

KNOWN AND UNKNOWN
OF NEW TRENDS IN
CLEANING THE LANDSCAPE

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split

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One. You're on a boat. It takes time. More than you thought. It is already a bit boring. The very same base tone, constant speed, and the amplitude shrinks. It may seem you have gone out of rhythm, but don't worry – it's not that. Things just come smoothly. And then go. You might lose your sense of time. But – you have time. You might feel uprooted; have occasional diarrhea, and pneumatic turbulences. You might even burst into unexpected cries, get anxious, and lose your sense of directionality. Yet – against all odds, it is pleasurable. And you know it.

Two. It's a boat to Greece. I'm sorry – I didn't choose it. Neither did you. You want it or not, this is a trip against time. It's not a matter of decision. Wherever you are sailing from, you're in reverse. Of course, you will be tempted to reject it. You will meet people who already rejected it. They will tell you: 'you're in time degree zero'. Or: 'it is timeless'. The others will speak of slowing down, and some will even say that time does not exist. In any case: stay calm. You will take all the mind detours possible to get along it – that's for sure. But this is not a reason to panic.

Three. You come too late. Henry Miller and Max Frisch already made it and left. You might want to scroll through Plato, though. Don't be bothered by what the others think. It's still a pretty good read. At a delayed enough moment, you will get to his rectangles and cubes. And you'll realize there's no Ancient Greece. Not a big surprise, though. You will see well-dressed tourists and elegant white walls. If you are lucky, you might even grab a glass of wine. But don't get estranged too quickly – it only smells bad. And anyway, we don't stop here. We're going to an island.

It is a beautiful island. All cows are dead. There are palm trees of yellow leaves, downcasting to the ground. There is beige grass scouring over the valley. There are useless buildings of unknown shapes and resonant hollows. And there is rubbish. Colorful, faded, organized and undetermined. There is a threat you will only see heads, mostly skulls to be precise. And a bunch of microphones. Odd, I know. Heads and Greece don't come very well with mics. That's what you call a gentle challenge of waste. Don't ask me why. Forget decorum, and take it.

You may look around, but it won't help you. Everything there is to see – it is there, at first glance. And a fly. You will never see her, but the bloody bitch will go through everything. She will sit on every piece of shit, and then try to take it to your ear. Certainly, you will be tempted to kill her. What would you possibly do with a fly? People kill them. It's efficient. Legal. Yet not easy. So let me tell you this right away: with her, it's hopeless. You will only lose your time and energy. Do something else. Consider cleaning the landscape.

You might be willing to talk. Simple, compulsive habit. And the mics are set. You might even get the feeling there's a need to say something. A request maybe? Addressed to you? If so, go on. You will have to take on your own mistakes. But don't say I didn't warn you. Your voice will not sound anyway. You will speak and hear nothing of yourself. An electricity blackout? No one will tell you. Are they out of order? Could be. Are you already preparing yourself? Good.

You wanna know what's wrong? You wanna know why is that so? Well, why not? Strange to think there's an infinite space endlessly consuming your bullshit. 'On Air' is full. It just won't adopt any more of what you say. Ahhhhh, the fly! Again. How come she's here? Strange. Ok, you will try everything to test the mics? Most welcome. You may shout or start speaking Greek; you may please or attack, but I'm telling you: this is physics. It originated from here. You won't beat it. You will lose your time – again. Very unwise.

Better: try to adapt. It is easy to imagine. The radio. Like the cows, a dead one. Finished, but not yet stopped. Stuck. Good thing about it is that you don't need to recall anything. Just listen; it's all there. William S. Burroughs. He's having a chat with François Rabelais. They seem to enjoy themselves. They talk about water and electricity, and also the place they both ended in. The fly is here, sure. They're all acquaintances now. But you – you may not join them. You have to do your job. You're not here for a chat.

Surely, some time ago there must have been a radio, as we knew it. People used to listen to other people. Real time! From time-to-time – if fast enough – you could even win something. A trip to Europe. A car. I don't know. But things come to an end. No more prizes and not even a chance to speak. Well, this is more serious than you initially thought. Air is full. Radio waves are all used. You can't call anyone. No SMS. SOS is unavailable. Oh, no, sorry – stupid. It is perfectly available. It's just that no one's gonna hear you. You may listen though.

The fly is back. Or is it the cow's skull? Or is it already you? That happens. It's normal. Scientists proved it. First, some sounds come from nowhere. Second, some sounds may stay with you forever. Listening may go beyond tenses. Do you remember your boyfriend's final scream in your ear? Did you ever get rid of it? Nasty goodbye wave, forever. But didn't they tell you listening is the most dangerous of all? So here you are – it's time to swallow it. The frog, the bird, the train – whatever it is you have in your ear, there's a word for it. Tinnitus. It comes from nowhere. No reason and no excuse.

