

Helen Palmer

**Sirens and Organs
or
A Dramatisation of the Transition
from
Duality to Deliquescence
via
the Diffracted Systems
of
Acousticks and Opticks
or
If These Whorls Could Talk**

Staged in Blackpool, in the North West of England,
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Latitude: 53.814969 Longitude: -3.0554974

Through multiple wanderings, thoughtings and fictings I have tried to synthesise synaesthesia, tried again, failed again, failed better, and along the way realised that my own neuropolysemic entanglements are perhaps of a different kind. In my hometown of Blackpool, Lancashire, a cacophony of multifarious sirens and organs can be heard, seen, felt or complexly perceived. Some bewilderingly assault the optical and aural systems simultaneously; some have a pulse; some you can touch; some touch you. Organs and sirens: polysemous and intrafigural symbols as manifold sense organs. I attempt to chart a journey or perhaps a love note to synaesthesia which takes place in several times and places within and around the town, which in all of its excesses, hedonisms, ejections, emissions and propulsions is for me a hub of sensory clash and entanglement. Through the skin of buildings, through portals on stained wallpaper, through multisensory yearnings, and finally to the sea.

ORGANS: instruments, tools, tendrils, viscera, sensoria. A scale. Every organ exhibits, plays, presents or demonstrates a scale. Organs presuppose scales which consist of measured segmentations of change: variations. Variations might be of pitch, volume, colour, tone colour, timbre or sensation. What if we were to think transversally about these segmentations, in terms of their difference of both degree and kind? A speculative taxonomy transmutes the segmentation into something different. It estranges; it queers. The only difference between the variations within the speculative taxonomy of organs is perhaps the anthropocentric notion of an operator: a musician, a player, a conductor. An orchestrator.

ORGANS. The High Tide Organ in Blackpool is played by the sea. Eight pipes are attached to the sea wall, which are connected to eighteen organ pipes within the tentacular sculpture housed on the promenade. At high tide, the swell of water causes air to flow up the pipes and causes them to sound. The pipes are pitched harmonically around B flat. Is this a sense organ or a musical instrument or a tool used by the sea, or perhaps all three? This organ is unmistakably derived from sea life, particularly cephalopodic life, which gives a different, tentacular sense to the organ. So what does it mean if an organ is a tentacle, or a tentacle is an organ? A sensitive instrument: a limb, a tool. A tendril.

SIRENS. Ineluctable diffractibility of the sensory manifold: dervished rubbishing child gull cries. Signatures of all things I am here to taste: deepfried candyfloss narcotic vinegartang. You tell me to analyse I'd rather synthesise. Blend and multiply the senses. Why? Because sirens do more than make sound. Sirens make plaits with long hair composed of three elastic elements: 1) feeling 2) time 3) space. So. Stretch it out and spool it like syrup. Tempo rubato. Pull it apart. Time honey or time dough. What the music does to you, line by heartfelt line, whizzing from fifteen to nineteen and back again because you never really went anywhere. Teetering is really falling, falling is really landing. Rushing through the depths, nineteen eighteen seventeen sixteen fifteen. What sound does the am-lance make. The knee and the gnaw. A wail awave upon the veil. Wassail. Ululate. Throatcroak. Heartrasp. Warning. Nineteen senses. Buckfast. The honeyed voices inside the tincture bottle denounce engraved numbers in favour of a viscosity sliding scale.

ORGANS. or one organ in particular, play a significant part in Blackpool's history since the 19th century. The Wurlitzer organ in Blackpool Tower Ballroom (also pictured there) has been there since 1935 and was made famous by Reginald Dixon, who played it for forty years, and more recently Phil Kelsall who has also been playing the Wurlitzer for forty years, and still going. Organs require the playing of three keyboards and the reading of three staves: three simultaneous lines. The human operator must, perhaps, think topologically, or toposophically. There is something agentially interesting about the concept of an instrument. An instrument, by its very nature, does not have agency. Who, therefore, has the agency when the sea organ plays its sounds? Sea organs, Aeolian harps and wind chimes operate without further human intervention; they are shaped thus in order to harness the power of the wind or the waves in order to create musical sounds.

