

## Reflecting on *Noise of Words*

### *Part I: Developing the Framework*

I began the process of selecting a topic for my Comparative Literature capstone project with only a desire. I wanted to find a way to integrate my interest in music into my curriculum as a CMPL major; I haven't done much music in a formal classroom setting since high school, and the capstone seemed like an excellent opportunity to do so. After a period of brainstorming about how to bring music into my project in a way that wouldn't feel forced, I decided on the idea of an experimental performance project focused on comparing two deeply related processes: musical transcription and linguistic translation.

I've tended to focus on a few central themes during my time studying the humanities at Oberlin. One such theme is what I would refer to as *the paradox of translation* — the concept that translating or adapting a work from one language (or art form) into another requires a certain trust in the existence of prelinguistic, metaphysical ideas<sup>1</sup>. I've dealt with this subject in everything from a European Political Theory class (in which I [wrote about](#) the problems associated with discussing non-English texts without ever considering translation) to a class on the poetry and prose of John Milton (in which I [wrote about](#) the fall of man in *Paradise Lost* as a reflection of the invention of binary linguistic signification). Since this subject has been relevant for me in such a broad way, I came to the conclusion that it would be a sufficient subject to focus on for

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<sup>1</sup> As I elaborated on this concept pretty extensively in my [program notes](#), I won't do so again here. However, if the idea isn't an immediately accessible one, I'd recommend reading Saussure's "Nature of the Linguistic Sign" (which outlines a straightforward, "structuralist" conception of linguistic signification) in comparison with Deleuze and Guattari's "Introduction: Rhizome" (which deconstructs the assumption that linguistic signification can ever function in this direct manner through a theory of *language as deterritorialization*).

this inherently multidisciplinary capstone idea. So, my project evolved into its next stage — it would not only function as a comparison of musical transcription and linguistic translation, but also as research on this ever-fascinating question of the paradox of translation.

Once I had decided to survey the paradox of translation in my project, it seemed like an obvious choice to work with improvisational music for the musical portion of the comparative experiment I was planning. Improvisatory music is rarely translated to or from paper; when it is, it is almost always done so in a new or experimental manner. This question of transcribing improv seemed to me like a perfect place to go to in order to consider how strange the process of converting ideas or sounds between different languages can be. On the other hand, I'm not a trained jazz improviser in any sense, and I didn't want to try to work with a form of music completely unfamiliar to me as a performer/composer. Thusly, I selected noise as an alternative genre within which I could explore improvisation and its relationship to more structured performance; much of the noise I've seen performed has appeared at least partially improvised, and I have a fair amount of experience (in genres at least tangential to noise) making both [super composed music](#) and [weird, chaotic music](#).

My idea had moved a step forward. My project would be a transcription/translation comparison that would focus on the paradox of translation, and the music I would attempt to transcribe would be in the genre of improvisational noise. This would allow me to explore the limits of translation, as noise improv is an especially difficult (and not regularized or formalized) style to represent with paper and

a pen. I decided to begin making improvisational noise music as a daily practice<sup>2</sup>; my eventual goal would be to record a performance of this kind of music, transcribe it into sheet music, and then attempt to perform it again as a form of research on the problems of translation discussed.

I began studying the question of unorthodox music transcription<sup>3</sup>, diving into the works of composers like [La Monte Young](#), [John Cage](#), [Carl Bergstrom-Nielsen](#), [Cornelius Cardew](#), and [Cathy Berberian](#). In these composers, I found examples of representing sound in a distinctly self-aware manner: a methodology of experimental transcription that could avoid (or at least confront head-on) the paradox of translation. I also read scholarship on the problematic of transcribing experimental and improvised music, like Paolo de Assis' *Sound and Score: Essays on Sound, Score, and Notation*, Alvin Lucier's *Music 109: Notes on Experimental Music*, and Hugh Davis' *Eye Music: The Graphic Art of New Musical Notation*.

At this point, I also began to read the translation theory canon. Texts both within and tangential to translation theory by authors like [Walter Benjamin](#), Friedrich Schleiermacher (especially "On the Different Methods of Translating"), Jacques Derrida (especially "The Father of Logos, from Plato's *Pharmacy*"), [Jorge Luis Borges](#), and [Julia Kristeva](#) helped me come to the conclusion that, even though I wanted to push the limits of representation in my linguistic translation (just like I was trying to with my

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<sup>2</sup> I ended up choosing to work with the instrument on which I am most comfortable — the guitar — for this project. However, I also experimented with a few other setups initially (including a mic'd up toy piano and a contact mic on my throat).

<sup>3</sup> My [bibliography](#) contains a somewhat exhaustive list of sources I researched for both the transcription and translation aspects of my capstone, as well as other works that I found relevant or influential throughout my process.

noise transcription), I still wanted to select an author who was at least somewhat well-suited to my ideas.

I needed to find an author that would be well-aligned to my plan of avoiding the paradox of translation through experimental forms of translation/transcription — one that would thrive from a translation methodology that fit with my philosophical presuppositions. I considered translating the work of a wide number of Japanese authors (mostly due to the fact that I can speak and read Japanese, but also due to a long tradition of noise music in the [Japanese underground scene](#)), including everything from ancient haikus to modernist fiction. Sherif-sensei introduced me to the work of Yoshimasu Gozo, a poet whose work fits my interests quite well: he often reads his poems aloud quite differently than how they're written out on paper, [performs with experimental musicians](#), and generally does his best to [blur the boundaries](#) between music, poetry, visual art, and even film.

To prepare for my translation process, I read *Alice Iris Red Horse: Selected Poems*, a book of translations of Yoshimasu by a number of different translators. Reading *Alice Iris Red Horse* confirmed for me that Yoshimasu was the right choice for my translation project — each different translator who contributed to the collection used a completely different translation methodology (some far more experimental than others), so I felt that translating Yoshimasu through the lens of the translation methodology I was developing wouldn't be especially disrespectful of his work.<sup>4</sup> I also

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<sup>4</sup> I'll touch on this point more later on; some questions I received from audience members during the Q&A session confirmed to me how important this question of authorial respect can be.

researched Yoshimasu himself through watching videos of him perform, looking into the work of related artists, and reading interviews with him.

### *Part II: Creative Pursuits*

Having read lots of relevant music theory, philosophy<sup>5</sup>, and translation theory (as well as having chosen a poet to translate chosen and a musical style to work within), I began the next portion of my project: creating the actual translations and transcription. Throughout this process, I did my best to devote equal time to my own music and Yoshimasu's poetry; I felt that working with these two arts in tandem would help me get closer to an understanding of how the two processes related to each other.

