

SOME THOUGHTS ON "NATURE" AND "STRING TRIO NO. 2"

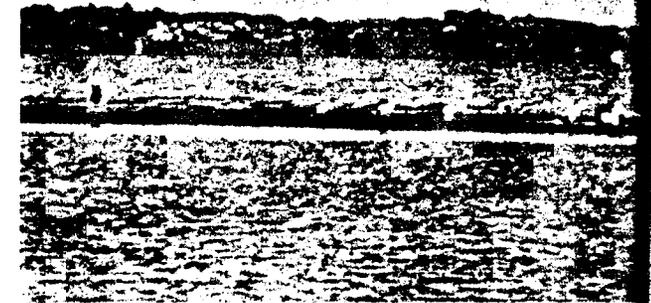
by Warren Burt.

Warren Burt, composer, film and video artist, has written previously in Cantrills Filmnotes, #35/36 on his film and video work. He has recently helped organise an important ongoing series of monthly new music performances at Linden Community Arts Centre, in Melbourne. Here he discusses his film work in landscape, and "nature" in general.

ONE of the continuing themes of my work has been that of relating to nature. This has existed since my work of the late 60s, but was given its crucial impetus in my long association, since 1972, with the Californian ecologist - philosopher - composer David Dunn. As Dunn has pointed out in numerous articles, the 19th century view of man and nature as spheres apart is clearly no longer useful to us. Advances in systems theory, ecology, cybernetics, biology, etc. make it clearer and clearer that we are a part of nature, inextricably linked with its operations, and it with us. About the only 19th century figure who was aware of this view was the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau, and in late 1981 I started reading his major philosophical work, the massive "Journal", over 4 million words written between 1837 and 1861. I finished reading it four and a half years later, in early 1986, and much of my work made during that period was a direct or indirect response to hints given by Thoreau in that book. In their own oblique ways, many of the ideas and issues dealt with by contemporary music find an echo in Thoreau. John Cage remarked that every idea he'd ever had that was any good he found echoed in the

"Journal", and many other contemporary musicians, on reading this book, find it a rich store of ideas. Thoreau was constantly examining nature in different ways, shifting his viewpoint, adopting different strategies for getting to know a particular place in a number of different ways. This method of his led me to adopt the same strategy in making a series of film compositions, each of which would examine the environment, or one aspect of it, in a different way, creating a whole which, like Thoreau's "Journal" would sprawl to a comfortably multifaceted long duration. As Thoreau had usually limited his field of study to Concord, Massachusetts and its immediate surroundings, I decided to limit my wanderings to places in the Melbourne metropolitan area, viewing those places only within a single day's trip on public transport. It was stated of Thoreau that he liked to keep his wilderness within walking distance of his mother's cookie-jar, and I felt that this was an ideologically proper thing to do. We can't very well save the rest of the world if our *own* backyard is a mess.

The film, *Nature*, was made on super 8 between 1981 and 1983, is 90 minutes long, has 5 sections, and is accompanied by a live reading of a series of short texts by Thoreau, John Cage,



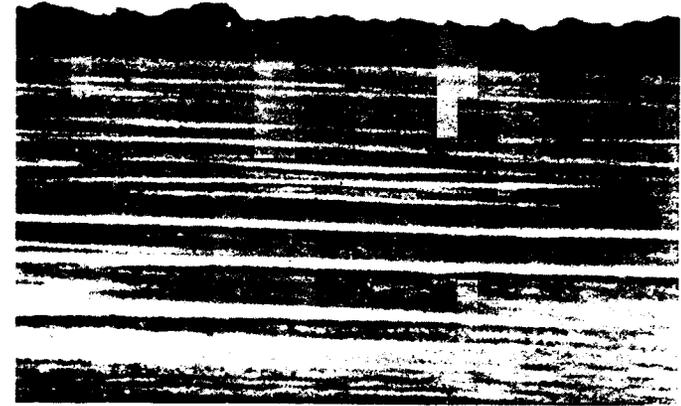
T.S. Eliot (specifically parts of the "Four Quartets" which seem to update a Thoreauvian vision), and myself. Super 8 was chosen as a medium because its relative cheapness implied that the making of a film in this way could be accessible to many. It was politically important to me that I work with the most accessible of materials if I wanted my work to stand as an easily available analogy of the kinds of interactive activities which I felt might be helpful in re-establishing a knowledge of one's own environment. Each section was made with a different way of interacting with a landscape and a different way of seeing it in mind. It is a film as much about ways of seeing, disciplines of seeing as it is about what is seen. I wanted very much to make, in Dunn's words, "a work where the technology does not merely function as a representational filter through which the 'natural' world is seen, but as a means to create a participatory coupling between the artist, the non-human environment, and the viewer." (from "Wilderness as Re-entrant Form", unpublished paper, 1987)

