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DARK RESONANCES

a multimedia installation/performance event

by Gary Hill, Charles Stein and Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson

June 11th 2005, the Colloseum

weblog:

5.15.2005 11:58 am

In the metro innumerable stairwells below the city of Rome set so low that the ruins not be ADDLED. The idea is to STOP history; a tiny child his adult associate mixed among legitimate traffickers grips an electric violin another with tiny keyboard in her lap while happy birthday several notes judicially excerpted rains out of speakers on desolation row and pickpockets legerdermain in crowded cars between the Spanish Steps and "termini" -- the hub of the metro I hadn't thought of the current underground when I advertised my attention thereunto and whammo the pickpockets got me my passport and 400 euros.

nevertheless moreover furthermore. cs

5.18.2005 12:01 pm

Pieces of the show are actually UP... in the colosseum itself there are a few videos of naked youths of ambiguous gender blowing trumpets with enormous bells and long tubes that snake and coil as they are tooted. These are projected onto various arches in the colosseum and go off and on at random intervals, the trumpet blasts audible throughout the amphitheatre and out onto the street.

Across from the colosseum is the temple of Roma's ruin, an inner concavity maybe fifty feet high where no doubt the goddess once was standing faces the colosseum and on it Gary has projections that stay up all night of "liminal objects"-- almost natural animations that perform their activities naturally until at one moment something gorgeously impossible devours the image. For instance, he has a goat and a sheep distractedly climbing the concavity, turning the site where the goddess once stood into something like an alpine hillside, until at one moment, the goat and the sheep simply pass through each other, the distraction of their general behavior as it were arriving at such an outcome. Another shows a man in Italian trousers and shoes -- you only see the fellow below the knees -- standing on an open book, but a serious wind is blowing, rippling the trousers, and turning the pages of the book which pass right through the legs so it looks like he is standing in a book puddle or book lake. These are huge projections and are visible at night from the road that separates the temple complex from the colosseum.

Dark Resonances

There will be no lions or other beasts. There is as one might have imagined a powerful CONCERN of officials dedicated to preserving RUINS (sic) and you don't do anything without encountering their solicitations.

The actual date that the entire business will go up in the colosseum is still not fixed, probably June 12. I am working with Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson on the sound. She will be the only living thing visible. All the rest will be ghosts and electronic sounds -- seven huge masks in the labyrinth will waffle and bind the atmosphere. She will be Proserpina. I will produce vast layers of the sounds of the dead derived from the amulet you have seen. cs

5.20.2005 4:39 am

The Colosseum only got called so in about the seventh century A.D. when no one knew what it had been used for. There was a colossus that stood in front of it, that is, a statue of the sun god over a hundred twenty feet high, hence a colosseum. Actually the statue was a monument that Nero built to himself and stood in his enormous palace the *domus aureus* that was torn down by the Romans after he died and upon its site the Flavian Amphitheatre (i.e. the colosseum) was constructed by the Flavian emperors to gain the favor of the roman populus. The statue was preserved and Nero's head was removed and replaced by the sun god.

Very ancient times, origins of gladiatorial games; human sacrifices in honor of the spirits of the dead. So the gladiatorial shows were sacrifices -- subtract the sacred.

In the Greek magical papyri the most prominent deity is Helios. Kirke (Circe) and Hekate are daughters of the Sun. And it was these and other heliades that guided the chariot of Parmenides to the regions beyond the tracks of the paths of day and night. Now, Circe's island is AIAIA as you well know, a palindrome. So the sense of a palindrome neutralizes orientation -- finding that which is neither this way nor that... the palindrome

disorients
the sun.

cs

5.20.2005 9:29 am

The queen of the underworld gives birth to the sun (not only the vernal season by her own return) but the day itself, and perpetually. The dawn sun rises from the land of the dead, redolent with the vast tranquility of that dark kingdom, for it is the quiescence not the longing of the dead that mothers the day.

Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson has begun to transform into Persephone/Circe. She begins singing a subtle, plaintive song, with words and melody of her invention, "Father, why have you left me among dark shadows..." with many variations, "Father why did you not give me the hands of the cyclops, Father why did you not give me the heads of the Typhoon.." (the awkward rhythm works perfectly in the tune.) But then she transforms utterly with astonishing ululations and Scandinavian herding calls (more present than haunting, but yes haunting too) herding cries that shatter the bones of the living and show the mother of all shadows as a cry among us. I am producing the quiet shadow sounds that ground the thing. cs

Charles Stein

5.21.2005 8:27 am

I wish I could get you Paulina's song instanter, but it will be with you anon. She actually has a pop single that appears on local radio. Something between Patience and Prudence and The Velvet Underground. Soft, seductive, with ridiculous hooks like Sexy Lover -- can you stand my heat, that transpose to no one can stand YOUR heat, you have wiped out all the citizens. Hard to explain without the actual words. But it isn't the words but the weird thing she does with them.

Stalled in red tape with idiotic though completely predictable impossibilities regarding permissions for the simplest things. We have an ominous meeting this evening with somebody or other. Two nights ago we were driven through the tiny labyrinthine Roma streets by a young mad woman in a mini and a black dog in the back seat. She is some kind of phenomenon on the international art scene and has contrived a crush on our engineer Aaron. I had not but got into the front seat and buckled down than she wanted to know from ME if she should have Aaron's baby. Said I, Skoooozi? She said his body was a body of iron, his eyes blue oceans where killer whales swim. et CETERA. Cetera: we got out of the car and she pulled down her pants to show a tattoo on her ass she said had something to do with Israeli nuclear program, and there I lost her. At the dinner when it turned out that Gary and Paulina and I were not about to help her network with the gang of arts bigshots at the next table she dropped us flat. Good thing too. So. Other energies than Proserpina seem in resonance. I will spend the rest of the afternoon learning Italian from a book.

cs

5.22.2005 12:55 pm

The installation / performance is now beginning to take shape, at least conceptually. No animals, no chorus. Insurance demands prohibiting. However.