On the music end of things, I formed a noise duo<sup>6</sup> with my friend Natty Baker-Salisbury, and began taking recordings of us performing a vaguely structured yet largely improvisatory piece of music (which later came to be "Counter-Transfer," the piece we listened to [a recording of](#) and performed at the capstone event). About a month before the capstone event, we recorded a performance of our piece in the TIMARA labs. This was before any of my transcription/notation work had happened — we had a general idea of the structure of the piece, but no visual guide to follow as we improvised. In the subsequent weeks, I began to transcribe the piece onto paper while listening to the recording. Using processes influenced by indeterminacy, automatic

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<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly enough, ancient Greek philosophy ended up having a pretty sizeable effect on my process. Specifically, the Platonic dialogue titled "Ion," in which interpretation in and of itself is problematized, was key for me in coming to terms with the impossibility of direct translation.

<sup>6</sup> Though I detail the specific instrumentation we were using in my [eventual transcription of the piece](#), I'll also include a brief explanation here. For each iteration of the piece (in informal practice, recording situations, and the final performance) we kept our setups consistent. I played a prepared electric guitar with a fork woven between the strings, run through a number of effects pedals; Natty used two graphic equalizers plugged into themselves.

writing, and more systematic graphic scoring<sup>7</sup>, I did my best to create a transcription that conveyed my problems with traditional translation while remaining *functional for performance purposes* as well as *aesthetically aligned with Yoshimasu Gozo's work*.

Simultaneously, I read as much as I could find by Yoshimasu in the original Japanese. I ended up selecting three poems for translation. First, I translated 「死人」 using both an audio recording of Yoshimasu performing the poem and a written version of it; next, I translated 「石！」 using only a written version of the text; lastly, I translated 「石狩シート」 using only an audio recording of Yoshimasu performing it<sup>8</sup>. By translating each poem from different sources, I was forced to confront the complexities of attempting to convert sound onto paper. Through this process — in dialogue with my transcription experiments — I came up with my original title for the project: “Sound, Paper, Sound.”<sup>9</sup>

### *Part III: The Performance*

As the performance loomed nearer, I prepared in a few different ways. For the music side of the event, I practiced attempting to replicate the original recording of “Counter-Transfer” with Natty. I decided that, in order to show the audience the relationship of the sounds we would be making in performance to the visual

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<sup>7</sup> Again, a more specific description of my transcription process can be found in my [program notes](#).

<sup>8</sup> All of these translations — and the originals upon which I based them — can be found in my capstone materials [folder](#).

<sup>9</sup> As I discovered just how related to noise music Yoshimasu Gozo's work is (one famous anecdote describes him leaping on-stage to shout his poetry during a particularly intense jazz/noise improv show in Shinjuku), I decided to change the name to “Noise of Words.” To me, this title seemed to capture the fluid, rhizomatic relationship between Yoshimasu's poetry and my noise music that had begun to develop, though “Sound, Paper, Sound” may have given audience members a clearer sense of how exactly the two processes compared to each other.

transcription of it, I would project my transcription on the wall during the event. To this end, I enlisted the help of my friend Judy Jackson, who had already aided me a lot in researching graphic scores and other experimental notation techniques; Judy ended up projecting the scores in (and out) of time with the original recording of the piece, as well as Natty and my recreation of it, during the event.

For the sake of keeping the performance relatively short, I decided to only present my translation of the Yoshimasu Gozo poem that I had translated using only audio/video references: 「石狩シート」. For one, this poem spoke to me most intensely on a personal and emotional level; perhaps more importantly, this process of translation from sound (and image) rather than written words seemed most directly relatable to my musical transcription experiments. So, though I had continued editing and working with my other two translations until just a few weeks before the performance, I ended up focusing exclusively on 「石狩シート」 towards the very end. I watched and listened to two videos of Yoshimasu performing this poem — one with a noise band backing him, and one in a more traditional reading setting<sup>10</sup> — over and over. I tried to capture the intensities and extremities of Yoshimasu's words and actions in my translation<sup>11</sup>,

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<sup>10</sup> We watched both of these performances during the capstone event; they are also both available in my performance materials [folder](#).

<sup>11</sup> My choice to focus on intensities and extremities in both my translations and transcriptions was primarily influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's "What is a Minor Literature," in which they imply that literature that focuses on these elements tends to be less politically problematic than literature that goes for more pure meaning value.

though, sticking with the philosophical basis I had started from, I never tried to do anything akin to direct translation<sup>12</sup>.

At this point, I created my [program notes](#) with the help of my sister, Hallie Evans, who is far more proficient in graphic design than me. In this pamphlet (which I distributed to audience members at the event, and then made public via social media<sup>13</sup>), I attempted to explicate the philosophical system behind my translation and transcription processes, the historical context of my research, the political potential of a performance of this sort, and why I chose Yoshimasu Gozo in particular to translate. One of the most difficult parts of this entire project was trying to get my performance notes to be a reasonable length. Ideally, I would have had the pamphlet be approximately 4 pages; this amount seemed this most immediately digestible to me. However, this was a complicated and expansive project; I ended up coming to terms with the fact that I needed 12 pages to make clear everything I wanted to get across to the audience. Even so, I think the program notes could have actually covered even more things that I didn't directly deal with in the performance; for one, I probably should have made a section more explicitly explaining that I don't necessarily think all poetic translation has to adhere to the strict philosophical guidelines I established for myself for this particular project. Though I do fully believe there's a potential violence in attempting to translate anything directly, Ting-sensei's question during the Q&A

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<sup>12</sup> One relevant example of this is my translation of Yoshimasu's "一角樹" into "Re'em." 一角樹 refers to a unicorn-like creature from Chinese mythology that would be unfamiliar to the average Japanese reader; "Re'em" refers to a unicorn-like creature from the Bible that would be unfamiliar to the average Western reader. Clearly, I'm not trying to capture any sort of exact meaning value here — instead, I'm trying to capture the rupture in understanding Yoshimasu creates in the audience by using a defamiliarizing (yet tradition-oriented) term.

<sup>13</sup> This, and a fair amount of other work associated with the capstone, is all available on my [blog](#).

session was helpful to me in realizing that certain (less marginalized, more well-known) authors probably require this kind of experimental translatory treatment more than (more marginalized, less well-known) others.

