

2.3 Speech Transcription: *My Poor Room*

My Poor Room Christopher Williams

Male Voice

Female Voice

[Footsteps approach]

Because I have decided not
to hide anything, I have to
admit that there were moments
when I lost my faith in the things
to come. Further on, nothing!
This cry would be repeated
many a time in my life.

[Footsteps recede; tenor saxophone plays Bb minor
blues]

Back room
Waiting room
Bedroom
Cold room
Living room
Operations Room
Bathroom
Greenroom
Dining room
Rehearsal room
Boardroom
Morning room
Room for improvement
Room divider
Powder room

Room with a view
Smoking room
Room temperature

Head Room
Sick room
Room mate
Leave Room
Room Service
Band room
Rooming house

Back room
Waiting room
Bedroom
Cold room
Living room
Operations Room

Greenroom
Dining room
Rehearsal room
Boardroom
Morning room
Room for improvement

Powder room
Room divider
Room with a view
Smoking room
Room temperature
Make Room

Sick room
Head Room
Leave Room
Room Service
Band room

Little boys' room
Drawing room

Smallest room in the house
Drawing room
Little boys' room

[MJ: *'In the Upper Room with Jesus'*]

I belong to the generation that witnessed the genocide and terrorist attacks on art and culture. I do not desire to save the world with my art. I do not believe in the easy accessibility of art. The experiences of our century have taught me where it will lead to. I have learned who and what benefits from this accessibility, which has dangerously spread all over the world.

I want to save myself. Not selfishly, on my own, but together with a belief in the value of an individual. I am locking myself in my little room of imagination where I create the world as I used to -

when I was a child.

I strongly believe that truth lives inside this room of my childhood.

Death and love. The moment came when I could not tell one from the other. I was enchanted by both. Nights came because nights were my time of creation.

The nights came -

when Death carefully guarded the entrance to my poor little room of imagination

[MJ: *'Oh, it's in the Upper Room, talking with my Lord. Yes, and your-'*]

[John Cage: *In a Room, under'*]

The room was destroyed. There was war, and there were thousands of such rooms. They all looked alike. Bare brick stared from behind a coat of paint. Plaster was hanging from the ceiling. Boards were missing in the floor. Abandoned parcels were

One

The room was destroyed by the war activity of 1944.

Odysseus returned to this room rather than to a mythological Ithaca.

The room was not the auditorium.
The room was not part of the stage design.

The room was a real sight, which was as real as the events surrounding the audience.

The room was thus an integral part of a work – a production.
The audience was inside the work of art.

The room -
object
poor object.

Two.

The naked and poor walls, marked by gun shells were a substitute for a Greek horizon and its blue and sunny skies.

covered with dust. They would be used as the auditorium.

Debris was scattered around
Plain boards reminiscent of the deck of a sailing ship were discarded at the horizon of this decayed/ decor

A gun barrel was resting on a heap of iron scrap.
A military loudspeaker was hanging from a rusty metal rope.

The bent figure of a helmeted soldier wearing a faded overcoat stood against the wall.

On this day, June 6th 1944, he became a part of this room.

He came there

and sat down to rest.

Despite his poor condition he carried a menacing air. When everything returned to normal after the intrusion from the outside, when the date was

Three.

A wheel smeared with mud.

A mouldered board
hanging from the ceiling.
A rust-eaten gun-barrel
resting not on wheels
but on a trestle smeared with
mud and cement.
Debris,
earth,
were used instead of
a palace interior.
Marble columns.

Four.

The war announcement
was played through a
street loudspeaker instead of the
heroic song of a
Homeric bard.

established and when all the
elements of the room seemed to
become indispensable elements of
this composition

the soldier turned his head to the
audience

and said this one sentence:

I am Odysseus. I have returned from
Troy.

This everyday realness, which was
firmly rooted in both place and time,
immediately permitted the audience
to perceive this mysterious current
flowing from the depth of time. When
the soldier, whose presence could
not have been questioned, called
himself by the name of a man who
died centuries ago. A split second
was needed to see this return, but
the emotion raised by it stayed much
longer in memory.