The colosseum itself is one huge brain and decrepit cathedral temple of the dead. The stalls around the stadium are chapels. In many of these stalls there will be local projected events punctuated with live performances by Paulina and/or myself. Other events projected as it were from these projections, i.e. the small projections writ large, will occur across the entire colosseum sound wise accompanied by certain dramatic scenes. Paulina will appear in the bowels of the place horizontal on a bier, as if a floating Proserpina Ophelia, suspended against the subterranean darkness, while periodic strobes will flash from beneath her and a chunk of quartz at her navel periodically struck by lasers (thanks for this to Bialy and my visit to Mexico last winter). I am recording sounds of Rome in public places overlaid with sound poetry commentary. This will be a stall and sound permitting may have its moment to fill up the entire cosmos. The Colosseum is a brain, if you look at a diagram of it as it is today with a recently built bridge that crosses it at the corpus calosum. Gary has a text of quasi techno psycho self reflected babble that is disorienting enough when read straight but it will be projected with many speakers all over the entire space to drive the good people of america germany japan china and alpha centauri who daily haunt the place quite --- PREPARED for illumination. I am working hard to master the palindrome in the drawing under my picture -- say: NANDAPADARAPAMANAGAPRAX ARPAGANAMAPARADAPADNA 23 times fast, dropping a letter from the front and the back each time as you go and you'll see what I Mean. Other wonders: a cart tugged across the bridge on triangular wheels. A tent with Paulina (Pinky Lizzardbrain to you) singing Persephone songs. sleeping Persephone's beauty in a box. AND you have some idea. No time to proof read this on the internet clock.

cs

5.24.2005 5:46 am

Bialy:

Dr. Stein checks in:

Back from Padova all day in Roma in the morning to St. Peter's to see if that pope was coming out on the balcony to do his waving thing but it turned out he was elsewhere elsewhere so all we got was something like diamond vision versions of the end of the masse and a chorus singing in the mood of Poulenc but the harmonies of Montovani and later we went to the zoo.

One project I have if I didn't mention it to y'all is walking around roman hotspots and taping crowd sounds over which I speak my piece in whatever language-like utterance occurs to me so this afternoon I did speak with some passion to one siberian tiger very large and lethargic one hippo named Carlo two giraffes and many little human children, I love the way Italian children talk.

There is a chapter in Lewis Mumford's "The City in History" called "Death in the Afternoon" that does the job on the colosseum. I may have some quotes down the road I am trying to write the introductory pamphlet for the installation; it is not easy for me to do this it turns out, though I have pages and pages of scribbles -- can you say things like "the life of the wound is the movement of the dead" or "we suck energy from the witness of violence -- energy to feed our indolence and lassitude"?

I don't yet know what the problem is, I can't jazz it on the one hand and explicit exposition seems down right wrong on another and on the third I don't know how to let the big dark thing mumble mumble its own cyclopien presence; the whole thing ought to be an act of rendering history invisible.

Harvey -- post this, I think; sorry I didn't put it in direct but I am unspeakably hampered by laundry machines at the moment and the good of the intellect is slipping away.

cs

5.29.2005 12:28 pm

I am currently writing a text for a pamphlet to accompany the performance. (Which by the way is to be called *Dark Resonances*.) The following is a note on an episode based on Gary's text titled "Primarily Speaking" which consists of a series of sentences, each suggesting a context, but not completely, and as the series develops the overall gestalt does not emerge. The sentences have been recorded in English and Italian and will be broadcast as it were throughout the huge brain of the colosseum, creating the impression of an enormous psycho-sphere of disorienting verbiage. A sample of the sentences:

one of us is probably involved
there's always someone willing to run the risk
at this point though there are no tell tale signs to speak of
I wonder if the better thing to do is refrain from speculation
hang in there but hold back
etc.

cs

Charles Stein

6.5.2005 4:45 am

No party no party... the colosseum is party enough. It stands you inside your upside and downside down. It does impend. It is a broken thing embodying the most broken of anything ever. Its greys and browns in the evening. It has its own sound. It is the brain as womb. Wound. We are trying to find a pomegranate. They do not seem to hang out at Roma. And it better happen soon. The white model airplane will descend from the highest reaches and land on the corpus calosum. From its bomb-bay a pomegranate will make an appearance. Seeds from which will be deposited in the hypogeum (the underside of the amphitheatre). The gladiators have been hired. The geeks who will try to make the triangle-wheeled carriage of Persephone move across the brain will be dressed in suits, as I think I communicated. The gladiators are very excited to be seated where the senators used to sit, there to watch the business people do some heavy labor on the floor. We are working at impelling a chorus from a single voice to chant the three formulas: the first,

nandapadarapamanagapraxarpaganamaparadapadan

the second,

nondot tuttitunOndut sititinEndAdnenitititis tudon utitittut todnon

and the third,

ee ee oo o a ooa oo oee ee eeo oo a ooa o oeee ee

as well as my I wanted to stay in my home
and not have to go rome
poem from years ago

and a new seed poem based on DEPLETED URANIUM

to be installed at various sites I hope.

cs

6.6.2005 10:43 am

Here is the entire text for the pamphlet. cs

Some Notes for *Dark Resonances*
Charles Stein
June, 2005

1) The Sun Thing

Nero's titanic palace, the *Domus Aureus*, occupied the space where the Flavian Amphitheatre, our Colosseum, was eventually built. A colossal bronze statue of Nero forty meters high stood in its vestibule. When Vespasian demolished the *Domus Aureus* to make way for the Amphitheatre, he preserved the statue but lopped off Nero's head, replacing it with the radiant countenance of Apollo. A later emperor traded Apollo for Helios, the sun god himself. When the Temple of Venus

and Rome was erected at the site where the sun god now stood, it took twenty-four elephants to tote the thing to the front of the Amphitheatre.

For the ancients, the sun god was something more than a flaming object that hurls itself daily about the earth. The sphere on which it moved bounded the known world. Radiance bordered on darkness, so the nature of the sun included, by contagion, that which exceeded the limits of natural order.

When a sorcerer sought to influence fate (to favor a gladiator for the sake of a wager, say), it would be to Helios that he'd first address his incantations. The dark side of sun god had innumerable uses. By the 7th century A.D., the actual performances in the Amphitheatre were forgotten, but the colossal sun god remained. The Venerable Bede believed the Amphitheatre a temple to the pagan demons over whom the sun god ruled. As perhaps it was. At all events, it was the colossal statue at its gates that belatedly suggested the name colosseum. When the colosseum is destroyed utterly, the city of Rome will perish, thought Bede. When Rome shall perish that will be the end of the world.