The the days leading up to the performance were emotionally and physically taxing. I continued to make small changes to the program up until the very last minute — for one, I ended up deciding just one day before the performance to read a [Deleuze and Guattari quote](#) at the beginning of the event that I felt would frame the program well. I don't think I've ever been more stressed about an artistic project than I was in that final preparation period; between logistically setting up the performance (everything from finding a solid venue and a filming team to acquiring projection supplies, amplifiers, food and drink for the audience, etc.) and questioning the entire philosophical basis of the project (something about practicing the poetry performance on repeat in tandem with practicing the noise piece on repeat made me feel quite confused), I was pretty overwhelmed. Despite those sometimes difficult feelings, it was an incredible learning experience for me; I feel more comfortable with the massive undertaking performance art can be now, and look forward to doing a lot more of it in the future.

I think the performance itself went really well. There were some small mishaps (such as, most obviously, me losing track of what part of the performance we were in at one moment, and thusly announcing where we were in the performance to the audience incorrectly — fortunately, Natty corrected me). But overall, I feel like I communicated what I intended to about Yoshimasu Gozo's art, the relevance of

experimental notation processes to comparative literature as a discipline, the philosophical dimensions of noise, the paradox of translation, and so on.

*Part IV: In Hindsight*

What has stuck out to me most in reflecting on the performance is that the way I presented the work — by briefly announcing what would occur (i.e., “Now we’re going to watch a video of Yoshimasu Gozo!”) and then doing that action — didn’t feel quite right. I think it would have been better to either make the performance completely fluid and streamlined (i.e., no announcements between any portion of the performance and some sort consistent sound or visual element throughout the entire event) or more directly accessible (i.e., give a slightly longer and more explanatory introduction for each portion of the program before doing it). I believe this might have made the performance feel more confident and less stuck between different styles of presentation.

Professor Lopez’s question after the performance has really stayed with me, too. Now that I’ve worked with Yoshimasu’s poetry so much, perhaps it would be pertinent for me to get in touch with him and see if he has any particular views on how close (or far) translators should attempt to get to his originals in their adaptations of them. It makes a lot of sense to me that, as Professor Lopez pointed out, John Cage would get frustrated with musicians when they interpreted his work as completely open for subjective interpretation despite clear performance instructions. This strain of thought has made it even clearer to me that I made the right choice in going with Yoshimasu for my translations; I think that if I had worked with a more traditional poet’s

art, there would have been a more obvious breach of respect involved in translating it so experimentally.

Moving forward, I want to keep pushing comp lit as a discipline to strange places. I want to keep making noise, notating music, translating poems, and crafting handmade visual media. Most importantly, I want to keep working with Yoshimasu Gozo's art as much as I can. One possible project that I could imagine coming next for me would be a translation of a Yoshimasu performance that includes noise performance in unison with poetry reading (i.e., attempting to recreate [this performance](#) with similar instrumentation, but in English). In regards to more possibilities for future translations of Yoshimasu's work, Sherif-sensei's question about why I didn't attempt to emulate Yoshimasu's physical movements in my performance of 「石狩シート」 has also continued to resonate with me; I think another possible follow-up to this capstone in response to that question could be a more rigorous attempt to translate an individual Yoshimasu performance. This sort of follow-up performance would require trying to capture Yoshimasu's physical movements, etc. in a more explicit manner that I initially shied away from (i.e., attempting to recreate [this performance](#) with all of its physical details, but in English) — though, as I mentioned during the Q&A session, I can't help but think of Pierre Menard<sup>14</sup> when I consider this idea...

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<sup>14</sup> See Jorge Luis Borges' "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote."

**ishikari sheets**

*by yoshimasu gozo*

*translated by danny evans*

ishikari sheeee-ts

cheeks against            the paper window

white *i n k* re'em

*v i s i o n* of

    a mountain

    ridden

    suddenly

    lifted a memory of a flower.

(a re'em is a beast of legend, like a rhinoceros, but in the author's heart was a small white silk worm 's form. maybe it was an image of the god of sericulture, floating, or the form of a silkworm from somewhere in the backwoods of china.)

form of a *child*

from somewhere in the back  
woods.

a star fall from the atmosphere

    — **qui**    **et** death

to climb the knoll at Morai,  
(but the pitcher isn't here, too— )

    the fennel flowers were blooming.

mouth of river: Nest            tulip Nest

wet the finger,

imitated the

thin *v v v v e i l l l* of dunes.

yellow hatted *P h o e n i c i a n* sailor,





the fruit of the mulberry tree: it was delicious.

from yamamoto ryokan:

house of rest

public laundry room

**quietly** descending the wood staircase of the universe,

(mountain lily-rustling beeeasts)

黒くて古い都市のカブリオレ

“seems pathetic, like a tree exposed to a flash of lightning on the knoll ”

ishikari shee ts, cheeeeeeeeks against the paper window

white *ink* re'em was resting its hand,

crouching,

thinking

(the underside of (the point of) a green leaf、tilted、is beautiful.

-ed)

ol dfabric ,

the faint smell of the kanji for 'fish'

the weft is addressing the warp

the swallowed fish is the fish that swallowed  
waves **quietly** lap.

voi ce o f oldf abric to 、 no one

is near

scent of tree,

under the tree

flowers were blooming.

ripples of the planet

of a little road

one day when i discovered fossils of ripples by the wayside  
may have been when My Road Began.

o ld                      bicycle came to a stop  
(strange whirp oooooo l  
biblical re'em)  
that was              a sign the primates were freed  
We Are                a sign the primates were freed

no descendents

the whiteness of skin reflects in the eye  
w e make O u r own Hell.  
(whirlpool. strange, biblical re'em.)

woven mat living on the water  
remains of the veranda  
young serpent on the second floor  
' tam    tam '

we were coming closer to the veranda of the genesis of the universe.

the closer we came, we came apart    tam tam tam tam    our old fabric sheeeeeeeeeeeeeee ts

foliage  
ark  
shiiiiiiip

'the mother dangling from the sky' <sup>parent</sup>  
may have been a vision of the 'flag mother' on a clear day in the universe.

wrrinkles wrinkle swrinkles wrinkle  
kachina doll's  
wrrinkles wrrinkles wrrinkles  
those wrinkles—meeting inside life—weaving us, death-like  
wrinkle wrinkle <sup>wrinkle</sup>  
kachina doll  
wrinklewrinkle

suddenly look :

white *i n* *k r e* 'em crouching under the mailbox

the loneliness of a postcard,  
like smudged accent markers,  
the loneliness of a postcard

Ishikari River at dusk:

a soccer ball came flying like one peach (we stood at the driftwood) in the thin light  
in a book, on the wrinkle of a white piece of paper, from right  
to left

on the throat of the book i played a little, drew a curve  
inside a dream,  
brought home from the ocean

that was the first i knew of a striped ball,  
the first i knew of a striped ball.