[End Cage. Footsteps]

A Man in a Room Gambling
A Room With a View
An Angel in the Furnished Room
An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare.

Backroom Blues

Boogaloo in Room 802

[door creaks open]

Bird in the High Room
 Boom Boom Let's Go Back to My
 Room

In the Furnace Room to Get the Body

From a Lonely Room

Come Up to My Room

[venetian blinds pulled]

Confusion in the Alibi Room

Dark and Empty Room
 Destroyed Room
 Drawing Room Blues
 Dying in My Living Room

Face on the Cutting Room Floor

Fire in the Engine Room

Fusion at Room Temperature

Get Out of My Room!

[sash window]

Girl in Room 12

Heaven's Waiting Room
 Horses in the Room

I have the Room Above

I'm Gonna Move in the Room

With the Lord

In a Room Where Nothing Happens

In the Grace of Your Room

In the Upper Room

Is There Enough Room?

[door creak & sash window]

Jumping Room Only

Leave a Little Room

Jumping Room Only

Leave a Little Room

Leave Room in Your Heart for Me

Legend in My Living Room

Like an Angel Passing Through My
 Room

Listening Room

Make room in the Lifeboat for Me

[venetian blinds pulled]

Mamma's Room
 Music for a Large Room
 Music for a Small Room
 Music Room

My Favourite Room
 My Lonely Room
 My Poor Room

Nervous Man in a \$4 Room
 No Love in the Room
 No More Room in Heaven
 No Room

[footsteps]

Our Room

One Room Paradise

Quiet Room
 Rebecca's Room
 Robbing Her Own Room
 Romeo and Juliet in Her Room
 Room 8
 Room 9
 Room 11
 Room 43
 Room 222
 Room 317
 Room 335
 Room 408
 Room 504
 Room 509
 Room 608
 Room 777
 Room 101

Panic in Room 100
 Panting in the Panther Room
 Petrushka's Room
 Quiet Room

Room 8
 Room 9
 Room 11
 Room 43
 Room 222
 Room 317
 Room 335
 Room 408
 Room 504
 Room 509
 Room 608
 Room 777
 Room101

[SS: *There's a vacant room in Glory,
 Who'll be the one?
 There's a vacant room in Glory,
 Who'll be the one?
 Well, well, yes!
 It could be you.
 [It] could be me.*

I want to state openly that this need
 to create theatre and visual arts that

would be different from the reality of political terror and police vigilance was grounded neither in a moral obligation to create a resistance movement nor in feeling of patriotism, nor in the heroism of the underground movement. I do not believe that this process of creating a different, other reality whose freedom is not bound by the laws of any system of life, or in the act itself, which is like a demiurge's act or a dream, is the aim of art. I keep stubbornly repeating this thought because I am suspicious that in the epoch of the 'springtime of the masses' and of the fight for political and economic freedom, this notion of the highest freedom that is demanded by art will not be understood, or will even be deemed unnecessary.

[SS: *Well I'm gonna move
in the room with the Lord.
Doncha know I'm gonna move
in the room with the Lord.
Well, I'm gonna stand right still,
steady myself.
You know my soul's been filled
by God Himself.
I'm gonna move
in the room with the Lord.
Doncha know I'm gonna move
in the room with my Lord.
Hey, child, I'm gonna move –*

[paintbrush strokes]

I used to paint a lot even though I knew that I would not be allowed to exhibit my works. Although I painted solely for myself, I needed to do so.

[John Cage: *In a Landscape*]

Then, there will be my own bedroom which I want extremely simple but with large, solid furniture. The bed, chairs and table all in white deal. Downstairs will be a studio and another room, a studio too, but at the same time, a kitchen. Some day or other you shall have a picture of-of the little house itself in bright sunshine, or else with the window lit up and a starry sky.