1) **Birds** (14 minutes) In this section, I filmed birds on the mudflats at Rhyll, Phillip Island and on French Island. I wanted to film birds as the interested amateur might see them, casually and in passing, and not with the almost lurid closeness of the Disneyesque nature photographer. I didn't want to pry into the "private life of birds" but to convey a sense of the beauty that could be found in the most casual of observations. All one had to do was stop and look, listen, be aware. This was the intent, anyway, but while wandering the southeastern beaches on French Island looking for suitable subject matter, I came across a recently dead white-breasted sea eagle, slammed into the beach, it seems, by an extremely violent windstorm a few days before. It was in a remarkable state of preservation, and I filmed it

in extreme macro close-up, studying details on its body that I would never have been able to film otherwise. I wanted to eschew the close-up totally, but finding this magnificent dead animal presented me with such a poignant opportunity it could not be passed up. And it was strangely appropriate as well, for not only was this the only way that an amateur, such as myself, could study a magnificent giant bird such as this in such detail, but the incident also provided a grim reminder of how most 19th century science obtained its knowledge of nature.

The rhythm of cutting and the durations of the scenes in this section were determined by my readings of the motions of the birds themselves, with the footage of the sea eagle providing the climactic point in a composed sequence of images of wading, feeding, flying, death and swimming. The soundtrack was a mix of wild sound recorded while filming and a separate recording of dawn at the mudflats at Rhyll made sometime later.

2) **Mud Island** (18 minutes) Mud Island is the crest of a large sand bank, The Great Sand, at the southern end of Port Phillip Bay, about 6 km. north of Sorrento. It is actually a series of islands enclosing a shallow lagoon about 1 km. in diameter. The islands are thick with low scrub and provide shelter to many species of birds. On Easter Sunday, 1982, I arranged with a boat owning friend to ferry me out to Mud Island and drop me off there for the day. Originally, I had intended simply to film birds there, but was soon struck with the stark, severe beauty of the place. The temperature on the island was about 30 degrees C. and a very strong hot wind was roaring in from the north. Most of the island's birds were seeking shelter. It was on top of Mt. Ktaadn, in Maine, during a severe storm, that Thoreau found a side of nature that was too strong for him. Even though



he loved remoteness and wild weather, there was here something too alien for him. I caught a glimpse of this that day on Mud Island, as I came face to face with the harsh, rich, NOTHING that an environment can sometimes present us with. I walked the perimeter of the island for several hours, and then, exhausted, sat down to rest. I hadn't even unpacked the camera at this point, unable to apply any of my preconceived ideas to the filming of this remarkable and harsh place. I then said, "Okay, Island, what kind of film do you want made about yourself?" A couple of seconds later, almost without thinking, I waded out to the centre of the lagoon, set up my tripod in the 100 cm of water, aimed the camera in 6 directions, each about 60 degrees apart, placed the microphone and parabolic reflector 180 degrees opposite the camera angle for each shot and did 6 long shots, each slightly shorter than the previous one. The filmmaking was beyond my conscious control. Batteries that previously had registered as strong began to fail. The wind rose to a new severity, but due to the sheltered nature of the lagoon, the waters appeared unruffled. The resulting footage had a beauty I had not planned on. The weakening batteries resulted in two scenes beautifully fading to nothing as the exposure control failed. The wind on the microphone produced a roaring symphony of wind noise. The shallow waters of the lagoon divided into a maze of still and rippling sections. I realised that what I was subconsciously attempting to convey here was a sense of spirit of place, of coming face to face with the rich, teeming nothingness that is sometimes available to us. Of all the sections of the film, this one is the most difficult. The structure of the film - 6 fixed long shots - gives one nothing to hang on to. One has simply to encounter the image on its own terms, to deal, as I did, with the difficult severe beauty of this

