

# Each day when he wakes up he wants to fill the bedroom with a tone

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It is raining outside his open window and he is explaining to someone about the tone. The tone contains its own negation. He says this to the person and tries to determine what he means by it. The preposterous sentence hangs in the air and threatens to open a crack between them. They are rocking forward and backward in rhythmic unison and sitting at an oblique angle. They have decided to do this tacitly. He waits until he rocks to the front again and adds that negation in this instance has something to do with the ability to hear the tone. If you want to be in the tone you have to know that it actually orients you to the silence out of which the tone emerges. He is slowly making his way to the back again. He has just realized something. He says: The tone leaves you. That's what it does. The tone leaves you where you are in silence and you might wonder what has happened. Rest assured this is the tone in its choreographic virtuosity. He is rocking to the front again and becomes aware of the sound of rain enveloping the room. His guest is silent. He is silent. They rock in silence. He continues. The tone contains its negation but it denies it too. Again the crack opens. It is the negation that the tone keeps on denying that gives the tone its momentum. That is why one must have an infinitely generous relationship to the tone. He doesn't say this but thinks it. It seems to be a private thought that cannot be shared. He cannot tell his guest that one must be generous with the tone true as that might be. Suddenly the idea of negation seems wrong. It is that the tone denies what it simultaneously devours. The word for this is not negation but a certain hunger. To be with the tone we must be hungry for what is beyond it in the silence that it keeps on obscuring in order to reveal. He says this last idea only to himself. It is impossible to say out loud. They rock quietly and look at the crack between them. No one remarks on it but they listen to the rain that seems at certain times inaudible and at others deafening.

It is Tuesday and he is in a room with white walls and a white floor. The summer is making everyone tired and restless simultaneously. There are four dancers trying to find the tone. Five including him. The tone doesn't come. It is very complex to make the tone appear in this room. First of all everyone is being paid so how are you supposed to hear the tone. Money is loud. And second no one has prepared the light that would make the tone easier to find. They have to do it all themselves. This is how dance is. They spend some minutes talking. These minutes turn to hours. It is easier to talk than to try to play the tone. But they are not avoiding playing the tone. Talking is all the tone they have. More directly approaching it is daunting. Almost embarrassing. Someone lies down on the floor. And breathes out. This seems to signify the end of the talking. So they all begin moving their languid bodies. They are sighing here and there. A leg extends. Their positions elaborate a blurred line between lying down and standing up. He sees an elbow. He sees weight transferring from the knee to the foot. He sees flesh. Tannish-brown. Pale. The inside of an upper arm. The side-back of a neck. Yellow shorts. The bodies move purposefully. So that they may stretch and feel good. So that they may stretch and feel good *amen*. A calf muscle elongates. A yawn. Ever since he introduced the idea of playing the tone to the gathered dancers there has been a general confusion. This confusion has almost been a tone but a tone that no one can hear. Silently they agree to start again from the beginning. But he can tell that the silence in the room has changed. Everyone moves to their positions. There is suspension in the moment before they all start. The light changes in the stillness. Someone starts to move in the way that has been agreed upon. This gives everyone the feeling of having been here before. But then someone else starts to move in a way that has not been agreed upon. No one has yet seen this movement in this light. The movement continues and the others must navigate the distance between what they agreed upon and what they have not yet agreed upon. He anticipates that later they will talk and agree on different movements. It dawns on him that their agreements are getting in the way. The tone does not require agreement. The tone that is barely audible in the white room with the people moving in ways that they agree and disagree on.

It is Wednesday and the air is heavy and hot. He has become unsure where his body ends and the tone begins. He waits a moment and listens to the trees and the neighbours yell. The heaviness is making him tired. He adjusts position. The instrument is heavy on his neck. The strap digs into his skin. He keeps listening. Waiting for a layer to open up so he can slide a note in. A high A arrives. It is flimsy like paper. A car drives by fast and loud. The note has ended. No luck there. He closes his eyes. The instrument is a large curved shape that coincides perfectly with the abrupt curve of his throat. From his lungs into the room. From the room into his lungs. Where the instrument begins and his body ends. The instrument is partly inside his mouth. He has a sudden desire to swallow the instrument. To make his voice the voice of the instrument that speaks from inside his body. He finds a layer and plays another note. High C. The wall vibrates. Where is the tone. Someone walks by and looks in the window. They don't know either. Sometimes he waits all day for the tone. He tries to find it in the belly. Or in the paint on the walls. Sometimes he sits and stares at the light hitting his chair and wonders if that is the tone. Sometimes his phone rings and someone has something to say about the tone. Or he gets an email. Sometimes he has to take a nap when the tone doesn't come and he dreams about it. There are weeks that go by like this. The tone being dispersed in the soft material of the bedroom. Under the floorboards. Deep in the closet. So that he must remove his clothing or select a book to search through. Or he must lie down to feign sleep and forget his task. The tone which is inseparable from his body. Inseparable from the folds of the clothing that he drapes over his torso. Inseparable from the walls of the room that vibrate with a high C. Inseparable from the sense of weight in the air. The waiting stillness. The understanding that what is air is also the material of tone and life. Which is expanding now. Expanding in the unbearable heat.

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This piece is the second in a series about the tone. The first part appeared in *Fence* 36 (Winter 2020).