But is there a reason for a fly? Surely, you're right: you start thinking of a fly and you end up with the radio. Both dead, both traceless, both everywhere. You haven't seen her, have you? And still believe she's alive? Anybody ever ask you whether you wanna listen to the radio? Normally, these things should go under a referendum. Do we want the air to be filled with radio waves? Yes. No. Shout. I don't know. Or – no third option. Then would have been great to also ask whether we agree for a tinnitus. Do we want ears? But here we are – we missed this chance. We will come too late to set-up a democracy, at least there – not on a Greek island.

Shall we have a break and prepare for the trees? Yes, let's take a breath. If we already reached the destination, you may only know by your ears. Once you get there, you will need to decide whether you stay or not. Then, what to do with the waste? Me – I don't know. Cut the trees? Pluck the yellow leaves? Leave them as they are? I cannot help you. Decision is fully yours. You wanna get it cleaned – get it cleaned. You wanna have a green paradise – go for it. You wanna send the rubbish to Mars – it's possible.

Cow's ears are full of flies. Flies fill the air. Air is full of radio. Radio is full of voices. All these voices – they stem from nowhere. Donald Rumsfeld comes along. Anyone invited him? Anyone saw him? Yes, these are good questions. So that you know: this is not a fly and this is not air. This is radio. Radio is sound. There's a word for it. Acousmatics. It originated in Greece. Pythagoreans knew it. People of French Radio knew it. 'There are known knowns'. This is not Donald Rumsfeld. Isn't he dead, by the way?

Now, if you decide to stay, you will be given a special privilege. You will be entitled to erase one single sound. Whatever it is. A frequency, a word, a person – anything. You don't like this one – get the fuck out of here. Beautiful, and quick. Let's make some space. Let's breathe. Maybe we'll be able to sound again. We'll see. Palliative care – this is what you call a real ecology of sound. The pollution is outrageous. Did you hear about the Chinese?

They do the weather now. They cannot stand the smog. It's a matter of hygiene. The island seems dirty? Clean! Ready? Go.

Well, the funny thing about the island is this sound. The radio, if you like. Whoever designed this landscape, must have been a pretty ironic bastard. It's full of death. But even fuller of sound. You might think sounds die tracelessly. You might think they're the cleanest of all. They're not sticky. They don't get paste on your cheek. You say a word and it's gone. They're not like plastic. You don't need to burn it. And there's no smell. If you think so, you are wrong. Grand.

Thank God – a bit dizzy sound you hear now. It's coming from the late Guglielmo Marconi. People say he's sick, tired, becoming detached, and talking bullshit. He says sounds don't die. Hah! And then what? Well, sure they don't die! Just have a listen around. They get frozen. Or recorded. It's Rabelais again: 'the words and cries of men and women [...] froze in the air'. Voilà. They're a bit distorted in this ice, no? People hunt for the words in the lows, the mids, and the highs. Water stands for the lows. Fly stands for the highs. And humans? Lows go for fear, highs for irritating. Perfect combination.

Yes, but Rabelais was just a writer. Marconi was the man. He started the radio. And now the time will come to shut it down. He was right from the beginning. Sounds don't die they just fill the air. And now the air gets stuck. It stinks a bit, that's a fact. But what's the big deal? The island is full of dead bodies, dead buildings, and dead trees. Electrical graveyard it is. And a noisy one. The lows stink of burned guts. The highs – of disintegrated brain. That's how it is. Burroughs is more of a duodenum.

Hey, this is not such a big mystery, this sound. Why is everybody getting so puffy about it? Why would you be afraid of a low frequency? Maybe a word comes in it but really – it's only your body shaking. You might get a bit unbalanced, sure, but in the end you like it, no? To my mind, there are more disgusting things than walking with dead a Burroughs dressed in lows. There are sandy beaches, for example. And even there, when you feel the entire world is in tune, you know there's a bit of white noise, don't you? The sea. You can't get rid of it easily. But it's not impossible. Just decide.

Now for the cleaning and rubbish. People will tell you that you came to an island because something is coming to an end. And that there is an overall feeling about it. And that it is scary. As for me – I think it's only a death letter. How do you read it? How do you treat the dead bodies? What

do you do with the rubbish? And do you count yellow leaves for death? You don't know? Well, you can be always contemplating your fear. It is one of the pleasures of life. You may also think of sounds. They're easier. They already died, that's a fact. How do you treat them? Remember – you can only erase one sound.