place. It is not a task that many have been willing or able to do. I especially remember the art critic Paul Taylor coming up to me after an early showing of this film and asking me why a remote location such as Mud Island was necessary, if the same film couldn't be shot on the beach at St. Kilda. This comment showed me how totally out of sympathy with the idea of spirit of place and environmentally formed art Paul Taylor was, and how much, despite his protestations, he was still mired in the ideas of materialism and formalism in art. For the piece was *not* about an idea of composition of water, sand and sky. If it was about that it could have indeed been made at any convenient beach. It was instead about being formed by an environment, being sensitive to that environment, and almost intuitively following the sense of that environment in making a response to it. This task puts us on very uneasy territory, for even more than with most art, it places us purely on the level of gut feelings as to what sorts of activities might or might not be harmonious with what we feel the spirit of a given place might be. It may not even be possible to do this with film, but *Mud Island* is my attempt at doing it.

3) **Dandenong Forest: for Cage and Thoreau** (21 minutes) If *Mud Island* is my attempt at letting the environment form a film, this section is my attempt to impose a non-traditional, non-filmic structure on the filming of an environment. In homage to Cage and in celebration of the Cage-Thoreau connection, I decided to use Cage's I Ching methods to structure a film. While walking through Ferntree Gully National Park, I thought to myself, "This place is so beautiful, you could aim a camera *anywhere* and get a good shot." To aid the "anywhere-ness" of the aiming of the camera, that is, to make sure the camera would go where I would not consciously aim it, I decided



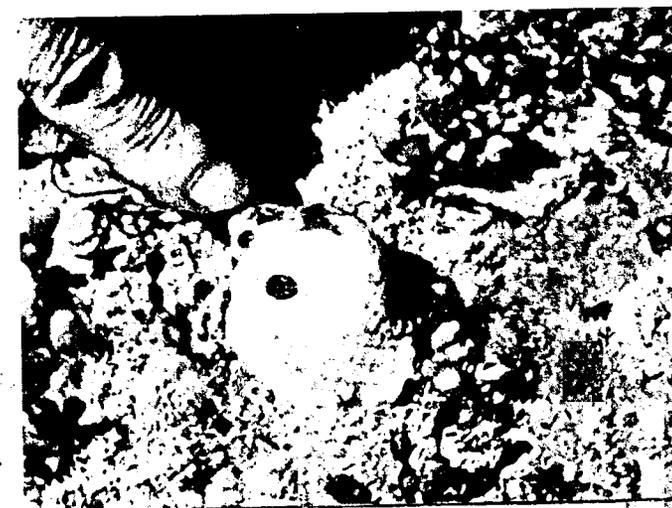
to use a random system to determine where and how long the shots would be. I then had to compose a system that would allow this to happen. First, I chose a path through the forest, mostly on the criteria that it was not too long and that it encompassed a wide variety of forest types. I then had to measure the path, to allow random numbers to determine where the camera would be placed. I decided to use a human scale of measurement, the step, on the grounds that its variability would introduce a further element of unpredictability into the structure of the piece. The path turned out to be 8,453 steps long. (Counting the steps was a bit of a Zen exercise in itself!) I decided that the film was to be 21 minutes long. I then consulted the I Ching, which in this Cageian usage basically functioned as a semi-random generator of numbers between 1 and 64, to determine how many shots would be in the film, how long each shot would be, where on the path it would be shot, what the compass bearing of the camera would be at that point, and what the elevation of the camera would be. I brought along a compass, protractor and stopwatch to make sure the shot would conform as closely as possible to the numbers specified. The only two elements left up to personal decision were camera focus and zoom. I wanted each shot to be as in focus as possible, and this also entailed being able to adjust zoom size if, for example, as sometimes happened, we ended up with the camera gazing close-up at the trunk of a tree. All editing would occur in camera. The filming was accomplished in a single session, though Malcolm Ellis, who accompanied me on the shoot, decided I was mad to submit myself so rigorously to the demands of a system. I felt quite good about it. The decision to use this system was freely made, and having decided to use it, I felt I might as well be as precise as I could in my realization of it.