2) Fan-fare

'Tuba' in Latin is 'trumpet', one of those long, valveless horns used to announce the arrival of Emperor or gladiator, Bengal tiger, or whatever. It trumpets in sonorous consonance the honor of what is about to appear.

In modern brass bands, what we call 'tubas' are usually replaced by the familiar sousaphone, the invention of that paragon director of marching bands, John Phillip Sousa: it wraps around the body of its player and heaves the enormous bell up over his head, where it swaggers at the back of the parade, commodiously blasting its great basso um-pa-pas.

Sousa knew that brass is a malleable thing, but how far can you bend brass? And if that is one question, here is a mushrooming rangle of related ones:

How big a fanfare can you blow on any given fanfaring occasion?

How much honor can you stir?

When does the tuba-blower get lost in his tuba-blowing?

Is there no limit to tooting one's own horn?

Will not the public arena eventually cave in on itself and consume the public attending the spectacle?

Is it not the very blowing of the horn that makes the spectacle spectacular indeed?

These are weighty questions. But weightier still are the sounds that these Sousa-forms have thrown into the arena of that weightiest of all arenas, the Flavian Amphitheatre, arguably the very center of Roman antiquity, and as such, the very center of Western civilization (and, given the imperial scope of the latter, the very navel of the human world).

We will not attempt to answer these questions, except to remark that 'consonance' is not the word that most readily comes to mind to identify the sonorities that are emitted by them, nor is 'honor' necessarily the quality that best characterizes what most commonly has been announced withal. Gnarly sonorities smart across the noosphere.

Oh, and one final question: who are the beings who put their confident lips and cheeks to our malleable trumpets? Such dignity possesses these figments, that as the unanticipatable consequences not only of their musical effects but of their very means redound to consume them, they bear the weight of their actions and return to the rough-hewn surfaces onto which they themselves have been projected. Would that their angelic counterparts knew such courtesy.

3) The life of the wound is the movement of the dead.

There were many gates to the underworld in the ancient cosmos: sites where commerce between the living and the dead were possible, if not likely. The Flavian Amphitheatre was not traditionally one of them, and yet we find among the magical papyri surviving from antiquity the

recommendation that in order to gain power over a recalcitrant lover, for example, it is a good idea to conduct one's sorcery on ground where a gladiator has been slain. This surely indicates that our colosseum would have proven to be the greatest hellgate of them all, had sorcery not been, somewhat hypocritically, proscribed by Imperial decree.

Today, the Colosseum seems an open wound in the mind-flesh of psychic earth; its mysterious hypogeum (basement), once covered by the floor on which gladiators fought in mortal combat, lies open to our gaze a bottomless labyrinth of compartments, battlements, and passageways, layered with a patina of moss and weeds, leading the eye to imponderable and chill, bottomless distances. The form of the Amphitheatre impends above it -- it has not the sense of the elegantly contained openness of a modern football or baseball stadium: the walls and their arches; windows; gaping eyes lean in, as if the theater itself would impose a dark essentiality upon those who, even at this late date, take their seats within it for edification or amusement. What is the scope and scale of the dark imposition of the broken survival of this ancient form? What but the unbroken continuity of the monumental pathology that was its occasion?

4) The Mind of Misdirection

Modern entertainment entertains by misdirection. This is how it relieves the pressures of daily life. The price is our submission to conditioning by the commercial interests that inevitably 'sponsor' it. More generally, misdirection directs endeavors ranging from petty theft to stagy legerdemain, politics, religion, high art.

In the contemporary Roman underworld (namely the Metro) having descended the innumerable flights down to the tracks, you are in the belly of Typhon, and all had better be alertness and conscious intensity. One might think one can spot the grim young men scouting the platforms for pickpocket or bag-grabbing targets; and, in general, like the gangsters say, you watch your back. Yet watch as you may, here is where misdirection works its sweetest ploy. It is not the surly males who look like pickpockets that do the dirty work, but comely and affluent accomplices, who might look like anyone at all. While you are fixated on evading the aggression of the thieves, the nimble fingers of the unsuspectable find your wallet.

This is an ancient craft, and it has been practiced for as long as untouchables have existed in a complex history of sometimes mutual segregations.

Sadly, we cannot confirm the assumption that the arcane art is never practiced by the functionaries of honored bureaucracies in the fiduciary arrangements they establish with the artists in their employ regarding such matters as budgeting projects, hiring craftspersons, delegating organizational responsibility, etc. For just where one's suspicion is raised that something is amiss, it is likely that somewhere else in the field of arrangements, somebody is crippling Peter to elevate Paul.

But to be the object of misdirection is not necessarily to be an innocent victim. The people of Imperial Rome were victims indeed of their own indolence as much as anything else, though this indolence was created and manipulated by their Patrician and Imperial masters. The misdirection was, as is the rule, in full view. By A.D. 354 there were 175 days of games with 200 holidays per annum. So addicted were the citizens to the variegated thrills of torture and slaughter, that, in the words of Lewis Mumford, "When the Vandals were hammering at the gates, the groans of the dying defenders on the wall mingled with the roar of the spectators in the circus, more concerned with the day's enjoyment than with even their ultimate personal safety." ("The City in History", p. 231).

"The citizens of Rome were fed a meager diet gratis; however, the main population of the city lived in cramped, noisy, airless, foul-smelling, infected quarters, paying extortionate rates to merciless landlords, undergoing daily indignations and terrors that coarsened and brutalized them, and in turn demanded compensatory outlets. These outlets carried the brutalization even further, in a continuous carnival of sadism and death." ("The City in History", p. 221).

It is easy to be complicit in one's own misdirection, as I fear the populations of the advanced Western nations have sadly become. The news last week (June 2, 2005) of the identity of 'Deep Throat' puts us in mind of how the Nixon regime fell because it thought it could actually hide its nefarious activities. Bush and company, whose publicly documented international crimes far outstrip anything the Nixon Whitehouse ever countenanced, knows that it can do whatever it wants so long as public attention is diverted sufficiently from its malfeasances.

Institutional religions, of course, of all flavors have provided ample employment for intellectual masters of misdirection throughout the ages, and High Modernism, in its contempt for 'representation,' has conventionally understood misdirection to be the very stuff of traditional art. Both in the way of confession and as a boast of the high lineage of the practice, we can say that *Dark Resonances* is misdirection of the purest water, for the object from which we would distract the wary attender, has already been deleted.

