

**EXPERIMENTS
IN
ALTERNATE
REALITY**

people together indoors
Robert Blatt, 2016

INTRODUCTION

People gather together indoors where no audience is present, except for, perhaps, those participating.

Sixty provided index cards, duplicated as necessary, are used to create multiple stacks of index cards, as many as there are people, with each stack containing all or a subset of the sixty provided index cards. In preparation, each stack is shuffled.

Each person reads the index card at the top of their stack – quietly, under their breath, out loud, to themselves. After having read the index card, a pause of inactivity follows for listening, contemplation or otherwise. The next index card is then read, and another pause follows. This process continues for each subsequent index card, everyone at their own pace.

SCORE

it moved in a surprisingly predictable fashion,
almost bored, without haste or emotion,
imparting a strange form of passage, inconsistent
and atypical.

we thought we would find hope in being together, but despair may prove itself more accurate.

the moaning continues, softly, from one to
another. inside and outside. densities shifting.

some of us motionless and without speech.
paranoia gripping us to the edge of paralysis.

barely present, one sound slowly recedes into
silence.

there is a certain palpable fear of death.

while we are speaking, convinced by our mutually understood language, a fleeting thought emerges as to how comforting lies can be.

each word spoken, one after another, brings this sentence and myself closer to their inevitable completion.

all of a sudden and without warning, in asynchronous polyphony, rising and falling, voices sound in an uncontrolled cascade of utterances resembling language only by association, guided by fear.

an environment shifting, not slowly, but quickly
and with every possible degree of predictability
into one long sound of cliché homogeneity
initiated without fear, inhibition and empathy.

but outside, silence, in its quiet but densely fragmented state, is punctuated by a loud and intermittent sound reoccurring for an indefinite length.

as we rest together, alone, absorbed in our own thoughts, we each, in fear and without hesitation, hope for nothing to change this suddenly achieved and wholly unsustainable stasis, until it is over.

two pulses, intertwined but independent, slow and almost static, occasionally accelerating and decelerating, starting and ending together.

here, unmoved and trapped, i now know that
doing something will never happen.

outside we saw clouds of gas encircling doors
leading to nowhere but mounds of waste piled
up in haphazard intricate constructions.

the muffled sound of an engine and the inaudible movement of a few trees in the distance. and those windows out front, enough for reflection, witnessing everything.

each voice, unique and trembling, grasping for
breath. each word spoken softer until none
remain.

walking slowly or just standing still. waiting.
equally among the crowds or when alone.
predictable and expected.

found in patches of yellow rock and opaque
water dripping from piles of reinforced concrete.
laying motionless on the ground and covered in
it.

here, together, we find moments of mutually understood isolation.

words softly spoken, perceived as noise. our
apathy growing with each accumulation of
sound.

through streets, sidewalks and alleyways,
sometimes alone, with a sustained low noise.

each in our own thoughts. self-absorbed. a sense of apprehension. uncertain as to who is speaking and where the thoughts are coming from. in this moment our schizophrenic selves were never more clearly present.

an uncountable assemblage of short, closely spaced explosions.

a high tone of inconsistent pitch, perhaps from
the ventilation or the passing charge of
electricity. a low and steady drone from vehicles
in the distance. intermittent frequencies
resembling speech. all now so suddenly unlikely.

with the present unceasingly addressing our
memories of the past, we hear other words, and
each of us, out loud, continues to quietly forget.

running here, mostly out of breath from shock and anxiety, what a fucking pity it is when we say that at least we're not the only ones to feel and hear this way.

in the distance and with a surprising level of polyphony, distinct groups of pitches sound, rising and lowering in frequency, from vehicles arriving at peripheral sites of distress.

there's a mindless mechanization present, one more tragic than first imagined.

a composite of noise, rhythm and pitch, each
inseparable, fluctuating in volume, at the door.

our minds give away our deepest sense of
longing.

indecipherable murmurings, but for certain words and phrases, recognized now distinctly as my own. for have i become the infinitely recursive mental bifurcation of psycho-visual distortion and schizophrenic auditory hallucination? no, with dread, this is something entirely other, for i have heard that question before.

now, having lost all sense of time, gazing into its
immediate infinity.

in those moments where we are still and without speech, breathing as quietly and motionlessly as possible, one might think that we were intentionally pretending to be dead.

it's inconsequential. the sounds outside continue.

again, interrupted by voices, rambling in
inconsistent patterns of repetition, paying close
attention to their tone, soft but never inviting,
haunting when i stop speaking.

intertwined, endlessly approaching and receding
in the present.

pausing after finishing this thought, the mind wanders in absence, fear and distraction.

numerous tones over a great distance, many in groups of various sizes, some very close to one another, others isolated, each at any pitch, lasting any length, starting and stopping at any point.

highways emerging from restaurants and bars
now so unexpectedly quiet.

perhaps to drown out the sounds outside or to fill our minds with thoughts that we for some unknown reason finally knew now were ours.

with time suddenly moving faster, i feel my
descent at the cresting horizon.

together, amongst the smell of everyone nearby,
the light pierces with an indifferent and
uncomfortable brightness. but thank god, for in
this condition, these walls are around us.

in here, momentarily void of remorse, it begins
to gain focus.

absorbed in spontaneous, frightening
connections until reaching here, then waiting
and listening.

those moments without repetition, free of
ramble, an instantaneous catalyst of change,
they're fantasy.

a distant and troubling noise occurs outside. but
inside, lost in thought, and expressed only in
words, each of us imagines wind setting flora
into one long undulating motion.

there's an irony in being together, each of us
isolated in our own thoughts. trauma has a way
of revealing these truths.

and we know now that at any moment each word spoken is ready to be overtaken by the noise.

endlessly talking to ourselves, repetition among
repetition, obsessively returning to a processes
that we fear and wish we could not comprehend.

and outside a sudden loud attack at first masked by numerous transients revealing a complex of overtones from a fundamental of inaudible low frequency, then bands of filtered noise, drifting high in pitch and lasting for prolonged periods of time, ebbing and flowing with subtle spectral variations, suddenly revealing everything in nothingness.

it approaches with every new thought.

i am obsessively returning again to the simple
repeated failure to comprehend this situated
innocuity, forcing myself to subtly shift in place
and terrorize my mind.

hiding here, isolated, fear has trapped us,
rational or not, into an obsessive circle.

with each breath, a new incomprehensible grouping of sounds, quieter, but with increasingly more effort, until it is impossible to proceed.

found not far from here along ever expanding rows of houses stretching for unforeseeable distances.

fleeting cries, unknown and hidden amongst the
silence, continue, speaking without tongues.

lost and immobile together. each alone. close.

it is as though once translated, the text, void of
gesture, is but only pain.

i have lost all hope in this endless static
temporality.