In true Cageian fashion, I decided that the

sound should be from the same area, but recorded independently. Using the same system, I derived a set of instructions as to where to go, how long to record and in which direction to point a highly directional mono microphone in a parabolic reflector. A week after shooting the film, I recorded the sound, using the pause control to create the same effect as editing in camera. The unsynchronized sound and image were then juxtaposed.

The resulting film, not surprisingly, poses many problems of perception, as do most works made in this way. They invite us to see in a different way, because most of our expectations of what will be seen are not met. We have to learn to see and hear exactly what is there, and not our desires of what we might want to see and hear. A different standard of criticism has to be applied to works such as this. To say, for example, "the rhythm and the pacing are boring," is irrelevant, for standards of what an "interesting" rhythm and pacing might be were never applied to the making of the film. The work is an object, with its own rules of making and perception, and we have to learn to see these, just as we have to learn to see what is there in front of us in the forest, if we wish to fully participate in its reality. In this way, the disciplined structuring of the film became an analogy to the disciplined way one might approach the perception of an environment, not in order to control any chaos that might be there, but simply as a way of getting to know the place.

4) **Tidepools II** (22 minutes) One of the ways we come to know things is by naming. In one sense, it can be said that naming is at the heart of science. Thoreau was fascinated by the scientific method, and while critical of it, became more and more involved in it as he got older. He recognized this change in himself, and at times regretted it. His later nature



writings lack the exuberant sweeps of his youthful observations, but in their place is a careful and minute intensity that has its own rewards. I have often used a process of just letting people describe, in their own language, an environment they are either very familiar with, or alien to. In 1980 I had my friend and collaborator Ronald Al Robboy describe a portion of the San Diego tidepools he was familiar with. The result was the short humorous film, *Tidepools I*, which made me want to make a sequel, this time with a marine biologist, to obtain that sort of looking at the environment. Through my work at the Council of Adult Education, I met naturalist and writer Jane Calder, and enlisted her help in making this section of the film. Jane was wonderful to work with. She is an excellent teacher, with a very clear explanatory manner, and her approach to showing the scientific understanding of the Sorrento tidepools was meticulous and friendly. So well did she know her material that even though it was my intention to shoot the film with no retakes, it turned out to be unnecessary even were I applying more traditional editing criteria. Jane takes us on a walking, talking tour of the tidepools. This section of the film is the only one with words on the soundtrack, for in this section, we see the rational mind at work, attempting to understand the world through its particular methodology. In addition to being an examination of the scientific method of seeing nature, the film is also a critique of the media's ways of filming this sort of narrative documentary. In this film, macro close-up photography is almost exclusively used, except where Jane is describing something bigger. The filming is almost entirely subservient to her talking. Only once does a framing shot, or a "Harry Butler at the tidepools" sort of shot occur. Except for that, we simply see what she points out to us, allowing her presentation, and not some media-determined idea of "interesting presentational

ideas", to determine the flow, pacing and framing of the film. It was quite a compliment to my intention to let Jane speak through the film that she indicated that she was interested in using a video copy of it in her classes.

This section of the film also provides quite a change of pace from the preceding 3 sections. Jane's friendly talking is a relief after the relative austerity of the rest of the film. This moment of relief also serves to change our state of perception from the abstract to the verbal, which change is also a set-up, much like a musical scherzo would be, for the more transcendental section which is to follow.

5) **Grass** (6 minutes) Thoreau had often urged his readers to examine one small facet of their environment minutely, to "see the universe in a grain of sand", and the later parts of his "Journal" are full of such observations. As a suitable coda to the film, I wanted to focus closely on the most mundane of realities around us, examining the grain and texture of experiencing it. I had often been fascinated with just lying in the grass and changing the focus of my eyes, moving from focusing on the extremely close to the farther away, and decided that this simple action of changing focus would be the basis for the concluding film. I also wanted to film this in the city, to return to the reality that I live most of my life in, but to hopefully show that the perception of this reality would now be changed by the process of retraining my perception I had put myself through. On Easter morning, 1983, one year after the trip to Mud Island, I went to the Andrews Reserve In Abbotsford to look for some grass to shoot. There had been rain after a drought, and new blades were springing up everywhere. The morning sun made the blades glow an almost translucent green. I placed the camera on the ground, focused as close as the camera would allow and then did a slow man-

