

A Cloud Above A Show
Rebecca Collins for Frederikke Jul Vedelsby

We start, or *this* starts, or perhaps *this* started some time ago and this is the point we start paying *this* or, more accurately, *her* attention.

Attention she deserves.

Attention she is calling for when we aren't listening or looking.

Someone suggests a movement with VI parts and II sections.

Ok.

Let's do circles and tracings?

Sure!

In the park we make horizontal planes then clockwise circles with our hands allowing oscillations to pass through our bodies.

Our fingers start tracing, touching, excavating, digging.

We are searching for something we already knew but didn't know we knew.

You know?

It was something we felt. Something to feel out.

We decide to mark out a ritual.

We cup Earth with our hands, allowing dirt to gather under our fingernails and let tiny particles of soil enter our bodies through crack lines in the skin.

We drink from the bowl she shaped for us.

We sing.

This action (and more) leaves:

A Cloud Above A Show

This text documents parts of what happened

Because, did you know?

A cloud never dies.

A cloud morphs, changes state and reworks its distribution.

I. i.

This starts
 With a wave
 What kind of wave?
 Is ambiguous, just so you know

But
 When you press
 Your ear
 To this wave
 You hear

Another form of narrating
 of intimacy
 of touch
 of caring
 of being

Some things you thought you knew

get

s u s p e n d e d

And that is absolutely

ok

(It's pretty nice actually)

so

come?

come on

c'mon

come!

co-me?

Let's pretend we're done with the surface of things
With appearances.

Now all we have
Are reverberations

Depth
Tides
Galaxy Rotations
Planetary Orientations
Orbits
Constellations
Seasonal Fluctuations
Feelings

This means
When she says
She's not feeling well
She's feeling
The not well
In you
Her body
Your feeling

Now what to do?

She decides to speak through
Your body

Just for a bit

This seems ok actually
And like this a few things happen

A few things happen
That nobody knew they needed
And it's pretty nice like this (this is good, no?)
And there are others
And they find it pretty nice too
And you do all kinds of things like this
And it's fun (like really fun)
And you're into it

Some cry
 Some read
 Some laugh
 Some get drunk
 (((Some do all of this)))
 Some draw
 Some paint
 Some smoke
 Some hold each other close
 Some slip inside each other
 Some hold themselves
 Some say things they've been holding onto

It gets a bit choppy at this point

But

You keep on going like this

Just for a bit

 Some wear gold glitter
 Some use the photocopier
 Some write
 Some dance
 Some fuck
 Some get ice cream
 Some cook
 Some grow fresh herbs
 Some sing (finally!)
 Some sleep

She is not saying anything

She is choosing only to breathe

Only exhaling and inhaling the air of fresh pines

That's ok. (That's pretty good, no?)

And like this you go get tattoos on your actual hearts that say

'INTUITION IS EVERYTHING'

This hurts
But, you decide
This is the only way to remember

You want to talk about blood
Organs
Routines
And reptiles
Instead
You talk about
Owls
Puddles
Antennae
Dreams
And online Shamanic regression

She talks
She's ok!

She wants to talk about drums
Caves
And wombs
Instead she talks about
Funding applications
Mother's
And social movements

We both disappear for a bit.

I.ii.

She awakes to a sonic boom, a noise inside her head yet seemingly also outside and all around, not quite a thump, similar to a pillow hitting a head, a sound that is singular, a signature of an event. The sound accompanies her, repeats at inopportune moments to startle and surprise, a reminder of something unresolved. She listens to this bang as she walks through the city and as she sits in the town square at night. This sonic boom is becoming more subtle, or more familiar as it repeats and audibly returns only to her. The rhythm became familiar, like an old friend you feel ready to reconnect with or the company of a familiar stranger. A sonic friend of sorts. She hears drums, she holds onto the rhythm, a beat and finds a way to continue.

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You are listening for something. You decide listening is your method now, you distrust any other means for thinking through history, politics, social and economic relations. You hear yourself into histories. You buy an old tape recorder from a thrift store. You sleep with this by your bedside to record the sounds from your dreams and the impressions you wish to narrate upon waking. You are alive to loneliness and the speculative all at once. You say sound is the thing to yield images. Sound lets us into untold histories, marginalised accounts of those who risked, who loved, who fought, who held onto precious values and to all that once mattered.

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She is sensing her way through repeated auditions of this sonic boom, she is travelling up and down a mountainous country. She talks with sound designers, sound artists, field recordists and record collectors.

*

You are walking through the city where she spent most of her life. You are recording your own footsteps, owl hoots and dove coos. You meet with historians and academics. You boldly tell them you distrust their ways of working.

*

She is watching someone sleep trying to understand how they die, every night, in their dreams.

*

You are letting a song out of your throat, overhearing words no longer yours, recording them as they emerge. Someone says these are echoes of a time before and you believe them.

I. iii.

She tells you of a sacred cave and spring on the south west coast of a cold and damp land. She says this is a site for healing magic. She says there you can bathe in the uterine waters at the shift of the moon. She explains how, on the surface, there always lies a thin beautiful kind of substance, that varies like the plumage of a peacock when displayed in all its full glamour to the rays of the Sun. She urges you to wrap yourself in this substance, to use this as a shield to counter turbulent times.

