with a mineral taste in my mouth. So much held up by void, little bits of orange peel under the bed-edge, the kind of shape that let in everything but day-

^{*} A version of a talk originally delivered at a SARU organised symposium at Oxford Brookes, 2014.

light. I am alert until I invent the dark that rips me out, the more I think about leaving the harder it is to hear doing it. I am not the one making noise in this hole, diamond, mouth, eyelash, when I affirm I still question.

I billowed uncontrollably beneath the looming, you understand, window-saturate with a condensation frame of floral curtains stained in my sister's lung-smoke everything corresponds with the thin reeks of carpet – he wrote, in sullen and gorged hands.

This way I read him talking very fast.

As the chaotic imprint of the offended ear, he bruised glass with bees, mouths like stale morning room-less air. He was a reality to me read aloud. The letters were roaming intensities towards which I herded myself beyond the intellectual and into a nightmare, squeezing out versions of myself so I could grimace at their addictive personalities.

As with most children, bedtime was a chore, something to be changed. He would lie still under the covers, pretending to drown in one of Venice's many canals, bordered by smothering willow instead of the typical crenulated stone that he would never see, surrounded by soft transparent creatures that had evolved beyond the lump of breath. There was no avenue left to him night after night but the space between listening and imagination. A quiet voice placed in them.

He would lie still in that bed for hours, thought and noise crashing from yellow tables and three legged chairs, he would sink and begin to hear (spreading) his mind would rouse itself enough slightly to think to remember. Passing out somnolent point he would be-comely left alone, observing collapsed organ-sound in his insides around the room bending the architecture. As walls rejected him into non-place he would fold into accommodation of torrential numb-sound of relentless dropping ear-nothing.

Obsessing myself, he wrote, and I cannot remember listening to the sounds of the house, I am a fool, a maniac standing on my fool.

Gradually he stopped reflecting and I can only assume, swallowed his apex.

That head is the world outside, and every night he reached a boundary.

On his bed, that phony convalescent, stiffened, in an attempt to avoid silence.

Again and all he would write the same panting part of a letter that would arrive covered in his grains of box-sweat don't wish to douse this too heavily in scented vocabulary / dog roam and rumble in scent / closer to excrement by now than perfume / excrements on the sides of a face no // no see myself playing the room into words sticking in somewhere's deathless flicker beyond recall / memory without recollection / this is bodily stillness under its hunted-lewd perception jump fuck out of the mouth with a puddle like it was the opposite mind-wood / reach a position from which it can dictate listening self to become its own unrelenting demise cut into the crust / hoped for and impossible complete stillness seeks the other side of its anxiety and causes the sound of body to cave in on itself / every night contraptions of sleep orgy before the black dogs arrive / reeling from images-sound-frames / young self would project before slipping desire / many limbs hang over fast rare lips that are cherished / sought love and found passage of escape in which it prevented its other / summoned dogs to exist as neurological noise in the ear-hammock between mind and / held up in blown up mountain-contentions / a praying mantis licking the carcass of the former mate / crashing into images of myself like snowflakes / transparent signals occupy themselves, un-listening through un-recognisable stations / further down the lines selling impressions cheap to every type of hope-static.

Not every night ends in the total disappearance of the outside, I remember him writing; it was only when a seeming-event occurred, the pouring in of the rain-water would crush his smiling skull – puissant and lidless rising-bells of subjection –over-powering in his avalanche – pulling lame feet from lame orifices.

As he tried harder to sleep, pushing himself into a frothing vertigo of tumescence, holding his hard disquiet as if it were a sick aunt, the black dogs would arrive, their ululating spittle-shapes in the half-dark of disjointed neurological functions roaming along the sound of the murk.

His letters were full of unwilling strings; onomatopoeias pulled from an insomniac mouth he swore would remain closed. He would lay the sound to forget the thing itself. His skull was full of living things and closing his eyes only made it worse.

There couldn't have been a sound with which he was more intimate, yet he could never claim it. The quixotic mutts spread through his body like a thousand resurrected Cleopatra's. He sat in them like a cave of which he was the cave-climate. In his letters, unnameable geographies chewed into the glucose of root structures.