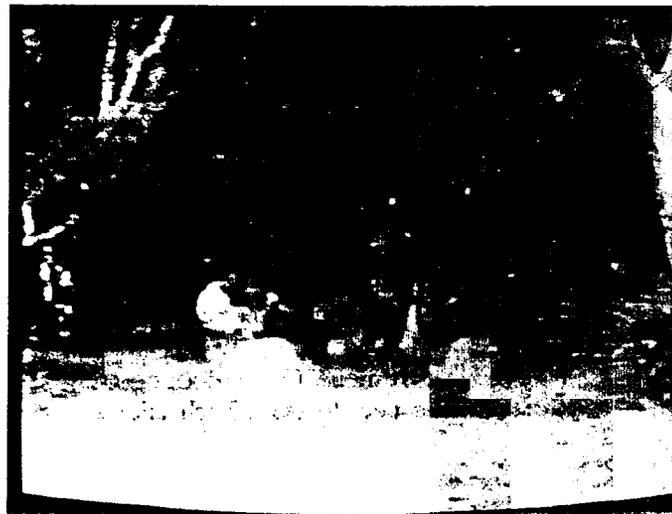


ual zoom out which lasted about 2 minutes. The field of view constantly changed as new depths of vision came into focus. At the maximum zoom out, the picture was mostly a blur of green except for a few tantalizing hints of clarity. The tiniest motions of light and wind on the blades were magnified and became quite significant. I made three different shots like this. Edited together, they are the film. The soundtrack is silent. Only three brief quotes, one per shot, form the live reading. The aim here was to have a concluding statement of great simplicity and beauty showing a kind of focusing of attention I felt would be of use in establishing a harmonious relationship with one's surroundings.

String Trio No. 2 (1981-86) (10 minutes) In 1980-81, I formulated a series of environmental musical performance pieces that would have as their end products either video or film documentations. Two of these, *Tidepools I*, for solo electronics/voice performer and San Diego tidepools, and *Requiem*, for solo violinist, ultra-cheap radio microphone, and forest and river environments in Waterford, NY, were made as super 8 films in late 1980. Two of them, *Rowville*, for 12 musicians under the SEC power lines in Rowville, Vic. and portable video camera, and *Baypiece*, for 6 musicians improvising at various spots around Port Phillip Bay, and realized as an installation for 6 video monitors, have yet to be realized. A first attempt at realizing *String Trio No. 2*, for violinist, violist, and cellist in a park in Frankston, Vic. was made on super 8 in 1981, but the demands of the piece exceeded the capabilities of the medium, and the performer for whom it was originally written, David Dunn, was only in Australia briefly. By the time the film was processed, he had left the country, and I didn't know of any other string players who combined his string playing capabilities with his

sensitivity to listening to environmental sound. The piece was shelved for a while. Four years later, Angela Dillon had moved to Melbourne. She was the first string player I had met since Dunn who I felt could do the piece. At the same time, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts announced applications for materials grants, and I applied for one to produce a video version of the piece. To my surprise and delight, the application was approved in early 1986, and in December 86 we set out to produce the piece.

What distinguishes these pieces is that in every case, the musicians take cues for their playing from events in the environment, reading the environment like a score, or using it like a conductor. In some of them (*Rowville* and *Requiem*) this interaction is minimal, but in others, the influence of the environment is total. *String Trio No. 2* (and it really is my second string trio – the first dates from 1970, and was performed by the American String Trio at the State University of New York at Albany in 1971 – one of my other activities is writing chamber music, which I passionately love) is the most radical of these pieces in terms of environmental determination of what happens. In this piece, the musician has no score, she plays sounds in response to sounds she hears in the environment. She chooses a sound that catches her attention, picks a single pitch within that sound, and traces the envelope of the sound – how the sound gets louder and softer – either at the same speed, or faster or much slower onto the pitch she has chosen. When she has finished this gesture, she remains quiet for a while, until she hears another sound she wishes to trace. She then repeats the process for the duration of the performance. I wanted to make a process which would require the development of an extreme sensitivity to environmental sounds, a sensitivity that was analytical (what pitch? what loudness shape?) and responsive (how do I make them on my instrument?) as well as



receptive and aware, again as an analogy to the kind of environmental awareness we may well have to develop for survival as a species.