At that time, I was *b r i g h t. b r i g h t*  
rivermouth in the eyes of a woman (green and narrow— why?)

wasn't sitting at ishikari rivermouth  
blue light of a swordsman in a dream --ta. Ta.

in the past, at the rivermouth, landscape of the *s o c c e r b a l l*  
i are 'em think it's wonderful.

what is *okadama*?  
fireworks burst open, *b u s b u r s s t*

what is *okadama*?

no 'i' sound where in the bottom of the night is the hand in 'hand-written  
letter'?

the *d r i e d* up Ishikari River: it's you. I took the form of that river and stood up.  
tree smell—  
tree box stood up.

O mountain lily, oh mountain lily:

trembling forms and sounds  
vessel: of the universe

white cow ghosts of india playing here  
oh mountain lily は o mountain lily ha  
at the entrance house of fireworks, the burst bus  
No 'i' sound  
\_\_\_ was listening without speaking.

**'deadpeople'**

*by yoshimasu gozo*

*translated by danny evans*

i-

f

you stare motionlessly,  
you can see deadpeople  
who left the graveyard ,  
roaming lonely-seem ing-  
ly.

two people, thre-

e,,

sound less ly mov ing  
through slugg ish act -i- on.  
creation

-i-f you try to ask likewhispering,  
they can **quietly** respond:  
'deadpeople.'

sensitive form of  
the hydro-lo-  
gate,  
washing a way the shall  
ows,  
expresses his lips.

some thing

,

,

some  
intuitive sensation  
(sensitive) (intuition)  
appears to underlay their exist  
- -ence.

this 1  
sketch sheet  
puts eye into the i.

just like just 1 i gen-  
tly submerging  
rightthrough the water'ssurface,  
eye am seeing.  
i am see(i)ng.

\*

very  
**quiet.**  
silence:  
when i  
hear d  
t hat  
wo rd,  
i i mag i ned th i ngs,  
but  
i ' m sure i t's th i s one.

the  
captur -ing of my sense  
may -be

only  
remember(ing)

,

terrible heaviness  
on my back-.

i feel  
the glittering fang of  
a giant animal  
on the unpainted back-  
face.

my i  
may be  
the tip of the fang.

eye,  
me,

this 1 light beam  
from the back of me  
pierces the grain,  
the fang?,

i don't know.  
anyway,  
i am seeing.

\*

deadperson turns his face,i place an impression of  
my face

on

that face.possession begins?!

no, it must dif-

fer.

arrange-doing

the dis order

o

f

his sidelocks.

sometime

(to see

inside h[i]s dream)

we(?) spoke about

meteorite observ ation

methodologies .

deadperson speaks,

no he doesn't speak,

idon'tknowのだ。

like a human be-ing,

he is transf

orm

ing

somewh ere but,,

it is not abstract.  
dead person(s) be.

not a very artistic way of be-ing,,  
.....  
...

smell-ing rotten?  
no , iam breathing.

i took  
the emotion of  
s(h)ame for my rottensmell,

then i  
van(i)sh ed.

\*

you can see dead persone who left the graveyard,  
roaming (seeming lonely.)

two people, 3  
soundlessly moving  
through sluggish act -ion.  
motion

\*

「deadpeople」

..  
...

..beautifull like her fo ot  
Shin-ing.

bright eyes, teeth white ly gleam ing *bright-eyed-and-bushy-tailed*  
beautiful as the turni-  
ng face  
of a wom en  
from a myth.

like hearing my own voice

from somewhere far away

shouting ,

「i like you 」

it's only that voice,

is it my conscious

ness persist

ing?, sex act,

it's

the sense of packing meat

and the entirety of my

conscious

ness

and 1 bo-

-dy but,

,my vo(i) ce

was more pleasurable

than ever be

fore. mirror!

na rc -is

s

us?!

those doubts al-

ready

(didn't) occur.

those words

will **quietly** me

It.

dead person(s

) be.

\*

usually at dusk,

**quietly** in a sin

gle room,

deadpeople

start walking.

\*

「deadperson [i]  
あれ the future.」

f

elt like hear-ing  
description words.

un

-like a broken vo(i)ce.

'stone s !'

by yoshimasu gozo

translated by danny evans

cherry blossoms scatter too— so, me-さん. little half-light in the corner of the schoolyard  
( light green) sand grain into airspace, like how many(?) scattered cherry blossoms  
suspended 2, 3 meters、 mid-air body of a plane made to vibrate with pleasure left to right  
(think of fairly large, blossom-colored U F Os).

(half-light in the corner of the schoolyard)

light green of 3, 4 meters into the upper air <sup>イ</sup> so, me-さん. miraculous object just floating there,  
right? packing a little? dazedly light green like the smell of burning to there  
with pleasure -ed.

object , like slipping into the house of the un-conscious— (however as usual  
body of the aircraft, while sparkling, like vibrating)

gently to 3000 meters? 5,000 meters? 70,00 meters? 470,0 meters?  
the heavens to the bluish black red copper of the house of the un-conscious,  
look-ing for land  
to land on— it seems the object is flying.

目  
so, me-さん. so, me-さん.  
to the process of making a painting like an *a m e r i c a n i n d i a n* talisman  
there is a 砂絵  
(sand-painting)

sand sprinkled on the vast land, ready-made  
4 , 5 hours? 4, 5 days?

then, that painting floating it's one sheet of magic to go lie down in another universe(?)

私

so, me-さん. object flying in the sky, shivering with pleasure, when gliding through super-high altitudes day of gods; day of (how many) thousands of universe(s)

object vibrating with pleasure

and gap、 of、 soil、 to how many rows becoming alongside it?  
(laughing?)

thin membrane layer

shivering membrane becoming alongside (it's like our eyes, in this way, slipping out into the out side)

it's the shadow of the word 「light green」

spring was ending, scattering below above the cherry blossom petals, dim wetness—  
when trying to lift up, like softly washing that wetness together with cherry blossom petals  
our schoolyard is tipp

ing in a big *l a n d s l i d e* ,

when far away, how many (?) thousands of lights

one year's hills

shine with relief.

しね

to

bluish black of light

green of bluish

black of light

green

shiver, tremble, shiver, tremble,,

me-さん, right?

*st o n e s* ,

stones!