[paintbrush strokes]

You will probably think the interior of the empty bedroom with a wooden bedstead and two chairs the most unbeautiful thing of all.

[John Cage: *In a Landscape*]

When I was painting people seated at a table, I could never have put a tablecloth or a basket with fruit on the table. Flowers were out of the question too. It was not a feast. The tables were empty.

[paintbrush strokes]

I'm working in my room at full speed. It does me good and drives away, I think, these abnormal ideas.

[John Cage: *In a Landscape*]

I could not discard the human figure, however, its presence was important and indispensable. I must have seen beyond it a territory and reality which I wanted to reach. I felt the need for a sphere that would expand beyond the boundaries of form/ and beyond the material surface of painting.

[paintbrush strokes > footsteps]

If I place on stage my home my little
room of imagination, I am doing this
for the first time

If I place on stage the painter's room
I have to show his paintings too.

[footsteps]

Before I made a decision to place my
poor room of imagination on stage/
I placed a painting there.

An idea born contrary to all my
principles.

[footsteps]

At the beginning, I had my doubts
about this idea.

[block of wood slides on floor]

I am against illusion.

The painting would be represented
by a frame.

But mine is not the limited mind of
an orthodox person

[footsteps > keys slide across wooden floor]

I know only too well that theatre
cannot exist without illusion.

The space within the frame

I accept illusion

would be empty

because by accepting /its existence

its depth would be filled by the
actors

I can keep destroying it interminably

and the room proprietor's
imagination.

[tenor saxophone plays minor Bb blues > John Cage:
In a Landscape]

It is splendid weather outside but
for a long time - two months to be
exact - I have not left my room.
I don't know why.

Will my work really be worse
because, by staying in the same

place, I shall see the seasons pass
and re-pass over the same subjects
– seeing again the same orchards in
the Spring? The same fields of
wheat in Summer?

My Dear Theo,
At last I can send you a little sketch
to give you at least an idea of the
way the work is shaping up.
For today, I am alright again.

I am adding a line to tell you that this
afternoon I finished a canvas
representing the bedroom.

What I need is courage and this
often fails me. Only when I stand
painting before my easel, do I feel
somewhat alive.

[Cage ends. Keys on wooden floor and footsteps]

The matter of the stage is the matter
of the auditorium.

[footsteps, book slides across floor]

The audience and the actors
experience the same problems and
emotions.

It is not the stage with its mirages,
a sacred site in the temple of art,
but a cloakroom, the place of lowest
rank in theatre that becomes a
performance space

[footsteps, a DAT Cassette case slides across floor]

a space that imposes its prosaic
characteristics on both art and the
actors.

[tenor saxophone Bb minor blues > paintbrush strokes]

I have done still for my decoration,
a size 30 canvas/ of my bedroom
with the white deal furniture that you
know

They say, and I am very willing to
believe it, that it is difficult to know
yourself but it isn't easy to paint
yourself either.

[John Cage: *In a Landscape*]

Well, I enjoyed enormously doing
this interior-of-nothing daub.

pale violet

Of Seurat-like simplicity with flat tints –

the yellow of fresh butter

- but brushed on roughly with a thick
impasto, the walls pale lilac –

very light greenish citron

- the ground a faded broken red -

scarlet

the chairs/ and the bed chrome
yellow –

/green, the toilette table

orange, the basin blue,

the doors lilac

the pillows and the sheet a very
pale green citron, the counterpane
blood-red, the washstand orange,
the washbasin blue, and the
window green.

the broad lines of the

furniture again must

express inviolable rest

By means of all these very diverse
tones, I have wanted to express an
absolute restfulness, you see?

*The frame, as there is
no white in the picture,
will be white.*

And there is no white in it at all except
the little note produced by the mirror
with its black frame in order to get the
fourth pair of complimentaries into it.

*

It is by way of revenge for the enforced
rest I was obliged to take. I shall work
on it again all day, but you see how
simple the conception is.