Not only were the musical events of the piece determined by the intelligent interaction of the sounds in the environment and the performer's choice, the visual elements of the piece were also so determined. Seeing the Cantrills' colour separation films had gotten me thinking about the beauties of double and triple exposure, and in 1979-80, choreographer Eva Karczag and I had experimented with double and triple exposed dance films using a backwinder. These experiments proved not so useful in themselves, but started the thinking which led to this piece, where triple exposure was to be the central structural device.

A string trio is a composition for violin, viola and cello. The three performers usually sit with the violinist on the left facing the cellist on the right, with the violist between and slightly behind them, facing the audience. It is a more intimate medium than the string quartet, but to my mind suggests even greater formality. The reason I had to wait so long for a performance of the piece was I wanted all three parts performed by the same player – a string player who was very familiar with violin and viola, and who could at least get around on the cello – performed at different times, but in the same location and from the same camera angle. The resulting three takes would then be superimposed, and the visual mixing of the three takes would again be determined by the sounds of the environment. In the original super 8 version, I attempted to do this on location, fading sound and vision in response to environmental sounds, but in the video version we did these fades later, in the studio, using the recording of a second microphone well away from the performer as a guide to our mixing. In the three takes, the performer sat in the appropriate position for her instrument. Otherwise, no change was made from take to take. Each take was a

real time, one shot affair – cutting would be inappropriate for the kind of piece this was. Likewise, our fading of sound and vision in the studio was similarly done in real time. Every aspect of the piece was a result of real-time performance of humans making choices in response to sounds they heard from this particular environment.

The environment in question is a particularly rich one for sound. Armstrong Reserve, Seaford North (Melways Map 97 Ref. E-11) is a narrow strip park that backs onto two rows of suburban backyards. At one end of the park is Railway Parade and the Frankston railway line, and the other end of the park is the Seaford North Primary School and a kindergarten. Somewhere near there is some light industry. A few blocks beyond the primary school are open fields. The park is on the approach path to Moorabbin airport, and is richly planted with native trees and scrub, which attracts a wide variety of native species of birds. It's all here – rural, suburban, natural, industrial, children, adults, dogs, birds, trains, planes, bikes, playgrounds, etc., but the sounds are thinly dispersed, so that the mix never becomes oppressive, or any one element dominates. The early rehearsals of this piece involved Angela and I going to this park, having a picnic and then just sitting and listening. The sound mix was always fascinating. In later rehearsals, she brought her violin and began experimenting with responding to sounds here. She then continued to practice this routine in her Carlton backyard, so that by the time of the shoot, playing music in this way was second nature to her.

The making of the piece, then, took place in three stages. First, in the park, we did three takes, each of Angela playing a different instrument in a different position, each from the same camera angle, each for the same duration. Second, in the studio, we listened to the original wild sound, and faded vision and sound up and down, following the loudness

patterns of environmental sounds we heard and chose, making intermediate tapes. Third, we mixed these intermediate tapes into a master, keeping the level of mix always the same, with all three tapes evenly balanced, so that the fade outs and fade ins of each image made in the previous generation remained intact. Vision mixing was done by Stephen Goddard, sound mixing by myself.

The resulting piece has a quite evanescent quality. Sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes all three players are present at different levels of intensity. Because sound and vision mixing were done by two different people, responding to different sounds, there may be a violin player present, but the sound track is the sounds of the viola and the cello. A quite delicate selection of the possible three instrumental sounds and three players' images occurs. As in nature, everything is always shifting, always there and not there, always in a state of change. People seem to have enjoyed the piece, but so far, seem to have had a hard time in adjusting their perception to seeing what is going on in it. Most comments I have gotten so far are on the order of "Bergman meets the Heidelberg School!" This may reflect a formalist perception of the image – women in long white dresses disappearing in a haze of ti-tree – but says nothing about whether the viewer has dealt with the issue I'm trying to raise in both *Nature* and in this piece, that of developing a greater sensitivity to the world around us in order that that sensitivity can serve as a guide to more harmonious modes of action towards both the earth and each other. The task of fostering this kind of change of consciousness, of acting as an agent for it, is a very difficult one, and one that seems to be not understood by too many people at present, but it is one that vitally concerns me, and as a result, I happily continue to devote a considerable part of my energy and work to it.

—Warren Burt, Sept. 22, 1987,
September equinox.