# "C O U N T E R - T R A N S F E R"

(For prepared electric guitar & two graphic equalizers.)

originally performed by Danny Evans & Natty Baker-Salisbury.

## GUITAR SETUP

Electric guitar (or guitarist's pref.)

→ Tuned to DADGAD.

→ 4-pronged fork w/ wren  
btwn strings.



[CONNECT W/ PARTIALLY  
BROKEN PATCH CABLE]

Volume pedal

→ Should contain wah  
setting that triggers  
nearly immediate feed-  
back when set to 100%  
high-pass.



Chorus pedal

→ Should trigger  
wobbling sound when  
set to 100% depth.



Distortion pedal

[SHOULD BE CLOSE TO ALWAYS  
FEEDING BACK (AT  
GTRIST'S DISCRETION)]



Delay unit 1

→ Set to "HOLD";  
changes in speed  
should alter pitch  
predictably.



Delay unit 2

→ Loop setting

with reverse, half-speed, and 2x-  
speed functions (should alter  
pitch predictably).



(reverb pedal encouraged  
but not fully necessary.)

Amplifier

(CLOSE TO GUITAR PICKUPS)

## GRAPHIC EQs SETUP

• Plug outputs into inputs.

• Take outputs from secondary  
outputs (into mixer).

[TO CREATE FEEDBACK LOOP.]

[IF POSSIBLE, SET SPEAKER IN RANGE  
OF GUITAR PICKUPS.]

Performers should face  
each other in an enclosed  
space. Wires & other electronic  
covering floor.

Gestural communication is  
encouraged.

"COUNTER-TRANSFER"



Pitch

↑hi

↓low



Volume

↑hi

↓low



Density

↑hi

↓low



Dryness

↑dry

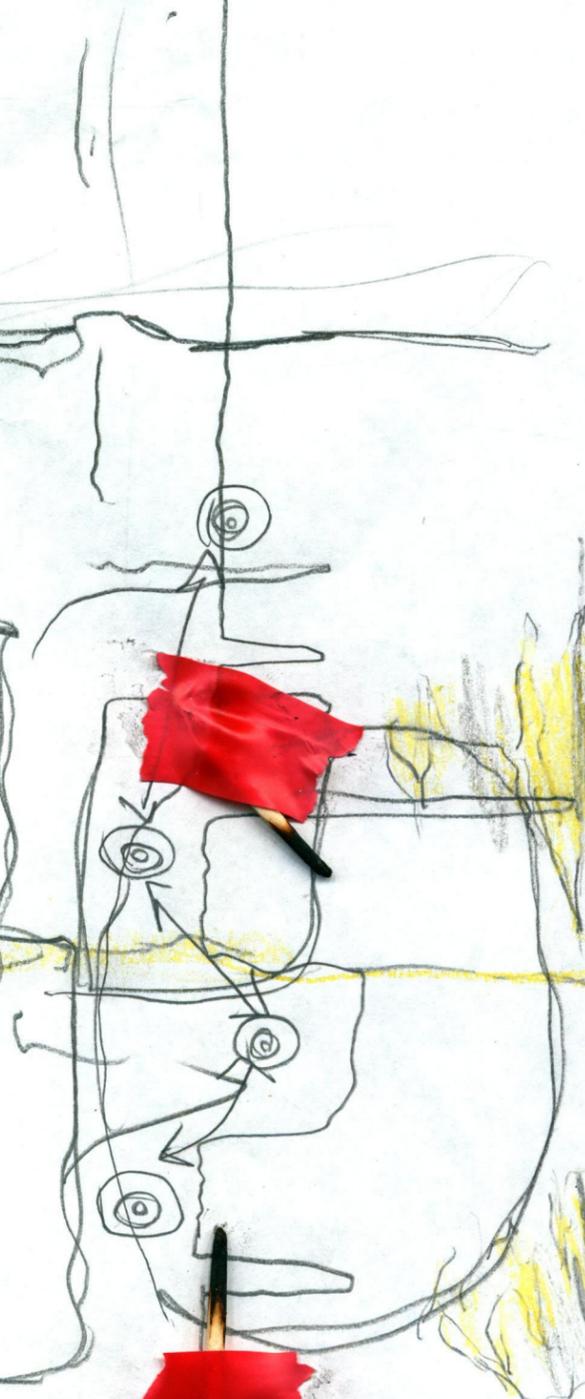
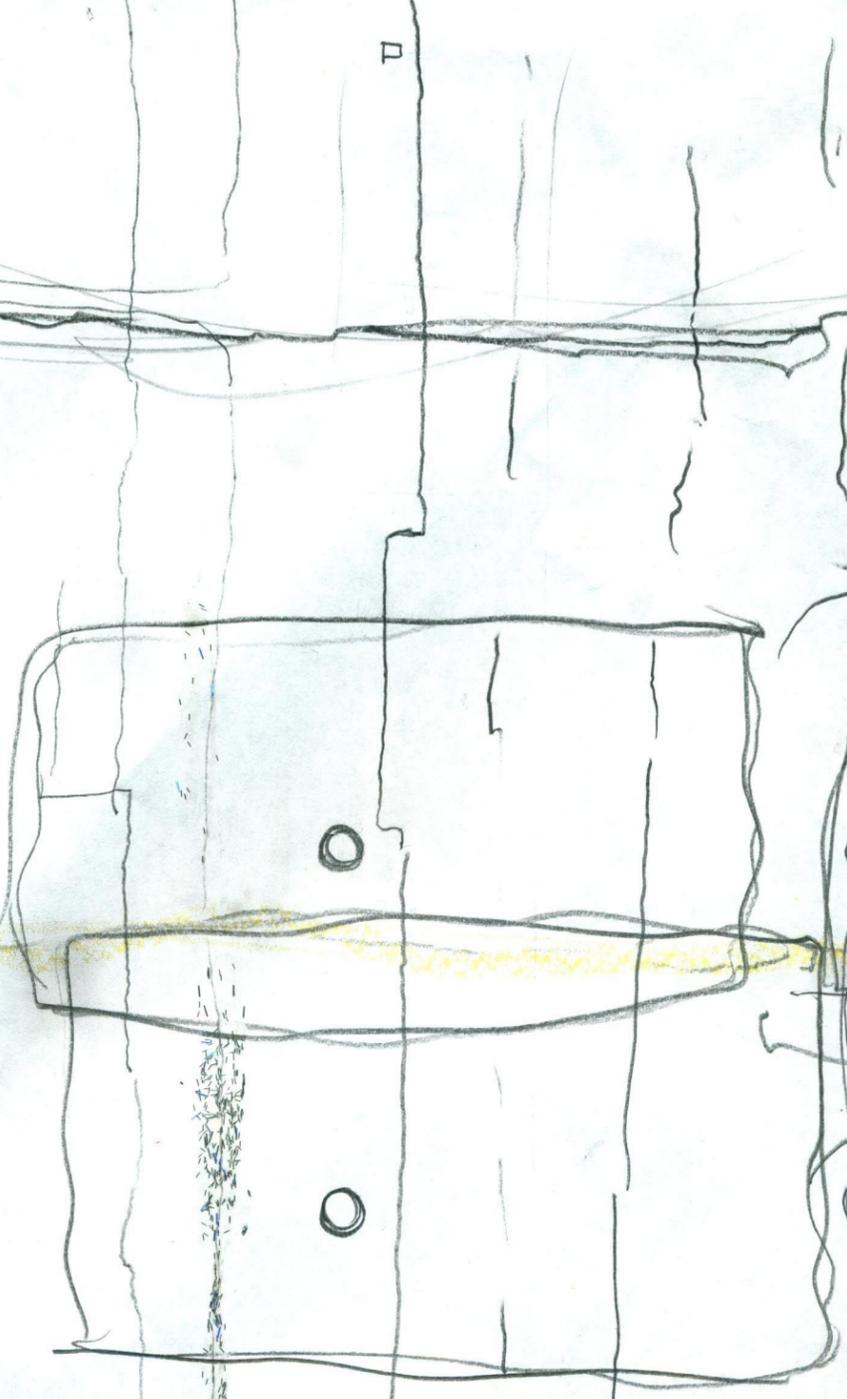
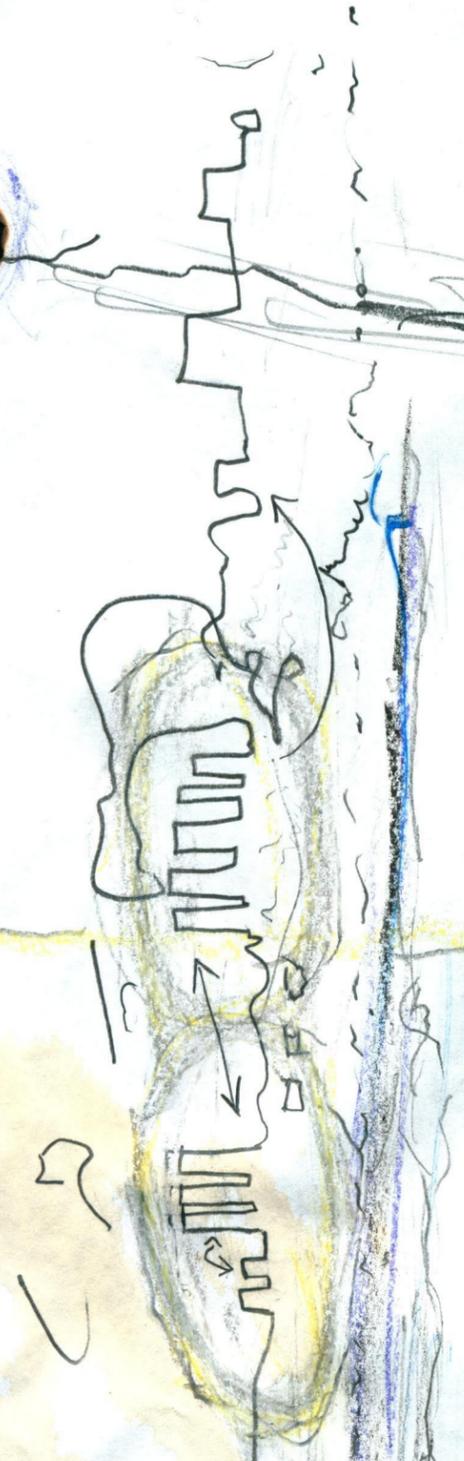
↓wet



