

So, one isn't going to wait forever for a time when everything is clear. It's more a matter of scale and realising that these things cannot easily be sorted out at a microscopic scale, or maybe that they can only be sorted out at a microscopic scale. The thing is that without readers and without editing the text it isn't going to go anywhere. But if I was going to sit there talking about the ins and outs of composition then I would be writing a composition book, whereas I think what I am going for is an argument to the effect that it doesn't necessarily make sense to try to fit everything into a bunch of journal articles, and even if it did, that material would have to come from somewhere. This is a reasonably cogent argument already, so my point is that trying to figure out what we have been talking about here intuitively is worth taking some time with. It isn't going to be completely obvious just from reading the outline or following the chats. That is all well and good but it seems to me that what the discourse is, actually, covers quite a lot of other kinds of ground. Take, for example, listening to people. What might it have to do with research in mathematics to sit in a meeting and listen to someone talk? Or, what might be the relationship between mathematics and Buddhism? Listening to yourself talk and grow silent.

I am not planning to answer all of these questions right away, and I am not even sure they are the most important questions. It also seems important to make a distinction between someone who tries to make a start of something because they have entered into a journey of exploration, and someone who is arrogant and self-important without having actually done much of anything. To insist that people should only speak up when they have completed their journey is not a sensible strategy. However, someone who sets out on a journey with a sense of humility rather than a sense of braggadocio is noticeably a different kind of person.

It therefore seems to me that it would make sense to begin with an intuitive and yet dispassionate assay of what's there, thinking about it from the point of view of someone who is feeling their way through the material rather than someone who is looking at it and trying to make sense of it all in one moment.

It is also not entirely clear that it makes sense to narrate this story through subtweeting people who exist in real life, or by creating a roman a clef, even if it is using the chromatic palette. I already did something like that once. What we don't yet know is who or what the major characters will be or what their landscape looks like or how they interact. We definitely don't know how this will go over with a public. But I think we can make some observations about the process.

First of all I think we can agree at the outset that this thing needs to be written a few times to get a feel for it. No one writes something like this without thinking it through in the form of notes and drafts, or without talking it over with people on the way. People might manage to write other things in that fashion, but that doesn't make it something to aspire to: a kind of closed model of production.

Rather we can look instead at notions of open works and open workshops. There will at some point be some trips to the library and maybe also the art museum involved. There will probably be several changes of format, and some changes in readership: one would hope, right, that the topics that are discussed might grow beyond a niche interest. This seems to be one of the ways in which I have been thinking about things slightly incorrectly lately. While it makes sense to look at the ways in which scholarly communities do gatekeeping, that doesn't mean that in order to be a productive scholar I should go looking around for a friendly-seeming gatekeeper. Actually I am starting by now for almost 20 years to lose all patience with that way of working. This is why I think it is high time to make a start of pushing some things

out there in a format that makes sense from the point of view of expression, and also the point of view of linking and annotation. It doesn't seem to me that this is necessarily corrupt or fatuous just because it employs methods from freewriting or artistic creativity. Neither does it seem to me that these methods add any special form of valorisation in their own right. We can see, some 500 days later, whether we have actually gotten anywhere or not. Maybe it's just a paean to a burning world. Maybe it's a narrative. In any case what doesn't seem to work is to regard it as any one thing in particular at the beginning. That much seems clear. So for example one should not make the assumption that it is either single-author or multi-author. One should not make the assumption that it is either scholarly or popular; secular or religious. One should not even make the assumption that it makes sense or has anything to say; or that it doesn't. This sort of non-committal stance seems particularly important at the outset if we are indeed going to combine an open-minded approach to writing with a rather structured approach to WRITING.

Without any particular sense of where things are going, nevertheless, one can make certain observations about arrangements of value. For example, one can look at these pages only as sketches or exactly as sketches of something: something that probably exists in more dimensions that could be straightforwardly photographed or painted. This is why each word should be understood to be looking around a corner.

So it is less about where we are going and more about how we are getting there; perhaps this echo of oral culture inside of textual culture is one link that we should preserve with the material reality that we find ourselves in. It's less about the individual actors or the comedies and tragedies that they find themselves in, which we could all be reviewing at length. It's less about the specific details of popular culture or even scientific or technical culture. If we are going to think meaningful or dangerous thoughts, we should be ready to think them over the long term; which means that the specific technologies and fads that we find familiar now will mostly all have faded away and been replaced with new ones. At the same time we have to think mediatic-ally, which doesn't mean that we think only in terms of the affordances of this particular medium or that particular medium, but that we must think about media in general.

All the more reason not to get hung up on this or that fact of this or that present reality, or the echoes of one character or another from fiction or from history. That will happen anyway. The larger point is to think about what these different mediatic surfaces, networks, and complexes have been saying; to engage with them in much the same way that we might listen to a conversation, since after all a given conversation is just one specific example of a media form. So of course we might read books or watch films but we should have forgotten all of the details when it comes time to sit down and write or think. It is impossible otherwise to do anything but to engage with what's right in front of you: and again, that is problematic if what we are trying to do is to ENGAGE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF US. Hopefully these paradoxes are self-illustrating and self-explanatory. If there is nothing there than nothing can attach to these ideas; and the overall project will crumble, just like many others have. What makes me feel at least somewhat confident is that this method can be hooked together with some other forms of scaffolding, building, and so on. If we don't fully embrace all of the techniques of historical Art then it seems as though it will be impossible for us to create anything new. So if I am prepared to accept that from the perspective of writing this is just another form of apprenticeship, then I am ready to proceed. If I get into the swing of things and need to make some adjustments, OK, I will be happy to do that within reason, although I think that picking a basic format and sticking with it is going to be part of what makes this work.