

# JUNCTURE

In Christian Petzold's 2020 film, *Undine*, Christophe, an industrial diver, is underwater soldering some scary piece of corroded machinery when a giant catfish comes swimming towards him. Giant as in two metres long. It's the mythic Big Gunther, which sounds so much better in German: *der grosse Günther*. After I saw the movie, I found myself calling my cat Ted "der grosse Günther" for a couple of days. No longer can Christophe see the underwater world as merely a venue for paid labour. The catfish initiates him (and the viewer) into a realm of magic and the unconscious, and all the other nonlinear, nonrational things that bodies of water have symbolized through the ages.

When Christophe returns to the dock, his coworkers are irritated he took so long. One yells at him from the shore to hurry up. "Hey, guys!" he shouts. "I don't want to get stuck at Kamener Junction for two hours!" There is lots of confusion about the difference between junction and juncture. Juncture is a point of exigency or crisis, a point made critical by a confluence of circumstances. Big Gunther is a juncture. Junction is where things come together (congested autobahns). Junction is about place. Juncture is about time.

These past two years all I've written about is death and grieving, and I don't know how to come up from that. A juncture is a pause. It can be internal or external, open or closed, a transition between segments. A juncture can be falling, level, or terminal. A fall before silence. A juncture is a manner of moving between two, a cue. A

juncture is the difference between a name and an aim, between that stuff and that's tough, between fork handles and four candles.

Juncture is a soft word, an equitable and amiable break. Its vowels are highly spiritual, symbolizing peace and love. And immortality. They signify continuum, that the entity lives on after its existence. The consonants in juncture are full of magic and mystery, but they do not represent the higher side of occultism. They are associated with good talkers with strong personal magnetism, traits conducive to obtaining gifts and favours.

“At this juncture” is a fancy way of saying “now.” At this juncture we have spent a year in isolation. Junction is the front door to our homes, where we stood compulsively rubbing the knobs with alcohol. The threshold that marks the inside from the outside, the living from the dead. I was planning a coffee date with a gallerist to discuss a possible show of my late husband's drawings. The gallerist emailed me, *I've had these long conversations with people I love in the past two days and each time there's a big part of me which is like “this conversation needs to end, and soon.”* He too does not know how to come back up. He was just being friendly, but I felt a falling of hope, of belief that there was anything left for me but afterlife. The past two decades we straddled the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries—one might say it was a critical juncture—though grammar police say all junctures are critical, so critical juncture is redundant. Charlotte Brontë: *What a mercy you are shod with velvet, Jane!—a clodhopping messenger would never do at this juncture.* Juncture implies some sort of relation, but what I'm seeing around me is a gulf, a pit of the stomach dread that humanity, as I was raised to conceive of it, is gone. Over my chest I swipe the sign of the cross with a Lysol wipe. A juncture is the difference between night rate and nitrate, between ice cream and I scream.