5) Palindromes

A brief glance at a diagram of the human brain and of the Colosseum and it is obvious: the Flavian Amphitheatre is like the brain; the brain is structured like a Colosseum.

In a famous analogy, Freud said the unconscious is like the city of Rome. But conversely we observe, the city of Rome is entirely like the unconscious. Successful analogies are symmetrical, like palindromes. They flow both ways.

Circe, the sorceress daughter of the sun god, lived at the edge of the world beyond the paths of the sun and moon, on an island named AIAIA - a palindrome. With a palindrome, you do not know whether you are coming or going, hence the use of them in casting spells. Magic works by strategic disorientation and tactical misdirection. To disrupt the flow of causation and impose the will, time itself must be thrown into confusion. Circe's capacity to morph Odysseus' sailors into swine and to book him passage to the underworld, we think, was drawn from such disruption.

Another passage to the darkly disorientable can be opened by certain magic plants that awaken the chaos at the heart of things. These often supplement the mind-altering wizardry of the palindrome. In the 1970s it was discovered that psychotropic fungi carrying chemical variants of LSD were natural parasites on barley and rye, and that the psychoactive agent in a beverage imbibed during the mystery rites of Demeter at Eleusis (the *kykeon*) was very likely a substance of this type.

Demeter, the mother of Persephone and goddess of the grain, bestowed upon humanity, it seems, other gifts than the civilizing means for separating the wheat from the chaff.

6) The Carriage of Persephone (or: De-inventing the Wheel)

Few today are certain of exactly what the advent of civilization as such was supposed to have done for the species that, by now, has all but universally adopted it. Yet, oblivious to this uncertainty, our technicians continue to advise themselves against 'reinventing the wheel', lest valuable time, better dedicated to the further advance of it, be unnecessarily squandered. Not reinventing the wheel is the principle of technological progress. You build on what you know.

To unbalance this obliviousness, we thought that an opposite strategy, given the historical setting of our installation, might be appropriate for conveying Persephone to her seat as Queen of the Underworld. Her ride along the corpus callosum through the center of the Colloseal brain, though harried by the lurches of her devolving, triangular wheels, will at least have the advantage of retarding a dubious progress from here to formerly. For the underworld is nothing at all if not a thing of the past.

7) Primarily Speaking

The number of voices that at any moment might awaken in one's mind, each capable of drawing attention to the very point from which it speaks so as to inspire the conviction that it is oneself that

is saying what is being said -- the number of these voices, as they used to say of the demons of the air, is surely 'legion.' The one quadrillion (1,000,000,000,000,000) neural connections in the human brain make it so.

A vast universe of possible voices vibrate in the darkness of the skull just beyond the threshold of consciousness. When something forces the transgression of that threshold, if, for instance, one finds oneself in resonance with some apparent manifestation of the dead (by social practice, by psychopharmacological or artistic agency), there is no limit to the number of voices that may awaken there. Then brain reveals itself as full of voices, attitudes, ecstasies. They are too numerous to manifest as dialectical antagonism. It is as if all the political parties of Italy were to have their say at once, no coalitions allowed, no views adulterated by compromise, no agendas diluted for the sake of a share in real power. The mind then appears to be neither this nor that, but the entire arena of possibilities, a space beyond all partialities, all philosophies. To try to find one's way among these voices is madness itself. And yet to shut them out is to deny the very resonance that brought them within mindshot. Our advice: sit still and listen.

8) Persephone

Persephone, the daughter of the great goddess Demeter, is abducted by Hades, the god of the dead, while picking flowers with a bevy of nymphs on a meadow, possibly in Sicily.

Once in the Underworld, Persephone is radically transformed. She is no longer an innocent maid, but the ravishingly beautiful, though ghastly, blue-white, stony-fleshed Queen of the Dead. Innocent life and unspeakable uncanniness seem strangely superimposed within her being.

Persephone rules over countless shadow beings, trapped forever by their identifying traits. To be a shade in Hades is to be irremediably what you are. Even positive identities cloy there because unrelieved by the possibility of Being to come. In either case, a shadow voice eternally drones in your heart, 'I KNOW YOUR KIND.'

These hapless souls cling to the cold and gusty energy emanating from Queen Persephone, as if, should they once but catch a glimpse of Her, they'd be released from the yearning of their restless stasis.

Persephone herself is liberated in being seen, to see her is to be her, to be her is to be what nothing is but all portend. Flash! And you pass from being a being to being Being-Snap the whip of an eagle's wings' and identity fails or flees to another configuration.

In the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Priest sits in the pregnant silence of a vast and darkened temple, a space that is like the Halls of the Dead. The crowd of initiates waits in anticipation of the vision of Persephone to come, having imbibed the gift of the *kykeon*, brewed up from the ergot grown on the grain that Mother Demeter so bountifully provided, some time before.

Until the moment of vision itself, there would be this ambiguity, this tension in every soul: DEATH OR LIFE; FIXED IDENTITY OR OPEN POSSIBILITY; HORROR OR RELEASE; each potential initiate harboring the hope of the transforming vision, a flash of the phantasmal radiance of the nocturnal goddess, that is also the golden light of grain against the sun - each soul, one pair of eyes...

9) Pomegranate

Pomegranates are bloody things. They spring from the severed organs of murdered gods. They are, that is, the means by which immortality asserts itself in the very midst of sacrifice, violence, the joyous orgies of daemonic slaughter.

The seed of a pomegranate, if engorged, bound the being that engorged it to the conditions under which it had been proffered. When Persephone was induced to swallow three seeds in the lap of Hades, not even the decree of the Olympians could liberate her entirely from her bondage to the

Dark Resonances

chthonic realm. Her office as sometime Queen of the Dead was consecrated; she would return to the underworld for the four months of the Mediterranean winter.

It seems that to deposit the seeds of a pomegranate is to induce a certain intention upon the site that receives them, symbolically, of course. But the scope of the symbolism of this dark place has been the elusive object of our continuing inquiry since we first alighted upon the colosseum some months ago.