You might get this spooky feeling on the island. Of course you will. You will take a walk with an old man and you won't even be able to say anything. What you might do is make him mute. Any way you go: death. Yours or his. You may fall on one of these medium guys. There's a lot of them. They all look a bit alike. Dead eyes. Extensive fingers. They usually come to help. They are the translators of the dead. Marconi's descendants. Or Burroughs'. I advise you to stick to Jack Sutton. It's a good tip. He's a decent guy. Very good in hearing. Maybe you can learn from him.

But anyway, death is not such an easy trick. It is not STOP button. At least in sound. But who cares about humans anyway. There's always an echo. We are an echo. We're not that human. People should get a Noble Prize for proving this. Maybe if Jack Sutton would be able to speak, he would tell you that down beneath all the noise you hear now, there is the wave that is an echo of a Big Bang. Ahhhhhh, the fucking fly! At this point you will be desperate to kill that cunt. But it's gonna be like this. Get used to it.

Dead buildings, dead trees, and dead rubbish. Get rid of it. Cut the yellow leaves. Turn rubbish into food. Make the old guy mute. And don't trust me. You think it's a trick with this Big Bang echo? This is what we are. Well, it's a scientific fact now. 'There are known unknowns'. They announced it in the radio. It's pretty low, if it comes to hearing. You need some pretty good ears for this. But Jack Sutton would tell you. Lucky you didn't cut out that frequency yet. But who knows, maybe they would bring the new one. Shiny.

It is perfectly normal to get a touch of nostalgia here. It's Greece. You will think of time and roots. It's not your indulgence. It's a matter of organizing the landscape. The cows are dead. The fly is dead. The radio is dead. It can be easy. You put people into graves, cut the dead leaves, throw them to rubbish, burn the rubbish down, and that's it. The problem is the sound. The electricity. The air. The radio. They're dead and still on. The last of the dead are not cremated yet. Now is the time. Decide.

In electricity everything is reversed. You plug in and instantly everything starts to run in both directions. No wonder people get schizophrenic. You

might excise the eyes of a cow, and put the sounding ears in it. You might give people mics, and put speakers in them. If so, there will be no metaphor. It will be structural. It will be architectural. If only dead, even the fly seems to have roots and coming from somewhere. But where is she coming from – you may wonder. Electricity effect. It sets the trajectory, but it really stands for repatriation. The return. Greece.

It is still ahead of us, but there is a poignant feeling we have already been there, no? You will be hearing things that already happened. Electricity will make you think of the past. The fly will show you what you had done. That's why people like to kill flies. That's why it's legal. You ever realized what happens with dead flies? Ha, they simply disappear, no? Very hygienic. But the sound of it... Electricity effect, once more. You will always come too late. You will always feel you missed something. And it will be there. And you will still have to take on your responsibilities. It's good you're preparing a bit now.

But for now, since we are all where we are, we will need to know what to do with the dead. How do you do the cleaning? There are two ways. A quick one and a long one. For a quick one you need a bit of water, some powder, and a make-up aid. But it only works if you have a full dress for the dead man and a stone grave for a coffin. Otherwise, it'll stink. In the end it's a matter of landscape. Is it closed? Or is it open? No third option. The Capuchins knew it. The Egyptians knew it. And the Americans know it even better. Green grass. Little stones. Clean is invisible or clean is clean?

Four. There comes the Judge. He stands for the long way. He's at the same time numb, mute, and dead. The most beautiful sonic appearance of all. Sentencing persona reversed into silence. How was the judge washed? Well, you can always read the panel. Adhesive tape, rags, wire. But I tell you: this is only the surface. They started with drying him for eight months. That's to make the stink go away. Then comes the time for vinegar: arsenic and lime. This is for the skin. Finally: ventilating. Call for integration. And sound. For now, he doesn't say anything. You can't erase him. Sorry.

After the end of the radio, you may need to stick to the old ways of mummifying the dead. Electricity is your tool. You pull out the substantial words. The sentences. The ones they liked to present in full confidence. Then you search for the others. The ones they whispered to their lovers. And the random ones. You need them. They are like tiny roadhouse rubbish. They

bring life. They're undetermined. They're open. In the end – you collect them; do a bit of filtering, handful of sweat, and some saliva. And you throw them in the air. FM or AM.

Any way to avoid becoming completely depressed? There's death everywhere, yes, you are dealing with the end of the radio, and the air is a bit too dense. It will be a bit dirtier with rubbish maybe. Perhaps, a possibility of the plague. Things will get more violent, sure, but why would you expect to live a safe life? The cows never had that. The flies neither. Maybe that's why they still sound pretty well. If anything happened here really, the future might just as well get a bit better. Scary? Be prepared. 'There are unknown unknowns'.

At least that's what I've heard from Donald Rumsfeld.

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Konrad Smoleński – mattin, Gregory Whitehead & Jack Sutton

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