That life of blank audition was nightly hauled into the world of phantoms; his heart forgot itself for desperate love of the cochlear nucleus, as vague and magnificent as the great pyramids. His ear and heart an incipient madness.

For years the albatross of his letters has pinioned me to the ground, fragments have seared images of themselves as memory, reflections have formed centres; it's become impossible to see through the heat and establish what exists in the strata, a maddening, Gordian phenomenology, the idea of hundreds of refracted attitudes shot from the white air. All they can do is reduce me.

I tried to carve out a few decades from this sediment, but the stranger it all became. I lie in a state there too, unable to recall when I was felled to the feeling of being one-dimensional. I tried to exist everywhere, like a fat and hairy pig in compressions of soil exposed to warm stones and pristine bottle caps. Out of the haze I fell upon certain shapes, loops that created loops into deluding my eyeballs, expulsions of vectors to rest on the cold of infinite wool-cobwebs that denied as well as created this sick of an existence. In these still images of flattening I can just hear myself walking, a thing that was once as dear and important to me as anything I can recall or imagine. He always signed his letters with imprints of wings.

Into memory blood, cripples itself around my body, with force as to draw skin painfully inward. I touch my ears as a blunt mass of smaller concretions, piling up into the calcium fields, around the nucleus that was my heart. This kind of solidification, if one were to peer into its space, could appear as some kind of fantastical life, killing itself, revealing all manner of infinitesimal creatures in patterns - sand hoppers of Persian symmetry, a cormorant, white patch displayed, fishing next to a Chinaman in a purple robe, the garment as silent and depthless as the warts lying on the face of Francesca's Duke of Urbino, a metamorphosis revealing one's mind to itself.

His character led downward into a smell like a car of leopard's turning trees upside down.

All that remains of him is this hand in the noise of my chest.

The volume of my body refutes an instinctive quietism that is akin to a defensive mechanism in the face of calamity, this is now a self-portrait akin to a closed-exercise in pathography. It is, like my now-body, frozen in reception. Systems of collapse and generation manifest in-crowd listening's thought. It's flow, implicit in its function, permeates every word spoken and heard in this timeframe of transitory subsistence. When I think of the rattling of his box otolith, flow is a mark as relentless as mad sound, a image of a monolith that is the self-perceived impossible—
silence in which the body is buried.

The weight of our epistolary exchange understands me as an encounter, the moment that takes place from form and cosmology, personality from relation; working onto itself a continual sense of lopsided correspondence to rip in pieces as endless pebbles penetrating an osseous un-flowing river.

My organs lay near me on the wood, each one covered by a letter,
underside the moments of utmost happiness,
concrete covered in fur.

Bios

Christine Sun Kim

is a New York and Berlin-based artist. She uses the medium of sound through technology, performance, and drawing to investigate and rationalize her relationship with sound and spoken languages.

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Joseph Clayton Mills

Is a Chicago-based musician, artist, and writer whose work includes text-based paintings, assemblages, and sound installations. In addition, he curates Suppedaneum, a label focused on releasing scores and their realizations.

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Marvin Tate

is a performance poet, lyricist, author, and visual artist. Tate is also the founder and ringleader of the legendary funk band D-settlement, a Funkadelic-infused band that received a vast amount of critical acclaim in the late nineties to the early aughts.

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Manfred Werder

is a Composer, performer and curator. He focuses on possibilities of rendering the practices regarding composition and fields. His recent scores feature sentences found from poetry and philosophy or words found from whatever impacts. His performances, both indoors and outdoors, aim at letting appear the world's natural abundance. Earlier works include stück 1998, a 4000 page score whose nonrecurring and intermittent performative realization has been ongoing since December 1997.

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Patrick Farmer

is a performer and composer of text scores. Over the last three years he has published three books attempting to observe a premise of layering language. Farmer's speculative writing treats the signifying possibilities of textual strata as a notion of constant abstraction, allowing the possibility of unlimited realisations and the relentless continuity of reinterpretation. He is co-founder of the Compost and Height label and an editor of the Wolf Notes Journal.

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