Imagine our consternation (if you will) when we learned that the wings of our model airplane, that we thought would betoken the wings of the dove of grace itself, had, in spiraling down from the highest reaches of the Amphitheatre, released from its abdominal portal not only the seeds, but the fruit itself of the darkly resonant object, to become the plaything of the flower-like maiden. The seeds we learned have been planted, by whom we dare not conjecture, in the very bowels of the hypogeum there to command what future? To bear what fruit?

On the wings of a white pigeon, or contained by what they fly, red seminal juices fall into the readied darkness of the uteran brain. "For nigh two thousand years, we have been waiting" (whispers rise like fumes from the dark hypogeum). Words arise to greet insuperable advances, as if they too had advanced into the impossible, as if they too were readied in the dark of an untoward materium.

6.7.2005 6:13 am

The following is an additional piece, too late for the pamphlet.

Under the (Double) Eagle

One of the computer animations for *Dark Resonances* consists of an eagle trapped in electric wire, flapping its wings in a desperate attempt to disentangle itself. Vast wind sounds arise as his wings move, until something happens, and the eagle acquires the intensity he has generated and begins to snap instead of flap, one wing at a time, each wing snap generating a whip snap, and terrific force emanates from each gesture.

I have not googled 'eagle' to track down the precise history of its symbolic preeminence over all other birds, but I know that from native America to the sufi middle east humankind has felt the ferocious majesty of this towering raptor to the extent that when time came to choose an avian emblem for empire, there was no second choice. Thus empires from Rome to America, with czarist Russia, Prussia, and Nazi Germany between, adopted the eagle as their bird and proclaimed, along with the stupid song of Ex-Attorney General Ashcroft in Michael Moore's flick, 'Let the Eagle Soar.' Until recently, in America anyway, it was difficult to find an eagle. Embarrassed that the image of the highest rank in the Boy Scouts should be on the endangered species list, Americans artificially bred the very icon of natural freedom, and now, occasionally, we once again can catch a glimpse of one skulking above the marshes of the Hudson Valley, its nest, this time, graciously preserved from cell-phone towers, cement factories, or high power lines.

It used to be a figure in poetry, that when a poet wished to express that he had been granted a panoptic vision of the cosmos, history, or the human race, he would say that he had been seized by the claws of an eagle and taken to the summit of the sky. Today we have techno-toys to produce the affects of the panopticon, but it is well to remind ourselves that the soaring of the eagle once portended the broadest of possible creative points of view. And if the natural, if not the political eagle, no longer soars, let us imagine its rage as a monstrosity for the natural majesty of creative energy is lordly indeed, and, if thwarted, who can say with what dark forces it may find it expedient to align itself.

6.8.2005 6:35 am

The Bureaucracy of Ruin

Journal entry, June 8, 2005

Will *Dark Resonances* resonate in the Colosseum? Bureaucratic tangles, funding misunderstandings, behind-the-scenes manipulations, and permissions ambiguities put the thing in doubt. As I am typing these words I overhear Aaron on the phone say, 'You mean you can't get us permission to drive up to the Colosseum to bring equipment for the performance?'

In 1965, I remember very well it was possible to walk right into the Colosseum, explore its labyrinthine passageways, and commune with the myriad cats that survived on innumerable small rodents living among the ruins. Today someone has a stand outside of the back of the amphitheater with a sign that reads: 'These abandoned cats depend on donations for their survival.' There was a half-a-dozen of them around an old woman and a bunch of empty, cheap catfood cans. Compared to the robust nature of the former cat population, 'survival' is not the word for it. Similarly, in England, in 1965, one was not obstructed at Stone Henge in sauntering among the Big Stones. The 'constructive process of ruin' (Ed Dorn) was allowed to proceed along its natural course. I do not know exactly at what date Rome awakened to the danger that free access to the innards of the Amphitheatre spelled to its tourist-trade asset, but today a Byzantine hierarchy is in place to assure the world that these venerable remains not suffer abuse.

Given the heinous history of the place that is treated with such solicitude, I wonder if the Germans are assuaging similar anxieties about Auschwitz, though here it is likely that the holy awe surrounding the comparatively recent history of the place protects it from commercial exploitation - but give it time.

At the head of the bureaucracy protecting Roman ruins in general is the office of the *Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma* (the Superintendent of Roman Antiquities); under this, an office dealing with the Colosseum per se, in charge of doling out permission for rock shows and establishing various regulations for times and costs of admission. (The Colosseum is the most frequently visited historical site in the world, with 10,000 daily visitors at ten euros a visit. I do not believe that this was the case 1965, a robust publicity function having made the Colosseum the center piece of today's Roman Holiday.)

Under the august Soprintendenza there is also the office of the Architect. Architect? Architect? Architect of ruins? In fact, there is an architectural specialty dedicated to archaeological sites. The brother of a friend of ours IS one. He works in digs in Egypt and has become something of an Egyptologist by osmosis. He devises the various rigs for the archaeological operation and offers speculation regarding archaic building structures.

The Colosseum architect devises and supervises the stair cases, bridges, walkways, struts and buttresses provided to enhance the ruins, and he makes judgments on proposals for activities at the site. Beyond these bureaucratic levels, in our case, there is the mysterious institute, apparently distinct from the bureaucracy itself, whose auspices were solicited to sponsor our work; the two curators who proposed it to the institute and to us; and a tight little network of craftspeople and employees with relations to the various echelons and persons within the hierarchy, who have to be

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consulted, hired, or mollified for anything whatever on the project to get done, and who seem to have an obstructive relationship to us in regard to getting anything done on our own.

It has become increasingly clear that all these people lie constantly to each other, cajole, bribe, perform favors for, and otherwise kibbitz and connive, to the point that, as perhaps one ought to have anticipated in relation to a European bureaucracy, no promise is made that is certain to be kept, no permission granted that might not without notice be rescinded.

I think all may yet be well, but we are being ridden ragged trying to actually put the piece together and satisfy the endless hassling involving changes required in basic ideas of the piece.

cs

[6.16.2005 8:15 pm]

Ontology of ruin
evanescence burns at the center of need.

International institution expressing institutional and vague evaluation of ancient glories,

Is every ruin valuable? is every dark retention of the past black gold? can we turn all our darkness into fuel? is that what they mean?

Or is it that we are in danger of forgetting that which we have already thoroughly forgotten so well that we think that every image of evanescence is a resource? Soon we'll know what Cromagnon language sounded like. Aren't you GLAD?