[Cage ends. Footsteps]

This world, when seen from backstage,
is artificial, cheap disposable, and made
of papier-mâché, penetrating beneath
this magnificent imitation and façade we

will reach the backstage, a true stage.

[book slides across floor]

There is a moment in the theatre when malicious and poisonous charms operate. It is when the lights go out

[footsteps end, handclapping]

and the audience leaves. When the auditorium's empty and a grey mist descends on the objects on the deserted stage, when the magnificent scenery and costumes, which a moment ago were glittering in the lights of the stage are reduced to common materials when the gestures and emotions which were full of life and passion have faded. Maybe then, we will desire to walk across the stage to find the remnants of life, which moved us a moment ago, as we would walk through a cemetery.

[footsteps]

A plain wall extends behind a blue sky, ropes, cables, lights, lifts and iron platforms operate above the green crown of trees and behind the marble walls of the palaces. The whole of this inferno of machinery worked by the hands of the theatrical proletariat moves the wheels of the stage which create the thin veil of illusion that is cast on the audience's eyes.

[tenor saxophone plays minor blues in Bb]

As to selling, I should say you are certainly right not to go out of your way looking for sales. I certainly should prefer never to sell, if it could be.

[tenor saxophone plays minor blues in Bb]

In despair I sought shelter in the corners of my poor room. Further on, nothing! I screamed, I cursed the painting I had been faithful to for a long time. I made a mad decision to leave its space, never to return.

[John Cage: *In a Landscape*]

I am not writing you a long letter because tomorrow very early I am going to begin in the cool morning light so as to finish my canvas. How are the pains? Don't forget to tell me about them. I know that you will write one of these days. I will make you sketches of the other rooms, too, some day. With a good handshake, ever yours, Vincent.

[MJ: *In the Upper Room, Lord
In the Upper Room, yeah -*]

Let us out
We are suffocating
Our stockcar lurches

Our coffin gurgles
We fight on the stairs
We pound against the panels
We break open the doors

There are too many of us.
Our numbers increase,
The more we fight for an inch of space, for a plank, for a board

The pickpocket cannot lift his crushed hand

We suffocate one another.
Our imprisoned fury flays our skins

Our numbers increase
horribly.
We crush those who have been trampled down,
a soft mass,

Let us out
We are suffocating

Our cupboard totters

We fight on the stairs
We pound against the panels
We break open the doors
Let us out

We are too close to rid each other of lice, to nurse or to thrash each other.

nor the murderer his knife
We suffocate one another
Our imprisoned fury flays our skins
and expires

horribly.
We crush those who have been trampled down,
a soft mass

a panic pudding reeking of fear,
acidly rat-like

bloated and sagging soggily.

We go down softly,

bloated and sagging soggily.

[JH: *I used to live in a room full of mirrors
All I could see was me.
Well, I take my spirit and I crash my mirrors,
Now the whole world is here for me to see.*]

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Eer*]

Feeling your spinal cord ride up your
brain through the force of being
compressed.

Feeling oneself endlessly uncon-
sciously and as if electrically
controlled.

Feeling your soul piss from your
body, as if no longer able to hold
water.

Feeling your head explode (feeling
your brain box on the point of
bursting a bulb)

Feeling your brain a dried fruit

Feeling them steal your idea-
association.

[Xenakis ends]

The feeling that your head [mean-
while] is exploding. The feeling that
the top of your skull must be going
to split and come off. The feeling of
your spinal cord being pressed into
your brain. The feeling that the cell
is moving.

It must be a memory room that I
keep re-constructing again and again
and that keeps dying again and
again a room that is pulsating the
space of reality must be expanded
for it to embrace such non-physical
territory as memory [TK]

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

You wake up and open your eyes
the cell is moving.

Feeling the cell move.

Impossible to know if you are
trembling from cold or fever.

You wake up and open your eyes,
the cell is moving. In the afternoon,
when there is sun, it stops suddenly.
But it still moves, you can't extricate
yourself from that sensation.

