

CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

February 26, 2020 — Artists Space
11 Cortlandt Alley, New York, NY
<http://www.experimentallecures.org>

To The Ringdown by Aria Dean

[A spotlight turns on. Its light is focused on a small area in the center of the room.]

[A bass-heavy drone begins to play from speakers around the room: The sound of a Roland TR-808 stretched “to infinity.”]

[A tall, young, Black man wearing tuxedo pants and a loosely-buttoned white shirt under a tuxedo jacket carries a microphone and its stand to the area lit by the spotlight, sets down a cup of water on the floor, and begins to read from stapled printer paper.]

I

This is a draft for an epic poem, a monologue, a truncated one man show. This is a draft for a song, for a structure, for a versioning, for a simulation. Bricks or frame first.

We open on a man standing at the center of the room. The audience has expectations, some of which are defined by the architectural context, some defined by the time of day (here, it should be roughly half past six). Otherwise, also here defined by the date: Feb 2, 2020, Superbowl Sunday. The audience, aware of this, might consider themselves quite serious in their intellectualism, their love for art. Or they are, perhaps, good friends of ours.

The man stands at the center of the room in a cheap tuxedo, holding his notes. He speaks:

This is a draft for two becoming one, bound by a third. A draft for a blur, a draft for the ringdown. A draft for becoming—the overused, sexy framework for something other than being, but so what. A draft to be rung, loudly, repeatedly, until it forms the ground itself, until it stretches its roots down to the earth’s core and encases itself and everything and everyone else.

We cut to—because we are already here, mis en scened, mis en seen—a wide open field, at the far end of which, the little wooden shack trembles in the still brown air. At the roof's peak, the golem ebbs and flows. The man, the king, wades his way toward it.

Finally, he reaches the shack. He lingers a few feet away from it. The golem takes no notice.

He enters the shack, only to find himself alone.

Hello? Brah Dead?

Brah Dead, a man who never made himself known but whose presence snaked around and choked out everything else.

On the other hand, The King had drowned here with his own dreams and anxieties. But now everywhere he looked: this man who appeared to be no one and nowhere himself. He was in the leaves, the dust, the film of pollen that had settled on the windshield of the abandoned car in the driveway.

And so, having no choice but to breathe him in at every turn, he had to seek him out.

A draft for the sort of entanglement that can either be known as death or as love.

For a while the man looks for this other, searching the little house as sticky language folds itself over. Like a little box, like Russian dolls, like some automated system clanking its way toward heaven. Gears soaked in gasoline, an underside coated in debris.

In this room, a hollow mold of this world, everything slightly off-kilter, where the body billows and stretches to an unwieldy state. He finds himself pressed against the cool glass.

Brah Dead?

A brah, a brother, someone's kin supposedly. Last of kin, a loss. Lossy lossless, both and. Planes we'd need to peel apart in order to cease to see.

The rotted ground under him flashes in the vague sunlight, one long, lurching tectonic roll of the earth's tongue.

The thing here is that this draft can only ever be a draft for such a thing as this. The process churned over on itself again and again and again. It can only be this monologue, crushed into itself, crushed again and again for itself.

Looking at itself from above, from the side, from below, from a first person point of view, all at once—never at the same time.

A dialogue that is only ever a shared soliloquy. He says, oh it's a soliloquy. This is what you brought me here for? For this articulation that ends in non-directional zero sum.

II

The man remains at the center of the room. He grips the microphone. He has turned to the next page.

The audience may wonder why this man, why not her, why this light, so tight and white on his face and shoulders. Or the audience may wonder why not tighter and whiter, why so spare. We came here for an experiment.

This draft is an incident, as many things are. A thing that happens to coincide, and ideally to incite. To incite really only

itself, as a draft is asked to do.

The man tells us that the king has found himself in a metaphysical knot. In a way, he is both bound by this knot and is himself the rope. This is also itself a metaphysical knot, isn't it? He is himself and this other, so so so separate, but upon entering the house, entirely not so. On an infinite delay, in an infinite regress. Looking for someone and only finding yourself. Essentially, the man is cancelled.

With this void left in his place, there is only ringing laughter. The ghostly science of mirth. Death is only for common people. This chaos is especially ours.