No, not every ruin valuable--only the ones some sort of consensus evaluates and judges so to be. What sort of consensus? I vote for ruins that still exude telluric forces -- that one might go there and absorb -- for transformation and communion with energies and possibilities dormant still. My vote won't count, believe me. I know a lake in Montana. But forget about it. We know very well the kind of forces ruins very well have been selected for. There is an hegemony of ruins. World class ruins, no tourist dare to miss. Forget about it.

cs

6.8.2005 6:39 am

Better news today. Better news. The biggest hassle was over the gladiators. They were, as you remember, to be sat in the senators' seats, which are about the only setup seats in the Amphitheatre. We had been told by the architect that it would be no problem. But the day before yesterday the curators and the representative of the institute (about which a word in a minute) nervously and adamantly averred that we had been told no, no one can be in those seats, the Soprintendenza forbids, especially not gladiators, don't ask why. We had not been told. Quite the contrary. Dr. Hill went wild. Told them no gladiators no show. There were also a bunch of details that were worrisome about costs, I won't deal with these here. I was worried we might be out of business.

But. Last night we met with this august (sic) Soprintendenza, who was an unlikely type for the role, as I suppose such fellows usually are. No problem. Gladiators? fine. Senators' seats? Va bene.

Charles Stein

In addition to that, for the first time we got to feel the Amphitheatre at night without lights, and the speakers were in place by 10 pm. Big ones, surrounding the ground and second levels of the Colosseum. I was most worried about Paulina, whose singing is so intimate, we had no idea how it would go amplified into such a space. But the Colosseum is no Shea Stadium. There is virtually no echo, hence no noxious delay, and she sounded fantastic. She sang all her songs walking around the theater and had everyone spellbound. Truly. "I'm a little dead girl, I want to fall in love with my evil twin...", "milk honey chloride," all of which I still promise I will have available, probably the day after the event.

The upper echelon of the Amphitheatre forms a closed ellipse, and is small enough so looking up you see the dark blue late night sky and a few stars rimmed like a wildly set sapphire which doubles perfectly the hypogeum below.

Tonight we test my sounds. cs.

6.9.2005 6:39 am

BULLETIN BEULLETIN BEULLETIN
GLADIATORS BANNED FROM COLOSSEUM

June 10, 2005, Roma. Curators of artist Gary Hill's performance/installation, DARK RESONANCES to be presented at the Colosseum on Saturday evening have proclaimed the connection between gladiators and the Colosseum a "folkloristic element" inappropriate for a monument of such world importance. Colosseum authorities, according to sources, have been harassed by persons impersonating gladiators in the past. Dr. Hill claims the gladiators were only to have a passive role in the piece and that there was no anticipation of bloodshed. Nevertheless, our sources say, there is a fear that allowing them to participate in the Hill performance, even in a passive capacity, would give them a "foot in the door" that might prove regrettable in the future.

.....

This is no joke. After our meeting on Wednesday evening and our shaking hands with a man we were told was the "Soprintendenza" himself, a call from one of the curators (who was not present at that meeting) informed us that the TRUE Soprintendenza is not a person, but, apparently, a stack of heads, like one of those Tibetan tanka figures representing a lineage of masters.

A higher head than the talking one of Wednesday (we dare not say the highest head) censored our plan to place actor-gladiators in the senators' seats and rescinded the handshake we are all but certain was not an hallucination.

Gary wanted to fight, but the elusiveness of the foe and the astonishingly intelligent idea that somehow the link between gladiators and the Colosseum could be demoted from history to folklore knocked the wind out of us all. It is impossible for moderately creative artists like ourselves to do battle with critics, curators, and public officials, whose demonstrable creative powers so far exceed their own.

:::

In spite of all this, work at the Colosseum proceeds apace. Last night for the first time we were able to project images and animations onto the walls of the Colosseum. Now, you must understand that in a sense there ARE no walls in the Colosseum, that is, there are no flat vertical surfaces uninterrupted by openings, arches, bridges, slanting slabs, and butress-like diagonals. Until last night

Dark Resonances

we had no idea how we were going to make Gary's projections visible, and had taken heart mainly in the fact that the auditory experiments of the night before had been so successful. But as soon as we threw the images onto the un-surfaces, all our fears were dissolved. The first thing we looked at was the desperately flapping eagle caught in what I now realize was an electricity tower. It was fantastic. The multiplicity of planar surfaces simply rendered the image three dimensional. The eagle looked like it occupied the space between the planes. It was also immense, and we will have, I believe, ten such projectors surrounding the entire amphitheatre, so while the similarly surrounding speakers broadcast the wind sound of the eagle's wings and their sudden whip snaps, the eagle itself will appear to be flickering around the entire space.

cs

6.10.2005 5:20 am

Here is the "q to q" as it exists at this moment for the performance.

1) Colosseum as dark as possible. Rhythmic clapping sounds from all speakers, gradually becoming disorganized. Chaotic clapping sounds slowing turning into the sound of vast rushing waters, from which emerge or slowly to which are joined, tuba noises from the depths.

2) The first incantation: nandapadarapamanagapraxarpaganamaparadapdnan....

..... - 12)

God knows what it will be like. As usual with these performances with Gary, technical problems harass until the end and there is no time for a run through, and we will be lucky if we even get to do a walk through. So it could be anything from magnificent to complete disaster. Also, Gary looked at the images from the second tier last night where the audience exclusively is allowed by Monumental Policy to BE, and the images looked, he said, lame. We are making desperate diplomatic pleas to get permission to let the audience gather on the floor of the arena, where in fact the images look fantastic, but our hopes as of this moment (12:37 pm, with show time at 10) are not high.

next post will be post eventum. cs

6.11.2005 6:55 am

Well, it happened.

And was exciting enough so that it is a real bummer that we can't do it again to perfect it. It isn't like we can take the show on the road.

What was most exciting was the SOUND of the thing, which was I think rivetting throughout. The sound of the incantations, of the Carriage lurching across the bridge, of the "Madness of the Brain", and of Paulina's singing. There were enumerable glitches, but given our experience with other mammoth performances with demanding technical involvement and impossibly miniscule rehearsal time -- there was no run through, no walk through, we just barely got the video projectors functional, the drones who moved the Carriage instructed, and the oil drums in place in time to begin, perhaps a half hour late, I'd say we did okay.

