



Author Asks

from Ashley Butler,
author of **Dear Sound of Footstep**

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- 1 Clearly I'm obsessed with research and the history of science. What do you feel happens when the speaker is overwhelmed by these facts? To what does this excess lead? How might it differ in "Karman Vortex" and "Anechoic"?
- 2 Dear Sound of Footstep begins with a series of conventional essays and, over the course of the book, moves toward a more abstract approach. How does this movement relate to the speaker's journey? What are the disadvantages of this set up?
- 3 What sort of images, words, ideas, etc does the speaker return to over the course of this book? When an image recurs, do you find its meaning has shifted?
- 4 How would you describe the tone of "Karman Vortex"?
- 5 "Anechoic" begins and ends with a glass. What meaning has the glass assumed by the end? What is lost by the shattering of its form?
- 6 Little punctuation is used in "Feng Shui." How does this affect your experience of the piece?
- 7 There are many quotes taken from Konstantin Tsiokovsky's *Collected Works Vols I-III* and presented with line breaks in "Let Our Craters Be Points..." Do you feel this repurposing compromises the author's relationship with the reader? What are the concerns of this researcher?
- 8 How might you describe the difference between the bridge in "Bridge" versus that in "Karman Vortex"? What is the speaker's relationship to metaphor and how might this have changed?
- 9 How does the form of "Dear Sound of Footstep, Move Me or Tread" affect your reading of the essay?
- 10 The speaker in "The Book of Concealed Hearts" finds it too cold yet for the snow to "adhere and accumulate." How would you characterize the sentences and their relationship to time in this essay?

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Writing Exercises

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Exercise 1

“Anechoic” was written as a result of archival research, an interview with a speech pathologist and a visit to an anechoic chamber. Take a field trip. Get out of the room or place in which you write. If you are interested in theremins then try to find one in your area that you can play. Take notes, bring a microphone or camera with you. Find out everything you can about Leon Theremin and his relationship to dance, espionage, etc. Seek out different points of view. Allow yourself to be immersed and see where it leads you.

Exercise 2

The second to last page of “Reality is Recognizing...” began as a collection of terms taken from a book, found at a flea market, called *How to Repair Small Appliances (Volume 2)*. Go to a used bookstore, flea market, antique store, etc and find a book that catches your attention in some unexpected way (maybe it’s the title or maybe you’d suddenly like to know more about caring for and raising sheep). Flip through it and jot down terms or processes that in some way resonate with you (you might also consider doing an erasure). Go back and rearrange these points from which a story, feeling, or argument might then emerge.

Exercise 3

Parts of “Reality is Recognizing...” grew out of an exercise based on Kenneth Goldsmith’s “Head Citations.” In his book, Goldsmith catalogues mis-heard (or purposely disrupted) song lyrics. You might try your own version of this with a group of songs, phrases, aphorisms, national anthems, etc. Or you might try a homophonic translation in which you choose a text, written in a language with which you are less familiar, and translate the sound (ex. French blanc to “blank”).

For writing exercises from other Sarabande authors, visit our website at www.sarabandebooks.org.

Suggested Reading

The Nature of Things, Francis Ponge
Samuel Johnson is Indignant, Lydia Davis
Speaking to the Rose, Robert Walser
Return to the City of White Donkeys, James Tate
Call Me Ishmael, Charles Olson
My Emily Dickinson, Susan Howe
Xenia, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko
An Elemental Page, Eliot Weinberger
Baldessari Sings LeWitt, John Baldessari

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