

TRIPWIRE

16

*What is required to come to life?
is form the performance?*

—Kim Rosenfield

OAKLAND : 2020

TRIPWIRE
a journal of poetics

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back image: Cliff Hengst

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Kevin Killian.

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TANYA LUKIN LINKLATER
from *Slow Scrape*

An Event Score for Indigenous Epistemologies
(Eber Hampton)

A person enters and reads

The audience listens but does not look

Then

The audience looks only to follow with its body

Then

The audience's body turns to the east

Then

The audience holds its heart

Then

The audience listens but does not look

An Event Score for Haunting (Eve Tuck)

A person enters and reads

Then The audience remembers relentlessly

The audience feels no ease

Then

What can decolonization mean other than
the return of stolen land?

Then

What must it feel like to be haunted

An Event Score for Maria Tallchief, Dylan Robinson, and Sherry Farrell Racette

A person enters and says

The museum or gallery exerts a force in its looking.

Then

The look of a choreographer is like an everyday structure that exerts a force alongside the body of a dancer.

Then

Our bodies exert a force.

Then

Our objects exert a force.

Then

When do our bodies' forces exceed the look of a choreographer?

Then

When do our objects' forces exceed the look of the museum or gallery?

An Event Score for Kodiak Alutiit 1 (Helen Simeonoff)

An Alutiit person enters and says

This event score is longer than most. My job is to tell. Your job is to listen. Listen to the quiet around the words. Listen for the sparse and melancholic.¹

Then

Alphonse Pinart collected Alutiit masks on our island in 1872 and took them to France.

Then

Over a century later Helen Simeonoff, our relative, travelled from Kodiak Island to the masks held in a collection in France. She was the first.

Then

Many Alutiit travelled from Kodiak Island to the masks held in a collection in France. They tell us that when they touched the masks they wept.

Then

The Alutiit masks eventually travelled back to Kodiak Island but only because we had an Alutiit Museum to exhibit them and only if we promised to never repatriate the masks.

Then

The promise was made and vitrines were built.

Then

We looked at the masks behind glass. Some masks we quickly looked away from. Which masks were we supposed to see? Mostly we looked at the texts alongside the masks that attempted to tell us what the masks meant.

Then

We felt the masks when we looked at them.

Then

We felt the masks when we touched them.

Then

We think about the text remnants (behind glass, placed next to the masks) left by Alphonse Pinart and all that was held in our people before he ever travelled to our island to collect.

Then

We exceed the text remnants in Pinart's translations of our songs and dances from Alutiiq to Russian to English to French and back again.

Then

We exceed the Alphonse Pinart collection of Alutiiq masks.

¹ Kari Cwynar, in a Skype conversation on March 12, 2016, described my practice as “sparse and melancholic.”

An Event Score for Kodiak Alutiit 2 (To Ales Hrdlicka)

An Alutiit person enters and says

We exceed the archaeological site.

Then

We exceed the discipline formation of Anthropology.

Then

We exceed the structures imposed on us.

An Event Score for the Epistemic Violence of Translation (Edgar Heap of Birds)

1. A person enters and speaks in Alutiiq
2. A person enters and speaks in Alutiiq

The audience listens

TANYA LUKIN LINKLATER
in dialogue with Michael Nardone

Documenting Physical Investigations with Language

Tanya Lukin Linklater's forthcoming book, *Slow Scrape*, is, in the words of Layli Long Soldier, "neither wholly poem nor verbose prose and exposition, but reads as text in step—toe-to-floor, light and gentle or heel-to-earth, pounding, felt from the ground, up." Combining documentary poetics with lyric work, interlingual concrete-based installations with event scores for performance, the book explores the many forms of Lukin Linklater's practice as a visual artist, choreographer, and writer. The selection of her work adjacent to this dialogue focuses especially on a series of event scores from *Slow Scrape*, which formulate an important poetics of relation and action to counter settler-colonial paradigms of appropriation and erasure. In the following exchange, we discuss the articulation of these works within the context of *Slow Scrape* and Lukin Linklater's overarching artistic production.

Michael Nardone: When I first encountered your writings, it was in a visual arts context: you had printed excerpts from your poem sequence "The Harvest Sturdies" on canvas tarps that were installed throughout Open Space, the artist-run centre in Victoria, British Columbia. Close to the works were stunning videos of these tarp-texts also installed out on the land, in northern Ontario. Can you discuss the journey of these texts toward *Slow Scrape*, your writing of them and the various forms of their publication prior to this book?