As an exercise, to exorcise the stuff drumbling in my internal colosseum for the last ten hours, I will give an account of each of the twelve elements I listed yesterday.

I decided to place myself upstairs on the second tier where the general audience was positioned. If you think of the Colosseum as a baseball stadium, you have a large stage area around home plate at the back of which is an archway exit that we have been calling the Gate of Death because that is where Persephone makes her exit after being conducted on her carriage journey across the arena. I took my position in the mezzanine between home plate and first base. Most of the audience was in the outfield, I'd say concentrated in left-center.

1) Colosseum as dark as possible. Rhythmic clapping sounds from all speakers, gradually becoming disorganized. Chaotic clapping sounds slowing turning into the sound of vast rushing waters, from which emerge or slowly to which are joined, tuba noises from the depths.

Pretty much as expected. Immediately I realized that being upstairs meant that I was not engulfed in the sound as one downstairs would have been. The clapping and water though intense and loud was not overwhelming. It was possible to listen to it without going into a state of transcendental acceptance.

2) The first incantation: nandapadarapamanagapraxarpaganamaparadapdnan. The exact sound of which I am on my way after making this post to Via Marghutta to define. Text is projected below the second tier with the letters of the incantation alternately visible and set vibrating by a laser device.

Gary and Aaron did an incredibly good version of this. You will perhaps remember that this is a palindrome, and the method of incantation was to be iterating the line removing the first and last letter of each previous iteration until you come to the central letter, in this case X. The spell is done simultaneously both ways. As I read the complete line, another voice hits X at exactly the moment I say X. In the second iteration, the second voice says AXA, in the third RAXAR etcetera, until I come to X and the second voice comes to the complete spell. We recorded each line separately and recomposed the sequence so that it was possible to match the syllables perfectly. The voices were also slightly enhanced by doubling, so the effect was that an indeterminate number of voices were intoning the spell. We had a laser projector that was supposed to be able to spell the thing out letter by letter and project it onto a spot in back of home plate, but the tech guy operating the laser couldn't make it happen. What we did instead was project an inner fragment of the whole line alternating with a few lines set in a kind of vibrating spasm. In tryouts it worked very well, but in the performance the poor fellow couldn't find the right file and put up the wrong spell, then turned it off and tried another and then just gave up. The sound was much more echo than it was down on the field, and it sounded pretty muddled to me, but others from center field and down stairs said it was quite clear. This was generally true for me; there was an echo that made words almost impossible to distinguish from where I was, but clear elsewhere. I think it depended upon how close to an actual speaker one was situated.

3) Strobe flashes in the hypogeum begun during the end of the incantation, as if elicited by it, reveal Paulina /Proserpina wandering in the depths. As the incantation ends she sings "I'm a little dead girl / In a house of demons.../ I want to be there / To fall in love / With my evil twin.../Finally the yellow space / Finally the whitest light / Finally hallucinating /Crocodiles, invisible crocodiles."

Strobe flashes worked fine. I couldn't see Paulina in the hypogeum, which was simply obstructed by the stage. Her song, from my perspective sounded beautiful -- sort of -- there was an echo, and I couldn't make out the words, but others didn't have that problem.

4) At the end of song the trapped eagle appears, first singly, then all over the amphitheatre. Persephone leaves the hypogeum, climbs stairs to arena level, and waits there for her next entrance.

The eagle sound was amazing. It didn't sound like wind, but the enormous groans and squawks of a pterodactyl, and then the electrifying wings snaps. It was as if the very electronic universe that was trapping it in its tower had been absorbed by the eagle and was being detonated by it, as if you were involved not only in an ecological issue -- threatened extinction of the eagle -- but the whole matter of the confrontation between animate flesh and the technologization of the electricity that was in any case always its principle of animation were coming to a head. The image, however did not seem as interestingly multiplied around the arena as I had hoped. Instead of a sense of a band or series flapping and snapping together asynchronously, it was more like a few disparate projection screens, where you focused on one or the other, but couldn't get a sense of the whole field. I don't know if that was true from other positions, but it did seem there could easily have been more projections.

5) The airplane appears in silence from the top of the amphitheatre and slowly spirals down around the space and lands on the stage area at the front. There it wanders about trying to find its spot Casteneda-style. It stops when it finds it, drops its pomegranate payload, while a live camera picks up the placing of it. Then it positions itself for take off, takes off, and spirals slowly up and out of the space.

Something stalled the entrance of the plane. The silence lasted TOO long. Oy. Here it begins, I thought. But the pilot guy recovered and the plane, beautifully limned with green lights floated out from above the second tier behind home plate, wandered about the Amphitheatre a few times -- the pilot was not able to control the altitude or the curvature of the flight well enough to give the impression of a spiral -- and made a good landing on the stage, where it did its casteneda thing and found its spot. The projection of Paulina in full Persephone regalia deliberately and icily eating her pomegranate seeds from an opened red and juicy pomegranate was perfect. The plane took off, wandered about the colosseum a few more turns, and tried to exit above the second tier behind home plate, but crashed into a wall. Such is life.

6) The carriage with triangular wheels begins its journey to the sound and images of tuba sousa-forms surrounding the arena, Persephone aboard, dragged by slaves in business suits who have to keep struggling to make the triangular wheels "turn." The journey crosses the bridge built by contemporary caretakers of the monumental ruin and occupying the place of the corpus calosum in the coliseal brain. About 30 yards from the stage area the carriage halts, and Persephone sings, "Why, father, why /did you not give me the hands of the cyclops,/ Why, father, why/ did you not give me the heads of the Typhoon,/ Why, father, why/ did you not give me the throat of the sirene,/ Why, father, why, father, why?" The carriage continues with Paulina muttering fragments of her complaint amidst the clunking sounds of the lurching wheels.

In the language of the Biennale in Venice currently in full swing, I give this "Best In Show." The sound of the carriage was amazing. And the gang of business men slaves -- who were in fact American art and archaeology students one of whom it turned out was an expert in ancient papyri, perfectly familiar with the magical papyri upon which I based the palindromes, -- an excellent job, clunking and lurching the carriage across the bridge. Persephone was able to balance fine, and at her appointed spot, she sang her song, again beautifully, I thought, but from where I sat, again the echo blurred the words. Otherwhere, reports are, the words were fine. Guests from Paris, Japan, and Belgium moved the oil drums and made sound upon them to accompany the extraordinary reports of the devolving wheels.