Repetitiveness

↑#

↓0



0 sec

10

20

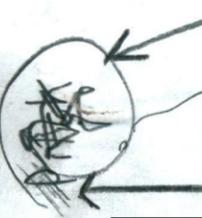
30

40

50

60 sec

"COUNTER-TRANSFER"



③

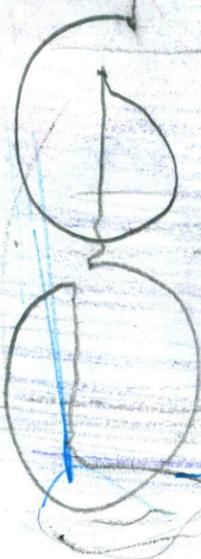
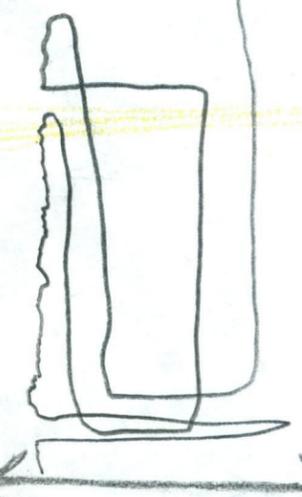
Handwritten scribbles and symbols, including a large '3' and some illegible characters.

Handwritten text: "A..."



Handwritten text: "Angles"

Handwritten text: "Repetition"



Handwritten text: "dark"



Handwritten text: "Mood"

0 sec

80

90

100

2:00 min

2:10

"COUNTER-TRANSFER"



2:20 2:30 2:40 2:50 3:00 3:10 3:20

Volume Density Synthesis Repetitive-ness

"COUNTER-TRANSFER"



pitch

Volume

Density

Repetitiveness

Repetitiveness

3:30

3:40

3:50

4:00

4:10

4:20

4:30

4:40

4:50

"COUNTER-TRANSFER"