Tanya Lukin Linkater: I hadn't intended on writing a book. I worked on each of these texts at different times within different contexts from 2011 to 2018. The poem "In Memoriam" was written in 2011 and was published in a special issue of *Drunken Boat* guest edited by Layli Long Soldier. I had met Layli at Bard College where she was studying and I was visiting one summer. "In Memoriam" is a text in relation to a series of works: performance, choreography for three dancers, and video I had developed during that time, centered on specific histories on my island that were violent and resulted in intergenerational grief, displacement, and loss of language and Alutiiq ways of being. I was interested partly in the ways in which memory lives in the body beyond an event or a series of events and possibly how it manifests for generations. I suppose I was also interested in how we make sense of ourselves in this time given the constraints of history that have produced our current context. I considered text as part of a larger process of this investigation of history, memory and the body. I later asked Layli if she was open to a poetry mentorship in 2012-2013. We met weekly or bi-weekly via Skype. I lived on Nipissing First Nation in northern Ontario at the time and she lived in Tsale, Arizona. Across that distance, we read together. She encouraged me to write about what felt urgent.

There were political actions taking place that were very present for me as I watched them unfold on social media that fall and winter: Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike, Idle No More and round dance actions in shopping malls at Christmas time in Canada. I was also moved during this time by the attempted assassination of Malala Yousafzai, a girls education activist, which I read partly in relation to discourses surrounding education within a Canadian context of the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I wrote "Not like us," "The Harvest Sturdies,"

and “A girl” during this mentorship as I worked through some of my thinking around education, treaty, and women’s experiences and work in relation to both.

It was an intensive research process in that I interviewed three of my Omaskeko Cree relatives for “The Harvest Sturdies,” asking them about their lives. I wasn’t exactly certain what I was really asking them when I first began visiting with them on the phone. I thought I was asking about who taught them to tan hides, sew and bead, and when they began to take up this learning and work. As the interviews unfolded, it became clear that my request extended to a remembering of relations with family and relations with the land in ways I could not have anticipated as well as the cultivation of their respective inner lives. These works were a form of documentary poetics in that I directly quote my relatives. I wanted to reflect their generosity and concision in the writing and this was in alignment with a way of writing that I developed over this time.

MN: What is the relationship between these compositions and your visual arts practice?

TLL: I often attempt to make sense of the world through writing. Years ago during a studio visit, Pablo de Ocampo described writing as the substrate of my arts practice.

Occasionally, I install text works in museums or galleries. In “The Harvest Sturdies,” I’ve used visual poetry to reference a stretched hide, the repetition of beadwork, or smoke in a tipi that is coloring the hide. For this project I chose to print on canvas or tarp-like material that we might use for a tipi or a temporary shelter on the land, citing the home and the

land as the locations for intergenerational learning that Agnes Hunter, Marlene Kapashesit and Lillian Trapper shared with me.

I've started bringing text into my video work in more pronounced ways in the last couple of years. I began to make text works, videos, and sculptures for exhibition partly as a way for the work to travel without me, to circulate beyond the live event. I was concerned that if my work only lived in performance, it might disappear or be erased. As an Alaska Native woman I think about the history of discourse surrounding Native Americans in the United States—the ongoing trope of the vanishing Indian as well as the substantive efforts to erase our intellectual traditions, to marginalize our contributions to most fields, an epistemic violence. The live event, even the exhibition, can and does disappear. Perhaps my practice shouldn't be remembered; others have to decide that. But, moving towards the art object in small ways means that my work can have a life that extends into the future.

I've often thought of how contemporary dance is an abstract form. My videos, attentive to the body, communities, architecture or landscape, might also be considered abstract for an everyday viewer to encounter in the museum. I consider text as a potential way for the viewer to enter into the work; however, I balance this access with strategies of refusal.

MN: In situating the texts within your visual arts practice, perhaps I overemphasize the object itself, which is something you are of course interested in, but, with that, throughout your work, there is, like you say, a refusal of that by means of a different emphasis on the live event, in movement, in choreography. So, I'm curious if you could also discuss the relationship between your writings and this other element that is central to your work?