SIRENS. Don't even get me started on words. The liquid ones and the crunchy ones and the ones in between. Eating Crunchy Nut Clusters with a touch of honey bathed in a cold milk bath. A nut is the hard full atom of a consonant. A mouthful of throthful faithful forthflowing mirthful youth crunching away hamstercheeks with milkdripping chins. Lunch. We munch our lunch on t'bench outside Tescos. The impossibility of Crisps. What you got there. Just a packet o Chris. Who's Chris? Clusterfucktastic. Cuntstruck: spluttering resplendent over splurges of spliced splendour full splitting to burst my edges. Feeling angsts a bazillion. A packet of angsts. Ich habe Angst. Sniffing with a snoopy snout, sniggering away snotgreen snapjaws snipping at yer heels. Snot good enough. Just let yerself wallow in the bath for one second. Coagulate. Between a liquid and a solid. Languishing in soupy soapy sounds. Solid love liquid hate. Aereous. Aorta. Aurora. Aureole. Aureoliae.

SIRENS. How to see Cecile Chaminade's waterfall of notes. Listen to it and think of what it does to you. Fifteen sixteen seventeen senses. How things bind and blend together. Try not to think about the bit in Howard's End, essays for A Level English, where all the characters talk about their different reactions to Beethoven's 5th Symphony. And you? What do you see when you hear those tinkling raining patterns in Chaminade? Do you see glass? Do you see stairs that light up as you step on them like they have in the bit of Grease when the fairy godfather man is singing Beauty School Dropout to Frenchie in his shiny white Elvis suit? Do you see les étoiles, brighter, thinner, sharper in French than English, tiny teaspoons on glass? Tinkle tinkle chink chink. Letter K, voiceless velar plosive, bright sharp high, narrow vowel space, minimal oxygen. Thin air summit white precipiceness. Scales ascending keys bright light steps tiptapping lighting up each plink a plink K for kettle bright metal upscale scale descale. Ha. Special K. My baby takes K all day. K is the opposite of sludge. Repeated tinkling. And you try, try, try to see something more beyond the feeling of the tinkling notes, and you can't. Where has Chaminade gone? Parametric versus segmentary analysis. Music is speech is flow is phrase is water not sand no matter how fine. Becoming Proustian, are we? Shut up shut up shut up. Don't give me that infinitesimal sensibility. I don't want to drown in congealing gloop. I cannot slow down. Ever.

And still you're trying to think about those notes.

Metaphorical bunny hops. Lateral leaping. Fucking bars of signification everywhere. The Zen masters had it right. Go on then. Do it. Bang your head against the wall. Noise pain space bright light. Chink. You just need to hear the simplicity of the melody somewhere in the midst of these twinkling lights—AHA! There ye go. Claritas is quidditas. Twinkling instead of tinkling. Congratulations, you have successfully created the conditions of possibility to see a sound as if 'twere a sight. As if 'twere a light. From tinkling to twinkling in one fell swoop.

Phew. Jobdone. Offhome. But not quite.

SIRENS. Much harder but not a million miles away from faking an orgasm to synthesise love you aim to synthesise the synaesthete's experience and the impossibility of a venture has never dissuaded you before and never will. A=black, E=white, I=red, U=green, O=blue : vowels. What about the days of the week? Try and fail again. Tuesday Thursday lilac pale yellow pastel; Monday Wednesday Friday strong triad of white red and navy blue. Lemon squeezy. Since each of us was several, we were already quite a crowd. A million black squid liquids pooling round some kind of universal soul crustacean. Just stop doing all of it and let your hair down. Unwind the plait and it all joins up anyway. Feeling divided by time divided by space equals one honeycomb head. Ear-plugs are redundant when the sirens are inside.

Nothing to see here. Or maybe we could make it? The skin of a building. Climb the palace walls and scale the squares.