5:00

5:10

5:20

5:30

5:40

6:00

# noise of words

---

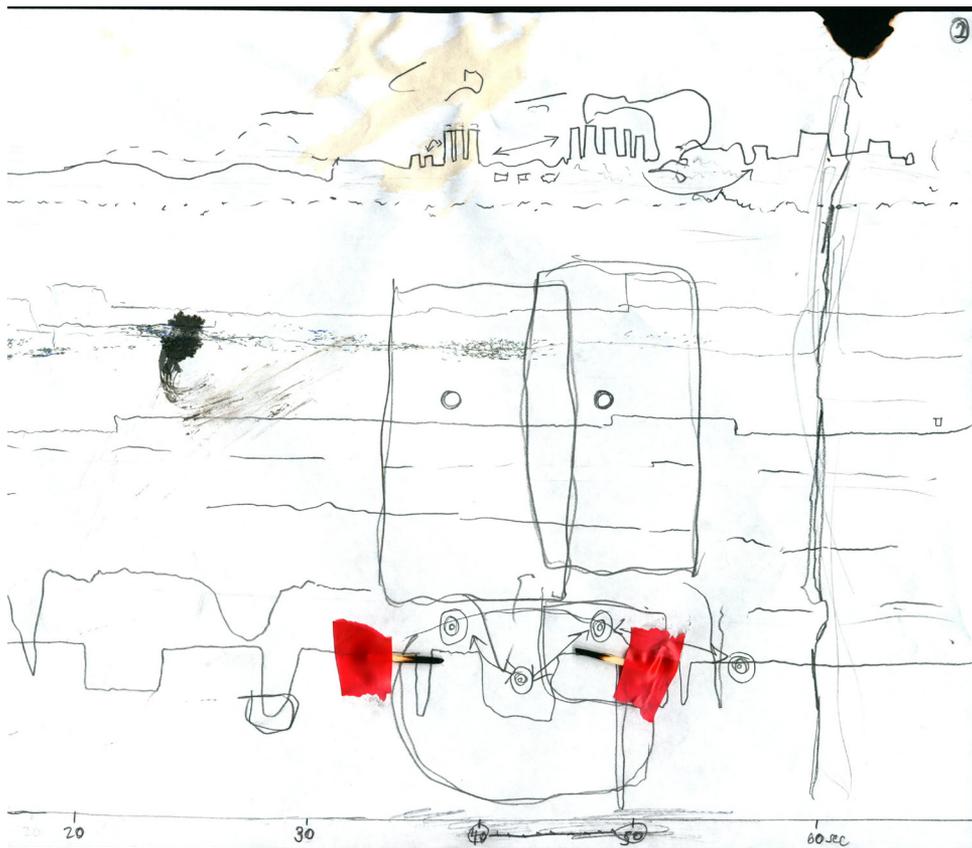
**A COMPARATIVE  
LITERATURE  
CAPSTONE  
PERFORMANCE**

**FAIRCHILD CHAPEL  
@ OBERLIN COLLEGE  
12.3.17, 5 P.M.**

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the poetry of yoshimasu gozo  
translated by danny evans  
+ noise by natty baker-salisbury  
and danny evans

「言葉のノイズ」



# PROGRAM

- 01 吉増剛造、「石狩シーツ」  
"ishikari sheets"  
yoshimasu gozo  
(radio play version)
- 02 "ishikari sheets"  
translated by danny evans
- 03 "counter-transfer (take 1)"  
recorded by danny evans  
+ natty baker-salisbury
- 04 "counter-transfer (take 2)"  
performed by danny evans  
+ natty baker-salisbury
- 05 吉増剛造、「石狩シーツ」  
"ishikari sheets"  
yoshimasu gozo
- 06 question + answer

# *metaphysics of binary translation*

Translation has often been conceptualized as an A to B movement from one language or culture to another. In the structuralist paradigm, we imagined the translator first capturing some sort of pre-linguistic meaning behind the initial word, then offering another word for the same conceptual object in the target language.

This framework of translation assumes an impenetrable binary between an individual signifier and the prelinguistic signified. If this binary between signifier and signified were absolute, translation would indeed function directly; a computer program could simply identify the signified truths in a series of signifiers and replace them with equivalent ones in a different language.

But this binary translation paradigm contains unreliable metaphysical logic. Translators that intend to exactly represent the signified idea from the source text in the target

language inherently trust that signified ideas are somehow real, and fully separable from signifiers. For Derrida, this simply isn't true: in his worldview, "there are no Platonic forms which underlie our conceptual forms ... There is nothing, no pure meaning behind words, behind language" (Edwin Gentzler). How can we identify an object being represented in two different languages — and subsequently translate "directly" — if we cannot even be sure this object exists?

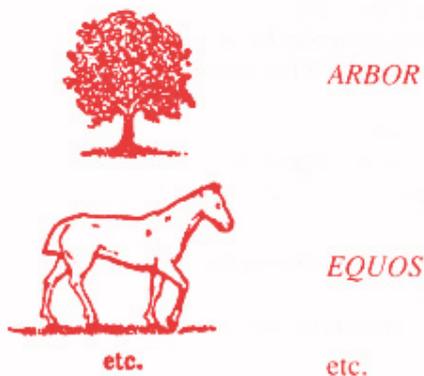


Fig. 1

In the structuralist understanding of translation, the question of what actual languages are serving as source and target is ultimately irrelevant. As, for Saussure, the relationship between any word and its meaning would be arbitrary and binary, translating from any language into any other would always be the same process of excavating truth value in one language and re-representing it in another.

But translation does not exist in a political vacuum. According to Lawrence Venuti in "Invisibility," there is a "violence that resides in the very purpose and activity of translation," especially when the translator assumes a direct transfer of meaning from the source language. This violence is "the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the translating language and culture," and thusly it is "always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality."

When we assume translation is a binary meaning transaction, we fail to account for differences in reality's constitution in the target culture: differences which inevitably transform the incoming text. How can we translate in a way that does not ignore sociocultural difference in this potentially violent way?

Venuti offers the possibility of a "foreignizing" translation program — one that purposefully forces the reader to consider that they are reading a reimagination of a text in an unnatural political context. For Venuti, this experimental methodology could "restrain the ethnocentric violence" and "cultural narcissism" of traditional translation into dominant cultural settings through emphasizing the subjectivity of truth (and its inextricable relationship to individual languages).

# indeterminate notation

In Western music notation we encounter the same philosophical and political problems that haunt traditional translation. The performer is expected to interpret and sound a paper-bound signifier — such as the eighth note, or a D major chord — in a manner meant to recreate the initial “idea” of the composer. This process assumes a metaphysical, non-locational piece of music separate from its notation, one the performer can replicate. And, like traditional translation, it results in the possibility of politically insensitive reinterpretations of reality by a performer sociopolitically disconnected from the composer, or vice versa.