Impossible to explain to yourself why
you're trembling, why you're freezing.

[Xenakis ends]

It was that one night that reality of
life, a heroine of the Undivine Comedy
whose performance we followed with
a waning interest, unveiled her face.
Frightened, I shut the doors to my
poor room of imagination. I could not
erase from my memory that image
which was as empty as the hollow
pit of a grave. No trace of life.
Now really, further on, Nothing!
It was not that splendid
La Belle Dâme, Death, what I saw
was/ a rite of her official priests.

The feeling that the cell is moving,
you wake up and open your eyes.
The cell is moving. In the afternoon,
when the sun shines in, it suddenly
stops

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

To speak audibly, you must make
an effort, most almost howl as if
speaking very loudly.

Feeling yourself become dumb

Impossible to recall the meaning of
words, except very vaguely

[Xenakis ends]

Memory makes use of negatives that
are still frozen, almost like metaphors
The whistling:

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

but unlike narratives /which pulsate,
whssssssssssshhhhhh
hhh

which appear and disappear,

say,

ssssssssssschhhhhh

hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

hhhhh

which appear and disappear again,
 until the image fades away, until the
 tears fill the eyes

intolerable tortures

The warder, the visits, the court,
 celluloid reality.

[Xenakis ends]

These dead facades come to life,
 become real and important through
 this stubborn repetition of actions.
 Maybe this pulsating rhythm, which
 ends in nothingness, which is futile,
 is an inherent part of memory. [TK]

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

A clear awareness that your chance
 of survival/ is nil

A clear awareness that your chance
 of survival/ is nil.

The feeling that time and space
 interlock.

The feeling that time and space/
 interlock.

[Xenakis ends]

Today, I can recall a similar scene
 that I witnessed a few years later.
 From a nylon bag, he took something
 dark and earth-coloured, black soil
 was stuck to the skull and there were
 also some rotten shreds of a dress:
 that was my Mother. Her skull, that
 magnificent creation of Nature and
 Humanism, now rust-eaten clotted
 with earth and mud.

Every night

Every night

*ritual sacrifice
will performed*

*ritual sacrifice
will performed*

I shut myself in my poor room of
imagination

*ritual sacrifice
will performed
here*

*ritual sacrifice
will performed
here*

I kept repeating with despair:
further on, Nothing!

*Every night
ritual sacrifice*

*Every night
ritual sacrifice*

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

Flashes.

Sick in the head.

If you write at the end of two lines,
impossible to recall the beginning
of the first.

No longer mastering construction of
sentences, grammar, syntax.

Feeling you are consumed within.

[Xenakis ends]

It is difficult to define the spatial
dimension of memory. Here is a room
of my childhood that I keep reconstruct-
ing again and again, and that keeps
dying again and again, with all its
inhabitants. Its inhabitants are the
members of my family. They continu-
ously repeat all their movements and
activities as if they were recorded
on a film negative shown interminably.
They will keep repeating those banal,
elementary and aimless activities
with the same expression on their
faces, concentrating on the same
gesture, until boredom strikes.
Those trivial activities that stubbornly
and oppressively preoccupy us,
fill up our lives/

[Xenakis: *Legende d'Er*]

Feeling that, if you were freed, to tell what it's about would be exactly like throwing boiling water into the mouth of others, scalding them, disfiguring for life. A mad aggression without outlet – that's the worst.

Being persuaded that you don't have the least chance of dragging yourself out of it. Impossible to make that understood.

[Xenakis ends]

MJ: *I wanna go in, in, in the Upper Room
In the Upper Room
In the Upper Room [Fades!]
I wanna go in, in the Upper Room
I been talking with the Lord.*

*Oh, doncha wanna go in, in the Upper Room
Have you ever had a talk with Jesus
In the Upper Room?*

[lift doors close - lift descends]

I had anticipated my decent into the infernum, my crossing of the River Styxx - the land of the Dead. I stopped at the threshold as if I were afraid to lose this precious image of a human being that I had just gained.

