

Two Songs

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And False Fire
Birmingham // 2020

Published by And False Fire
[an imprint of Fathomsun Press, Birmingham]

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Edited, printed, and bound by Kyle Lovell.

A

October (1994)

Gray bear got you by the scruff enough lately
that you haven't put on any music for days
and you're ashamed because it's uncouth
to write the same poem forty times about
the same song, "October" by Jackson C.
Frank as recorded on (I think?) *Heartbreak
Hotel* from the '90s toward the relative end
of his life, voice mostly a mess but is that
also the one with both versions of "Tumble
in the Wind" or no? *That* song, its grip
on me as a sad seventeen-year-old up
too late addicted to approval on music fora
and feeling a flickering incipience of the sad
twenty-X-year-old I would grow to be,
complete in the sense of done seeking

at least on purpose, like standing beside a vein to watch the deoxygenated blood shuttling back in not-yet-desperation, how Frank's speaker rides the flatcar or follows the signal depending on which song he's singing because this kind of criticism -lite is so much easier than *living*, that's why I slip into it like the habit of only playing that one pathetic playlist I made with two songs on it called Two Songs, the Webern Klavierstück in E Minor and then "October (1994)" announcing its year like which black metal album(s) is that? I can google it but let's guess *In the Nightside Eclipse* and I hope also *Transylvanian Hunger*, great eponymous murderer of me on Audiosurf because like all the noise tracks I loved it was just basically one long fuzzy assault that the algorithm didn't know what to do with, although it could handle the fuzz in something like Khonnor's *Handwriting* from Typo, another inescapable talisman of those years, so ridiculous to live in memories like these now, and best of all I don't remember anything of love for *people* during this stretch, just that deepfaked

religious seriousness I tried to give to music then and which has now migrated to poetry, the same way the fleas crawled up Gus's kitten face when we gave him his first bath in the hottest water he could stand. *A Perfect Pain* was another one, the song though was called "A Perfect Restraint" with Masami Akita's *Tauromachine*-era relentless loops undergirding (RIP) Genesis P-Orridge's unmistakable voice, the closest thing to restraint I'm dealing with now is how hard it is for me to type all these *p*'s with just my left hand, my right arm wrapped fully around your shoulders in the 7AM Sunday light and so out of commission (I typed most of them with a thumb stretched so far over that my purple-and-green-but-somehow-not-Barneyish phone case dug into my tense, overextended palm, but a few of them along with end-of-line edits and other cursor moves I had to do with my nose, the screen so close all its words blurred to illegibility, which to me is maybe the funniest thing about writing: if suddenly the little marks slip outside perception, or if anything else happens to jeopardize them, bad backup

spilled tea these *p*'s are *killing* me, then what?
Do they go to the great poetry farm in the sky
which I imagine looking like that musician's
place in *Upstream Color* to graze out their
days? Is Severino right in *The Essence
of Nihilism* that we have just foolishly forgotten
how everything is *already* eternal even without
playing it 1800 times on Spotify, which like
poetry starts off being very hard
to type, top-right corner of the QWERTY
keyboard and the base of my thumb on fire
but detouring left right by a WASD sense
of home and ending all but in the middle).
Remember when we used to be *truly*
afk, away from *any* k, for long enough to need
to let people know? I'm reminded of this
because my first AIM screen name was and
it pains me deeply to admit this *A Perfect
Pain* mistaqwerty, my password
mercifully forgotten but I think it had
something to do with *blackdog* something,
one of the first pairs of words I remember
loving for its sound. You'd craft these
clever away messages so when someone
tried to reach you and you weren't there
to be interesting and charming in "person"

(thumb!) there would still be a live datum
evincing that you were those things
and would still be once you got back
from eating or doing whatever had kept you
(thumb!!) from answering. Now the closest
thing we seem to have are out-of-office
replies and the professional baggage alone
on those is enough of a deterrent I think,
having to explain to your boss your reason
for needing to be unavailable to answer
emails and other business communiqués
for a while, set the keyboard down somewhere
across vast oceans, turbulent seas
unsafe for crossing so you have to be away
from it for some time, at least long enough
that by the time (Autocorrect wanted *my*
the time there and yes, how quickly it's over
is always a surprise) you encounter it again
maybe you'll have practiced enough
to plunk out a performance of that little
Webern piano piece you love
so much, or a new tune entirely.

B

All Partial Evil

I am going to get to listen to the Merzbow/John Goff split 7" when it gets here Friday, and I'm so excited to add it to the list of stuff that has felt familiar, or maybe I should say hasn't felt like *work* for my head, just dropping into a groove that's already there, as long as you stay on Side A (Side B of the Merzbow/Goff split is blank), which consists of one track called "Untitled" and it

sounds a lot more like a band of troubadours than a standard noise track, like when Masami Akita visited the USSR and they, after hearing one night of his music, told him noise wasn't going to *play*, that he was going to need to use real instruments for his second night's set, which is how we got *I'm Proud By Rank Of The Workers*, his live album recorded in Khabarovsk, CCCP on March 23rd and 24th of 1988, and maybe there's at least one baby was conceived as a direct result of one or both those sets, I'll never know but it's fun to imagine—your parents so jazzed up with the power of experimental music that they lose it

in and through each
other's bodies, and nine
or so months later, as
Merzbow is releasing
his album *Flesh Metal
Orgasm*, you are born—
thirty years after the fact
(or not) I get to posit this
fictional person, whose
life would maybe have
been not all that different
from mine, as a unique
privilege that is mostly a
function of the way light
creeps through my
bedroom window on
Sunday mornings, gives
me plenty of time to wait
for feeling to take shape,
for the needle to swing
across the grooved side
of thinking, stop just
over the day, and then
drop like the vocals
in the track that opens
Ensemble Unicorn's

Music of the Troubadours,
a song called “Tant
M’abelis” written by
Berenguier de Palou, the
title of which roughly
translates to “So Much
I Love” and although
it starts like it’s going to
be a list of all the things
the singer loves it
later becomes clear the
“So Much” is more of
an *intensity*, as the song
quickly pivots to being
about how the singer
could have anything and
everything his heart
desires if he only had
the love of the song’s
addressee, *ja d’als amors
no’m pot far mon plazer*,
did I mention the whole
Merzbow/Goff split track
is built on a loop, for
nine minutes and forty
seconds it’s mostly one

discernible bagpipe
melody repeated and
overlaid with the noise
you might expect but
now I'm not even sure of
that bit, I'm relying
on memory and it has
been so long since I
heard it, the only way I'll
know for sure is when I
play it as soon as it gets
here on Friday, four
days after I see you for
the first time in months
and I know we've been
keeping in contact
since then but to see
you, *really* to see you,
will be something else
entirely, an Ornette
Coleman feeling—don't
let me bore you with
more music, just tell me
how you've been
and let me hold
your gaze for like

maybe over the course
of the whole day say nine
minutes and forty seconds
total so I can go home
and remember it well
or just well enough
and long enough to
use something thin &
sharp to carve it
into Side B
of my heart