She says it's funny how this same story is one she overheard in a cafe just the other day. Kind of uncanny, don't you think? What are the chances of someone knowing the exact same site?

She had read of the sacred cave with her fingers, grateful for a text raised to be detectable.

When you turn your attention to something, to someone, suddenly it's everywhere.

It's everywhere.

She touches your wrist lightly
She says something like

'I'm the host of life and death
I've created energies
That I've outlived by a lot'

She still doesn't talk about blood, or organs, or routines, or reptiles.

And, nobody sings.

II. iv.

You gather percussion instruments: a gong, a drum, a bell, a cymbal, castanets, tambourines, a xylophone, a metallophone, a rattle, a rasp, a stamping tube, sticks, resounding rocks, clashing anklets, triangles, marimbas, snare drums, woodblocks, an anvil, a berimbau, a set of bones, a chime bar, a clavichord, a rattle and a thunder sheet.

You tell her that percussion is commonly used to communicate with the other world, that non-instrumental noise, produced by striking or shaking, is widely available precisely for use in this way.

She nods like she already knew but she goes along with what you say anyway.

You say, in the case of not having any of the above you can clap or slap the body in this way and it will achieve the same outcome. This, you say, is used all over the world to accompany communication with the other world.

Something shakes

 Something strikes

 Something slaps

 Someone claps

Someone smokes

 Someone begins a sequence of gestures

 Someone dances

 Someone dons a mask

You say, the beat of the drum is more closely connected with the foundations of aurally generated emotion than any other instrument. Like this, with the music of the drum, we can cover the whole range of human feeling.

But, a question looms, how to make sense of these bangs, thumps, taps, rattles, and sonic booms?

II. v.

A puddle appears.

Things start to become unreal.

A puddle in a path.

Suddenly everything becomes unreal.

Before long we are swimming in uterine waters to the beat of a drum.

Like this we perform synchronised routines worthy of a medal.

We have summoned an experience.

She says, when I see your face and your mouth talking it reminds me of a child I once looked after. She says she no longer remembers where or when, but she clearly remembers the child, her mouth and her face as she spoke.

She says in these uterine waters there lurks a sense of horror, a passive blow from a sledge hammer, a mallet, an anvil poised.

Some time passes.

You think about the body as a device for processing the external world, a conversion machine, hoarding, transforming, discarding and stripping for parts.

The waters ripple and you receive a silent blow to the guts heaping an avalanche of meaning, of feeling, a passive intensity with no easy way out.

You hear someone explain that to change your energy you just need to wash your hands, have a cup of tea, or walk in nature.

You do all three.

III. vi

We are
 All eighteen of us
 Gathered in a circle
 Sitting on chairs

Some take off their shoes
 Some have cushions for their feet
 Some take off their glasses
 Someone saves a seat for someone else,
 Someone mutters about a merging incident that took place last week

We begin
 She leads
 We make a tacit agreement not to move or cough
 We start with the breathing
 Hands open, relaxed, no clenching
 She leads us into the light
 A bright white light
 Like a cloud above a show
 The light is right now above our heads
 We bathe in this light
 We bathe our heads, hands, whole bodies
 Colours dip into view, green for the heart, yellow for the solar plexus, purple, red, later black
 We connect our energy pushing it out to the left and the right
 We visualise this white light that we share between us
 We slap our torsos
 She beats the drum
 We call on the others (no longer alive) to bathe with us in this light too
 We are all bathing in this beautiful light
 We are all getting the healing we need
 We are all the mind, body, spirit we need
 She takes us to the sand dunes
 She walks us onto the beach
 Here we wait
 We receive messages, objects, names, eyes, faces
 We hold a tender space inside
 We hold on for dear life
 Together
 We levitate on a feeling (it's nice)
 We stay like this
 For a long while.

And it's good, no?
 Like a cloud above a show.

Notes

As I wrote the text I watched these films:

Blindspot (1981) Claudia von Alemann, Germany, Alemann Filmproduktion
Memoria (2021) Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Columbia, coproduction with Kick the Machine, Burning Blue, Piano Productions, Illuminations Films and Anne Sanders Films

I read this book:

Ackerman, Chantal (2021) *Una Familia en Bruselas* (Tránsito: Madrid)

And I spent an afternoon trying to contact the dead at the psychic open circle at the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Centre in Edinburgh.

My writing may include influences or references to the above though these are not directly cited.

Rebecca Collins is an award-winning artist researcher working at the intersection between contemporary performance and sound. Her main research interests are in listening, performance, sound studies, and creative/critical writing. Rebecca's practice focuses on the dynamics of the sonic operating within specific environments, and technologies, to explore methodologies of writing, and making contemporary performance. Since 2017 she is lecturer in Contemporary Art Theory at the University of Edinburgh. Rebecca met Frederikke at a workshop led by Roni Horn and Isabel de Naverán at the Fundación Botín, Santander 2023.
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