The man is looped as is the King, as is Brah Dead. The man, having done his work, may step away from the loop, while the other two churn and churn and churn.

It is a fact, nevertheless, that he is no longer on Earth. Imagine the perplexity of a man outside time and space, who has lost his watch, and his measuring rod, and his tuning fork. This state which constitutes death.

We cut to—exterior: the wooden shack. The golem continues to ebb and flow. Each pulse a threat to destroy the world. The sun is high above it, but its matte black and depthless surface punts its rays back into the atmosphere. A surface that goes all the way down, a surface-core. To be aesthetic is to be surface-core. An aesthetic object to end itself and those it protects, to quash its enemies with its shadow.

III

A draft for a dance, for an organism, for a gestation. This is how you become one. Live in concert, live from the studio, live from the ocean floor where your ancient intention meets unstoppable futures and derivatives and they tie each other up with the greatest romance.

(look into my eyes)

The last thing I want is a mess, so we go slowly and quietly, sand rippling over our backs as we trawl the depths for an inlet, a hole that takes us down deeper into an already enveloping abyss.

This is a draft for non-space, but for permanence. A draft for a mirror, to be sung at the top of your lungs. A blueprint, extruded, a map in glowing white ink.

A draft for life, flatlined, for beautiful quiet, where noise once pierced, unrelenting storm of affect and vibey vibes, marching forward by the millions. Silenced.

Did I summon thee from the depths to promote me? A twisted tale, a torqued maneuver. Did I summon thee? From the depths? To promote ME? MOI? Moicito? Little old me?

A demon, an alien, a great whopping death. Perhaps men make them in their image not for the ease brought by representation, a soothing of a mind too feeble to think beyond the symbolic, but perhaps they are created in his image to make man feel powerful. These things that could surround and choke off must be brought down to scale.

Upon this meeting, scales are tipped and metrics tossed out.

Demons tremble in the presence of God, anyway.

A draft for a ceremony, a sacred game with no rules. The flux of exchange is not endangered by structure rather it masks it, renders it invisible to itself, and as we know appearances are everything. If the beams are obscured, then they might as

well have disappeared.

Here we are ourselves a mist, a fog, a haze.

The refuse of this endless exchange, a cosmic slosh. A dump reaching toward the sky. The world never asked for it; it finds its purpose on another plane, doomed to its own shapelessness on this one.

Dreams who dream of swallowing up their dreamer.

Nothing shimmers at the surface of it all.

Twisted little alien spirit no longer rattling its cage.

How do you write someone realizing that they are talking to themselves, that they are one, not two. But they were always one, physically separate, but ontologically indistinct. In the same place: nowhere. Did we make this thing together? And will it save us? Do we need saving?

I'd like to lose myself in here, here that extends infinitely into this bright darkness.

I arrived here on an edgeless night, in the context only of my own duress. Oceanic weight pressing on my, skull, my chest, my heart.

IV

Did we find relief? At least we found Us.

Did I love her? Did you? Her skin spoke too loudly of life. Not that kind of life which vibrates uncontrollably. That kind of life, which reflects on its own miniature nature, its own pathetic scale. She was so beautiful, still. It was ok. It was ok. It was ok.

This is a draft for the ringdown more than anything, but being that it has yet to occur, being that we still stand here surrounded by mirrors on a ground rotted through to its own base, most base and abject entity riddled with holes, we have to end here. The ringdown, when two black holes collide, forming an entity, non-entity, forming a vacuum.

That's the whole thing, the wet apple, the juiciest fruit, the whole shebang. It's the Garden of Eden and a plague.

By virtue of being false

Am I—

Are we—

Real?

And what would this mean?

I don't know where we are. We're in a corner. We're nowhere. Did we make him to save them? Did I come home tonight? Will you? I've never been co-terminous before. What's it like?

It was a territory. It had its autonomy.

You've been here before.
I've been here before.

You've been you before.

I've been you before? I've never been anyone as far as I know.

That's a lie. I have always been you. You, me.

Keep the verse goth and the chorus major key.

[He sets the paper from which he is reading down on the ground, grabs the microphone and stand, and brings them out of the spotlight.]

[The light is extinguished.]

[Applause.]