7) Ten oil drums mounted in a frame in a bowling pin or tesseract form, 4,3,2,1, with the four drums at the bottom, spotlighted on stage. Other business men drones begin slowly to translate the drums to another frame across the stage, set up in inverted tesseract form, the one drum on the bottom, thus repeating the image of the two triangular wheels (which, I forgot to mention, are oriented in opposite ways across the axel, so that while one triangle has its base on the ground, the other has its base in the air.) As the translation or transportation of the oil drums ensues, a drummer appears to make erratic drum beats on the barrels, interacting with the thumps and lurches of the triangular wheels and the sounds of burning oil that emit from the speakers while images of the burning oil fields of Kuwait are projected on the colosseum walls.

Included in the next remark.

8) Carriage enters the "Gate of Death" at the back of the stage behind and between the two frames of oil drums. Oil field images fade out. Then silence. Out of the silence the animations of the sheep and goats appear, first in place over the senators' seats where the gladiators were supposed to have been seated. Then everywhere. At the end of this sequence:

Oil flares were very red and spectacular. There could, again, have been more projections. Ditto with the sheep and goats.

9) the second and third incantations are given, which begins with a vowel palindrome chanted in continuous sound transformations of the vowels, ee ee O oo A o ee ee ee o A oo O ee ee followed by another complex, rhythmic one -- I don't have it memorized or the text in front of me, but it goes something like nondut titititin ondut andadand intititis, but organized palindromically. These are done on all speakers, and they crescendo into "Primarily Speaking" -- the multiple voiced piece I wrote about in the pamphlet--

10) which continues to increase into a "Madness of the Brain" free for all of sound improvisations and projected animations, towards the end of which --

Well the second incantation went fine. In fact it went twice. It was to my sense very intense and helped sustain the sonic magic of the piece. The third one simply didn't happen. I think the accidental recurrence of the second one made somebody in the control booth think "enough incantation", let's get on with it, so "Primarily Speaking" came up without nondut tititin endid getting its chance. The "Madness of the Brain" was generally strong and wild. During the afternoon, I had added a third voice to the English and Italian tracks already laid down, and then took off and did various riffs, I don't quite remember what, ending with a big over-arching native American Indian chant thing. The oil drum drummer was supposed to pick up the Chant with big banging Indian style drumming which would then very quickly cut off the sequence exposing Paulina. Well, the drummer guy got the idea to compose using Native American Rhythms, so that started way before the chanting, and the chanting kind of got lost in the rest of the sound, so there was no cue for Paulina to start singing. After a while the madness stopped, and there was silence before Paulina started to sing her last two songs.

11) Persephone begins to sing while wandering through the audience after having her clothes DOUSED WITH OIL... "Milk Honey chloride/ Crystal clear infinity / Burnt ammonium..." a very complex and beautifully haunting song. At the end of which, as it fades into silence

12) 50 white gliders, with five-foot wing-spans are one after another released from the top of the amphitheatre.

Dark Resonances

The oil bit didn't work at all. It just ruined Paulina's dress. There wasn't enough of it to create an oil stink further away from her body than a few feet. The song was in fact gorgeous, which this time I heard, because it was broadcast through speakers on the second tier.

The gliders were emitted from behind home plate and out in center field. We wanted them to come out of the sides of the colosseum, but the pilot and his cohorts felt it was too dangerous. The glider thing was okay, but in center field, they were emitted so close to the audience that people grabbed at them for souvenirs, causing a couple not to make the flight. It was a sweet ending.

That's the lot!

6.16.2005 7:25 pm

A Note on Black Gold

You burn oil to use it. Vegetable matter decays to produce it. As a resource or supply, on the historical scale of the human exploitation of it, it diminishes, it does not increase. It is entropic. Its essence is ruin.

Competition for it causes men to steal it, cheat to control it, kill, burn, connive, conspire, and deceive to extract what is called "profit" from it.

Oil is "black gold," and, given the behavior of what is referred to as the world "market" (as if the conditions of global economics were nothing but a natural extrapolation of the down home impulse to conduct local trade) it is the most prized substance on the planet, prized, that is, by the institutions that own and administer the planet and who manipulate the needs that keep it in demand. If oil is gold, we thrive on ruin.

To keep needs churning, a vast enterprise of misdirection occults the knowledge that the needs themselves could be dissolved by developing alternative ways of "satisfying" them.

But the needs themselves still burn at the center.

Savage flames rage against the savage shibboleth. The despot Saddam Hussein orders the burning of the oil fields of the despots of Kuwait. 100,000 Iraqis (seduced or forced into service by the despot) are slaughtered and buried by the Americans beneath the desert sands, that one despot not absorb the desperate black gold substance of another, that no image of slaughter appear in the American press, that the flames of hell be signed by the name of the Iraqi leader.

The barrels pass from here to there. The exchange of commodities is effected by idiots' tasks. Pointless patterns invert, or pointlessly pointed ones do. The energy of being consumes with savage noises.

Charles Stein

6.27.2005 1:25 am

Here are the long-promised acknowledgments for *Dark Resonances*:

Dark Resonances, Gary Hill in collaboration with Charles Stein and Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson, with:

Rohal De Ritter / Percussion
Christelle Fillod / oil drum manipulator
Yukiko Shinozaki / oil drum manipulator
Mariano Gosio / voice (Italian)

and

Kevin Curran, Dylan Cotton, Robert Gallardo, Paul Bertrand, Jeffrey Brewer, "Jewel" (Mohammad Rakibul Hasan), Doug DeBenedetto, Matthew McCarty, Mike Ambron

Technicians: Max/MSP programming: Aaron "motorino" Miller

Andrea Grasselli with Mario Montanari, Fabio Sirilli, Giovanni Sirilli

Production assistance: Aaron "motorino" Miller, Andriano Mesticella

Animators: Roman Testoni, Gianluca Nava, Novella Iodice, Harvinder Singh, Hesam Daneshvar, Francesco Marchesini

Curated by Esther Coen and Giuliana Stella

The original text of this piece was published on <www.bialystocker.net>, a blogg (sic) whose editor is Dr. Harvey Bialy; a website of uncommon fecundity.