TLL: I am perhaps most known for making performances or videos with dancers. An older Anishnaabe man where I live (the small city of North Bay, Ontario) recently told me that I make things happen. That was a significant comment as it was a recognition by a community member of the live event, of the ways in which I labor to make an event happen. It's a kind of slow build over time that becomes visible in performance but takes ongoing daily investigations, reflection, reading, thinking, conversations with curators, etc. Writing is an important part of this process as a document of these moments. These are processes dependent upon a number of constraints or conditions that I've put into place and require a flexible responsiveness. So much of my practice is in relation and in response to histories, to the present moment, to the conditions of the museum, to the conversations I'm having with dancers, composers, curators, etc.

At times, I document physical investigations with language, distilling language from conversation with dancers. The dancers and I notate their dances in different ways. I keep my notes for future investigations or performances, building over time. It can be a kind of back and forth between languages, possibly a kind of continuous translation between the body (which comes to have its own series of languages initiated by the dancer), materials (including cultural belongings made by our ancestors), and other forms. I tend to jot down key questions in journals that I later ask during the choreographic process. Or I document questions that come up during the performance-making process through conversation or connections I am thinking through. Often, writing is a very unseen part of my practice. This writing may never be shared publicly. I consider my journal to be a working space, a studio of sorts.

In terms of the ways in which poems and event scores are visibly or audibly present in my practice, since 2013 I've been reading texts alongside dancers and/or my videos. I have allowed myself the space for these performances with dancers to fail; I consider them to be studies, to be experiments. In some cases, the poems are a score, structure, or script for the making of a dance within the museum or gallery. I work through an open rehearsal process to build these performances and have come to work with a group of five independent dancers, each of whom have different strengths, movement languages, and views that they bring to the process.

The readings with videos are configured differently each time: I choose different poems, event scores and videos for each event. I'm particularly interested in these moments where my voice collides with the image in a way that may never happen again. I can't fully anticipate these moments. I leave that to chance and give myself the constraint of 30 minutes of video and 30 minutes of text. I time the performance at the live event but don't rehearse in advance. This means that the readings or interpretations of both the poems and videos might be infinite.

MN: I see throughout *Slow Scrape* a movement between action ("making things happen") and memory (documentation), both thematically and formally in the design of the texts. I'd love to focus on the latter for a moment—memory, with all of its partialities, scars, gaps, richnesses, the ways of being these poems are constantly imagining and articulating, their possible futures and assembly of relations. Can you discuss how forms of memory materialize and are materialized within these writings?

TLL: I don't think I'm unlike many Indigenous peoples in this commitment to remembering and continuous action. The idea that

I make things happen reminded me that the liveness of the event in this moment is a part of a durational inheritance that extends to my ancestors. What I mean to say in another way is that making things happen, organizing large scale events for families and communities was and continues to be an Alutiiq practice.

My work continuously considers orality, embodiment, our philosophical concerns, history and the present moment. I wonder broadly about how we have continued to insist on our Indigeneity (Alutiiq-ness or Sugpiaq-ness in my case) even in the face of dominant structures and systems that have actively dismantled our languages, minds, and relationships to ourselves. I'm interested partly in memory embodied at the scale of felt structures that insist in the midst of the historical. Elsewhere, I've begun to write about insistence as an accumulation of quotidian, minor actions that in some moments become visible. I think my larger practice investigates the ways in which the relational, coded in orality (including embodiment) and connected to the material, allows for this insistence. This insistence is not only concerned with the past but allows for our peoples' ways of being and knowing in the present towards a continuance, our future, where possible.

My thinking is in alignment with discourses initiated in the late 1960's by Indigenous peoples—practitioners and theorists working in relation to their communities, to sovereignty, to justice, and to what has come to be described now as resurgence—that continue today. I situate my practice within these larger histories, yet I'm speaking from specific moments and experiences that I've encountered in my lifetime or that I've come to know about. I feel a deep responsibility to our ancestors, to today and to the future. I think that the real work is happening in communities—in my villages and across Alaska, in Nbisiing Anishinabek territory where I

live, and in Cree communities in Canada that I am in relation to as well. My artistic practice and writing gesture towards that.