In the transcription of indeterminate music, I see an example of translation that circumvents certain aforementioned problems of structuralist translation. Notation of indeterminate music is a direct confrontation with the impossibility of signifying ideas through symbols. Each performance of

the indeterminate composition is inherently different, pointing to the instabilities of the text and what it theoretically represents. In *Composition 1960 #7*, La Monte Young does not attempt to establish a binary relationship of signifier and signified with the performer by offering “specific notation”; instead he uses notation to do the opposite, to make the performer uniquely aware of the incongruence between paper and sound. Young criticizes the notion that an idea can be directly communicated through a signification system by pushing this very system to its limits. It is a self-aware placing of the unwritable into writing.

Inspired by indeterminate composers' abandonment or abusive utilization of meta-physically slippery paradigms of "traditional" scoring, I centered my translation research on a musical transcription project of my own — one that required me to translate sound to paper in an experimental, self-aware manner. I imagine an educational relationship between my graphic notation experiments and eventual development of a new translation paradigm.

Natty Baker-Salisbury and I composed a 7-minute piece of mostly improvised noise music titled "Counter-Transfer" for prepared guitar and two graphic equalizers. The piece sounds radically different each time we perform it, but generally contains certain consistent elements of instrumentation and dynamics; we recorded a singular performance of this piece for eventual transcription. Due to its density and improvisatory nature, transcription from a traditionally melodic, harmonic, or even rhythmic

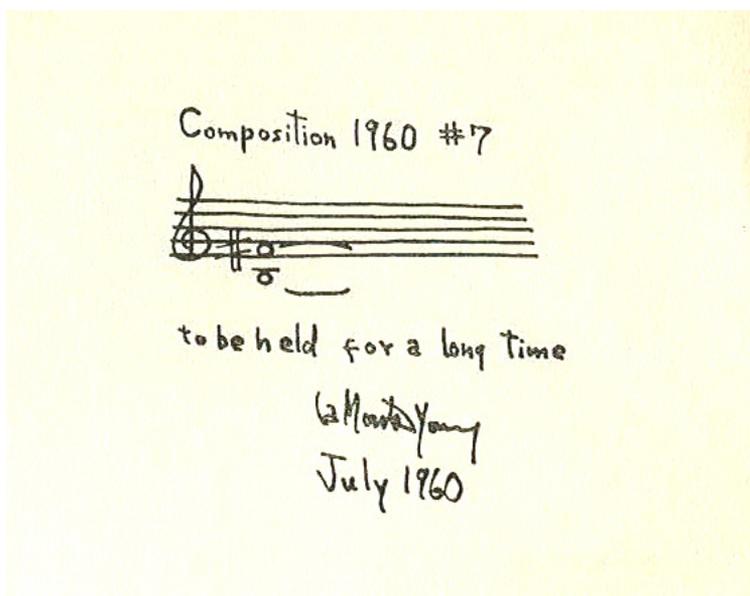


Fig. 2

perspective would have been redundant. Attempting to represent these elements on paper would have been akin to a binary translation of poetry that captures little of the original's actual content, instead forcing it into a canonized system (the system being, on the one hand, Western classical notation, and on the other, meaning-bound translation).

Instead of striving to be "representative" in my notation experiments, I attempted to capture a sense of the recording's "extremities or limits" through experimenting with unfamiliar materials — nail polish, leaves and flowers, glitter — and unpredictable processes — burning, spilling liquids — while transcribing the piece. I interacted with the score with these and other art materials while listening to the recording to capture experiential moments of intensity and rupture.

Today, Natty and I will attempt to "recreate" the initial record-

ing by reading my essentially non-representative transcription. We accept the inherent inaccuracy of the project; we have no chance of creating sounds exactly akin to the original. For this reason we will listen to the original piece before the performance, and revel in difference.

Translators must accept the impossibility of translation and transcription if we want to escape the potential for violence that exists within them. No performer can ever recreate the ideas of a composer through looking at a piece of paper. No translator can ever recreate the ideas of an author in a new language. Sound, paper, sound. In between them all, the mediating translator is always a factor.

# why yoshimasu gozo?



Fig. 3

Influenced by my political discomfort with common translatory practices and experiences with experimental scoring, I want to push my linguistic translation process to a place where the possibility of “accurate” translation itself is constantly questioned. For this reason, I chose to translate the poetry of Japanese poet Yoshimasu Gozo. Yoshimasu’s art is sometimes more akin to noise music than poetry. He often performs poems alongside experimental musicians, stretching out words and vo-

calizing nonsense (despite the fact that he’s “reading” from a paper copy of his poetry); he numbers John Cage among his central influences.

Contemporaries and translators have written of Yoshimasu that his “words possess more energy than meaning” and that he “aspires” to represent “the relentlessness, the ruptures, and the arbitrariness of language” in his poetry (Hosaka Kenjiro, *The Voice Between*). Thusly, it seems uncouth to translate

Yoshimasu's work from a perspective that implies meta-physical truth value behind individual words; indeed, he often writes of the beauty, smell, or memory not of objects themselves, but of the words and symbols that represent these objects.

I translated one poem, 「死人」, for which I had access to both an audio recording of Yoshimasu performing the poem with a musical ensemble, as well as a more traditional paper-bound transcription; next, I translated 「石!」 with only a written version as reference; and lastly I translated 「石狩シーツ」, for which I only had access to two different video recordings. Each different translatory setup forced me to interact with Yoshimasu through a window of distinct limitations: a clear marking of the distance between my sonic and/or visual perception of Yoshimasu's words and his initial thought processes. To attempt to directly represent the "content" of Yoshimasu's

poetry would not only be impossible: it would be an aesthetic betrayal of his poetic system. So, each translation is, rather, an attempt to capture the intensities of Yoshimasu's performative voice and abstract style.

Today, we will watch two performances of 「石狩シーツ」, for which I will also read my translation. Like our performance of "Counter-Transfer," this particular method of consuming Yoshimasu's work will put the inevitability of difference at the forefront. One of Yoshimasu's performances sounds and looks like experimental improvisation, while the other is a somewhat more traditional poetry reading; my translation is, of course, bound by the political and philosophical impossibility of transferring authorial intent directly.

*“Everywhere, organized music is traversed by a line of abolition—just as a language of sense is traversed by a line of escape—in order to liberate a living and expressive material that speaks for itself and has no need of being put into a form. This language torn from sense, conquering sense, [brings] about an active neutralization of sense...”*

**Deleuze and Guattari,**  
*Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

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**Fig. 1**  
from Ferdinand de Saussure's  
*Nature of the Linguistic Sign*



**Fig. 2**  
La Monte Young  
*Composition 1960 #7*

**Fig. 3**  
Yoshimasu Gozo,  
*“Naked Memos”*

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ありがとうございます



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