The journey was becoming a serious enterprise. Something had to be done. A decision had to be made.

And the moment did arrive when I decided to go over the threshold. Going through this unknown passage, I tried to keep the memory of the shape of a human body. And then everything was but motion and matter. Infernum.

[lift door opens and closes]

I felt lonely. I heard myself say: 'further on, Nothing!'

I can no longer see the shape of the human body. I can no longer see the external shape which has always been identified with life. Life itself has become suspect. All too often its essence has been oversimplified/ or reduced to a banal slogan

[John Cage: *A Room*]

I left all the road signs behind me. I felt anger against history, trends, stages, theories.

I can feel the breath of Death – La Belle Dâme as Gordon Craig referred to her. Is it not she perhaps who rules Art?

My journey acquired dimensions that were less and less material. The final frontier of the space started to recede and embraced a new, unknown dimension: pure imagination. Further on, Nothing!

[Cage ends]

Comrade, Officer, you don't have to take me to that place. Haven't I told you everything already? What else do you want to know? There is nothing I wouldn't confess. Nothing! Just – just tell me what it is and I'll confess it straight off. Write it down and I'll sign it. Anything/ not Room 101.

[John Cage: *A Room*]

/Later on, when the immense room had darkened completely there was nobody left, except a dead man and an unknown woman. Foe and friend had become one and the same – something other.

[Cage ends]

What is in Room 101?

You know what is in Room 101,
Winston. Everyone knows what is in
Room 101.

[John Cage: *A Room*]

Death would always appear in
moments like this. She would try
to give me some warning signs.
She would advise me against hasty
decisions and temporary solutions.
As she would say, I was destined for
more shattering experiences with
her at my side.

[lift doors closes]

The unknown woman heard his even
breath, stooped down to him in the
dark, closed his mouth, kissed him,
and with her one and only mouth,
took him along.

[Cage ends]

I hate him.

Tell me Winston, what are your true
feelings toward Big Brother?

You hate him. Good. Then the time
has come for you to take the last
step. You must love Big Brother. It
is not enough to obey him. You must
love him. Room 101.

[John Cage: *A Room*]

The journey was
becoming a serious enterprise
something had to be done
a decision had to
be made.

I felt lonely.

The situation of an artist is
similar to the position of someone
who is pursuing some goal
and feels suddenly
that this movement forward
or quest
becomes the real meaning
of his journey and life in
general

trying to find an exit or rather a
passage -

I heard myself say, 'further on,
Nothing!

he sees more and more doors being
locked around him.

[Cage ends, lift door closes]

I left all the road signs behind me

Many of them he must close himself
to open some others.

I felt anger against history, trends,
stages, theories.

You asked me once what was in
Room 101. I told you that you knew
the answer already. Everyone
knows it. The thing that is in Room
101-

Is the worst thing in the world!

[footsteps]

But he must keep moving forward.
Even though he realises that
everything leads to nothingness

[tenor saxophone]

that the true meaning of his journey
is the act of closing

[tenor saxophone]

which signifies selecting and
rejecting of this something that
attempts obtrusively to feel
nothingness.

[tenor saxophone, footsteps]

My journey acquired dimensions that
were less and less material

[tenor saxophone, footsteps halt]

The final frontier of the space started
to recede and embraced a new
unknown dimension: pure imagination.
Further on, Nothing!

[footsteps]

Repetition

Repetition

Repetition

Almost like a prayer

Repetition

or like a litany

Repetition

is a signal of shrinking time

Repetition

Repetition

And now I must enter my
little room of imagination and say,

Repetition

Repetition

it is the psyche that creates and
exhibits reality as if we were seeing
it for the first time.

Repetition

Repetition

And I think this is all.

Repetition

My last advice?

Repetition

Remember everything.

Repetition

And forget everything.

Note: Distribution of voices spatially on the page does not attempt to represent position in the audio panorama (stereo image).