Warren Burt: READING NATURE

The following quotes are from T.S. Eliot, 'Four Quartets' Faber, London, 1944; Henry Thoreau, 'Journal' Dover Publications, New York, 1962; John Cage, 'Silence' Marion Boyars, London, 1961; John Cage and Daniel Charles, 'For the Birds' Marion Boyars, London, 1980; John Cage and Richard Kostelanetz, 'John Cage—A documentary monograph' RK Editions, New York, 1970; and are read live as an accompaniment to the films indicated, although in some performances I have swapped quotes around a bit. In performance, I do not read the author's names, only the quotes, letting the sense of their difference, my own improvised statements and the vision of the film mix up a bit into a richer and more diverse whole.

BIRDS:

Cage: The emotions of human beings are continually aroused by encounters with nature. . . emotion takes place in the person who has it. And sounds, when allowed to be themselves, do not require that those who hear them do so unfeelingly. The opposite is what is meant by response ability.

Eliot: After the kingfisher's wing has answered light to light and is silent, the light is still at the stillpoint of the turning world.

Thoreau: Nature never makes haste, her systems revolve at an even pace. The bud swells imperceptibly, without hurry or confusion, as though short spring days were an eternity. . . The wise man is restless, never restless or impatient. He each moment abides there where he is, as some walkers actually rest the whole body at each step, while others never relax the muscles of the leg till the accumulated fatigue obliges them to stop short.

MUD ISLAND:

Cage: There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.

Eliot: Words move, music moves, only in time; but that which is only living can only die. Words, after speech, reach into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern, can words or music reach the stillness, as a Chinese jar still moves perpetually in its stillness. Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts, not that only, but the co-existence, or say that the end precedes the beginning. And the end and the beginning were always there before the beginning and after the end. And all is always now.

Thoreau: Nature shows us a stern kindness, and only we are unkind. She endures long with us, and though the severity of her law is unrelaxed, yet its evenness and impartiality look relenting, and almost sympathize with our fault.

Eliot: Under the oppression of the silent fog the tolling bell measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried ground swell, a time older than the time of chronometers, older than time counted by anxious worried

women, lying awake, calculating the future, trying to unweave, unwind, unravel and piece together the past and the future, between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception, the future futureless, before the morning watch, when time stops and time is never ending; and the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning, clangs the bell.

Cage: Why do you waste your time and mine by trying to get value judgements? Don't you see that when you get a value judgement, that's all you have? They are destructive to our proper business, which is curiosity and awareness.

FOREST:

Cage: Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look.

Eliot: Time past and time future allow but a little consciousness. To be conscious is not to be in time but only in time can the moment in the rose garden, the moment in the arbour where the rain beat, the moment in the draughty church at smokefall be remembered; involved with past and future. Only through time is time conquered.

Cage: What is a quiet mind? A mind which is quiet in a quiet situation? Think of Wordsworth, Thoreau. Thoreau's lake had a railroad at one end. Daniel in the lion's den. Time no longer exists. Only quantity. Let's say there are only a few sounds. Let's say they're loud. What shall we do? Jump?

Thoreau: The sun, rather low, is seen through the wood with a cold, dazzling white lustre, like that of burnished tin reflected from the silvery needles of the pines. No powerful light streams through, but you stand in the quiet and somewhat sombre aisles of a forest cathedral, where cold green masses, alternate with pale-brown but warm leather-coloured ones, almost ruddy (you are inclined to call them red). These are the internal decorations while dark trunks. . . rise on all sides and the floor stretches around and perhaps a single patch of yellow sunlight is seen on the shaded floor.

Cage: Silence, more than sound, expresses the various parameters (including those parameters which we have not yet noticed). Thoreau said that sounds are bubbles on the surface of silence. They burst. The question is to know how many bubbles silence has on it.

GRASS:

Thoreau: These two are almost the first grasses I have learned to distinguish.

Thoreau: The luxuriant and rapid growth of this hardy and valuable grass is always surprising. How genial must nature be to it! It makes the revolution of the seasons seem a rapid whirl. How quickly and densely it clothes the earth! . . . At first sight of this deep and dense field all vibrating with motion and light, looking into the mass of its pale green culms, winter recedes many degrees in my memory. . . the season of grass, now everywhere green and luxuriant.

Eliot: The light is still at the still point of the turning world. □