MN: When I first read your event scores, I immediately thought of them as reformulating Fluxus and other historical avant-garde practices in a newly engaged way. Here, I think of people like Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, George Brecht, Yoko Ono, among others. Were you drawing from this tradition, or, if not, were there other artists or aesthetic tendencies that animated the possibility of these works for you?

TLL: The event scores arose out of a graduate course with Dylan Robinson called “Indigenous & Settler Affect: Unsettling-Writing-Feeling” at Queen’s University in the spring of 2016. Dylan shared a series of event scores with us and we were encouraged to write in a range of ways. I was particularly moved by Yoko Ono’s event scores. I also experienced what I perceived to be a live event score when Eber Hampton led an Indigenous conference delegation at University of Alberta around the same time through verbal directions for a small series of physical actions that were intended to slow our sense of time, connect us to our breath, as a greeting of the sun. This small action was quite profound for me within that context as it was unexpected. Even though I had experienced these kinds of directions within dance and performance studio classes over decades and have also led these kinds of exercises in various spaces, it was quite striking to listen, breathe, visualize and move within this other space. It helped to create a shared experience amongst the group.

I found it quite easy to rest into this way of writing. It was generative to me in its concision (which is a form of refusal), the almost plain language, and its intentionality.

I connected this idea directly to my experience of performance. Yet I also considered that the event score could function solely as a text. I have performed the event scores at times, but not as a set of directions for an audience; instead as a distilled, concise text that I've spoken sometimes accompanied by video. A number of works in this book were written initially for that course and went on to be published, performed, or integrated into video works later.

MN: Another element that stands out for me in *Slow Scrape* is the practices of listening that are at its core—something that is deeply allied with my own interests in poetry and artistic practices. And perhaps, in the frame of listening, this is where memory and action come together in a fruitful way. I can see a few different forms of listening that take place throughout this work: intergenerational listening, translanguistic listening (Alutiiq, Cree, English), mediated listening (through global and national news, and also through one's personal relations), terrestrial or land-based listening (topological). Are there other forms that you see? Can you discuss if or how these forms of listening inform your practices?

TLL: I appreciate your analysis across these different contexts. Mostly I consider listening an integral part of being Indigenous. I've come to call it deep listening. My early training in listening came as a youth at the kitchen table where my dad visited with aunts, uncles and other relatives, neighbors, and community members. He also spent considerable time with my sisters and I on the land and waters near my village hunting and fishing. I have not attained my father's ability to discern weather, the tides, or the messages left by animals, birds and fish at home. This discernment takes a lifetime of experience, and I left my village as a young person to attend university. Yet, this early training, listening

to relatives visit or my father teach us about gillnetting salmon and when the different species run annually allowed me to later spend time with Anishinaabe and Cree elders and knowledge holders in Alberta as a young adult, listening, attuning myself to their way of speaking and communicating. This time in Alberta within these invisible networks was quite formative for me. I've continued this practice of listening in my adult life. Listening is connected to learning which means synthesizing knowledge—integrating ideas into what we already know or upending what we think we know in order to apply that knowledge to our lives, to change our practices, a process that may take years. However, it also means that when we listen we learn a level of discernment and responsibility in this listening. I might also mention that I listen to the voice, to conversation, to sound, to the body, to the multiple ways we communicate in everyday life and in the performances I organize. This listening is multi-sensorial. Elwood Jimmy speaks about an enlivened and expanded listening; I think a great deal about listening with the full body.

MN: In reading through the book, I wonder if part of this listening practice is situated within a concept of mentorship, in intentional acts of accumulating and transmitting cultural knowledge? Perhaps “mentorship” isn't the right word, but what I mean to gesture toward are the thoughtful ways you foreground your relations with others, which is both an acknowledgement of indebtedness as well as a commitment to give back.

TLL: I don't actually feel as though I've had distinct, long-term mentor relationships, although I certainly look to people in my life who have provided moments of guidance over time including family members—our grandmother in Peawanuck, Agnes Hunter, my late auntie Sue Lukin, auntie Marlene Kapashesit in Quebec, aunties Irene Isheroff

Linklater, and my father, Ivan Lukin, to name a few. Often I connect with my peers and we are learning from one another. Here I think of Layli Long Soldier, Wendy Red Star, Julie Nagam, Elwood Jimmy, Karyn Recollet, Duane Linklater, Raven Chacon, Laura Ortman, and Jennifer Wabano. I also look to the work of artists, writers and thinkers who came before me, learning from their cultural production. A few of these are Maria Tallchief, Rita Letendre, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Ralph Lemon, Senga Nengudi, Karen Pheasant, and Rebecca Belmore. I look to cultural belongings found in museum collections as information left by my ancestors. Yet, I learn from the youth as well, from my children, from the Anishinabek and Cree youth in North Bay. The transmission of knowledge isn't only from the older generations to the youth; this transmission of knowledge is multi-directional. I think of Ivania Aubin-Malo, who has deep knowledge of contemporary and fancy shawl dance; I think of Billy-Ray Belcourt's incisive writing; these young Indigenous folks teach me. Perhaps this book is something I am leaving for others. My artistic work doesn't tend to travel home to Alaska. It's my hope that this book can make it home.

The New Alphabets (Anstruther Press, 2019), **Virginia Konchan's** poetry and criticism has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Boston Review*, and elsewhere.

Q aka Kyoo Lee, the author of *Reading Descartes Otherwise and Writing Entanglish*, and co-editor of *philoSOPHIA: A Journal of transContinental Feminism*, who teaches at CUNY, is a transdisciplinary philosopher, genre-bending writer and critic. Her paradigm-shifting work has been supported by competitive faculty fellowships from Cambridge University, CUNY Graduate Center, KIAS, the Mellon Foundation and the NEH, among others, and her “philopoetic” texts have appeared in *3:AM Magazine*, *Asian American Literary Review*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Flash Art*, *PN Review*, *Randian*, *The Volta* and the *White Review*, as well as numerous standard academic journals. Throughout her site-specific cogitographical practices, Q Professor Lee explores co-generative links between critical theory and creative prose, and her Mellon-funded anthology, *Queenzenglish.mp3: poetry, philosophy, performativity*, with contributions from over fifty poets and theorists, is forthcoming this year.

Tanya Lukin Linklater makes performances in museums, videos, and installations. Employing orality, conversation and embodied practices such as dance, her performances with dancers are in relation to architecture, objects in exhibition, scores, and cultural belongings reaching towards atmospheres that shift the space or viewer. While reckoning with histories that affect Indigenous peoples' lives, lands and ideas, she investigates insistence. She ethically considers that which sustains us conceptually and affectively. Recent exhibitions include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *Soft Power* and *...and other such stories*, Chicago Architecture Biennial 2019. *Slow Scrape* is her first published collection of poetry. She originates from the Native Villages of Afognak and Port Lions in southern Alaska and is based in northern Ontario, Canada.

Rona Lorimer is from London and lives in Paris.

Jessica Lopez Lyman, Ph.D. (St. Paul, MN) is an interdisciplinary performance artist and Chicana feminist scholar interested in how Indigenous and People of Color create alternative spaces to heal and imagine new worlds. Her manuscript, tentatively titled *Midwest Mujeres: Chicana/Latina Performance and Art*, explores racialized and gendered geographies of urban Minnesota. Jessica is a member of Electric Machete Studios, a Chicana/Latina/Indigenous art collective. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Chicano and Latino Studies, where she joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor in 2019.

Jocelyn E. Marshall is an English PhD candidate at SUNY Buffalo. She is currently a reader for *Palette Poetry* and is co-editing a collection on trauma-informed pedagogy.

Anne McGuire is a time traveler from the nineteen hundreds who has studied writing with Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian.

Karla Milosevich currently lives and works in Santa Fe, NM. She grew up in Texas, and spent formative years in San Francisco where she co-founded Right Window gallery. She appeared in many of Kevin Killian's Poet Theater plays, and co-wrote five plays: *Love Can Build a Bridge*, *The Red and The Green*, *Dance World Gym*, *Celebrity Hospital*, *Seth Speaks*. Her video work has been shown in screenings and as video installations, and she has performed in various art bands such as The Helen Lundy Trio.

Eileen Myles is a poet whose 21 books include *evolution* (2018) and this fall Yale will publish *For Now*, a talk/essay on writing.

Michael Nardone is the author of two books of poetry: *The Ritualites* (2018) and *Transaction Record* (2014). Co-editor of the Documents on Expanded Poetics book series and the critical journal *Amodern*, his writings on poetics, media, and sound are archived at <http://soundobject.net>.