

## ALWAYS ALREADY transcript for one-hour performance (embedded in 7th hour)

Information in green

spoken word/sound in black

Performers are Karen (American accent) & Tara (Iranian accent) where possible it is marked which one is speaking.

top of the hour alarm sounds (recorded soundtrack)

*Performers heads appear through the wall of wool*

(2 voices on soundtrack alternate speaking the following text:)

So I've closed my eyes and watched us there in the wall. I waited to see what we might do. I remembered there was something we'd already decided would happen at the beginning but I thought:

are we still going to do that?

or has everything changed?

It seems so long ago.

So I've closed my eyes and, and watched us there, in the wall, embedded there, in the layers. And then I realised, I was watching from the audience . . . and I thought . . . it seems so long ago . . . and shouldn't I be watching from where I am . . . from within the wall . . . and there was some skipping around like an unweighted needle on a record player, like scrubbing along a timeline, like a faulty wifi connection that chops up speech and stalls it and then delivers a pile of speech too fast and partly in the wrong order . . . I tried to settle down, calm my brain, slow my thoughts.

I saw us rippling in the layers, we were rippling feet to shoulders in a layer sandwich and the layers of the wall were like sediment in the forest, like layers of earth in different states of decomposition. And I thought: it can't be our whole bodies, we've got to pop our heads through from behind the wall so it's just heads —like this—just heads and then there was a bit of progress: I commanded: "pick a number!" and you did, you picked a number, I don't know what number you picked but I know it wasn't 58—I think everything ground to a halt then because I stopped to write this down.

K: pick a number!

T: 38.

K: Could you grow your hand and could I fit entirely inside it?

T: pick a number!

K: 27.

T: Does everyone with lungs breathe the space between the knots and the space around our arms and the space of this loom and the space of this room which is a loom and the space of this building, and the space of the trees right outside this building, and the space between their leaves, their branches, and the space between their roots and around their roots, all the way to the ocean and in between the oceans?

*the performers pull their heads out and move to the front of the wall—a sequence of simple movements repeated again and again like clockwork, like a machine*

(on soundtrack performers sing *carpet weaving pattern calling* in Farsi)

[Ash Ooze: performers don white constructions and Tara sings live]

آهنگ زبان گنجشک رو تقدیمتون می کنم  
(Farsi)

She swallows the whirlybirds. Ash oozes out of her eye. Two leaves like tiny sparrow-tongues, tip out of her pupils, tear the cornea and wonder if they'll ever become a tree.

*Performers perform a dance sequence soundtrack is a “breath orchestra.”*

*Karen balances on the backs of two chairs and sings “a wavering song for a dandelion” live.*

I'm told it comes from the outside  
even though it started on the inside  
what I'm told, what I'm told  
is that a seed or — a part of a seed or — something very much like  
a se-e-ed  
got in  
to the inside and then  
with just enough nutrition to  
trigger a sprout  
it began to twitch and — as — it grew it — twisted  
twisted, twisted to one side

and then another  
and there were more than four

there were more than six  
and the sides increased  
and it repeats and it repeats and it repeats

that's my complaint  
not the fact of it  
I'm happy to be the birthplace of a dandelion  
it is a weed but it also has some good things about it.

I can do with a dandelion  
but the twitches take up all my time  
the attention it takes the poise to remain still  
the fa-a-ct of my status as a plant pot isn't a problem

it's everything else

the physical noise . . . it ne-e-ver stops.

*A single movement is repeated, the performers sing in Farsi.*

*Both performers stand on chairs behind the wool wall and move in a circular motion their voices on soundtrack speak a text together after which it is repeated with some words missing.*

97. I stood still and she stood still, on the street where we'd stopped, because even though we didn't know each other, and were both on our ways to work in the morning, we both reached a particular tree at the same time and both noticed how quickly the leaves had begun falling from it. And as we watched, we waited for this singular flourish, this multiple leaf drop, to come to an end but it continued longer than a moment or a blink of an eye and longer than a sigh and longer than singing happy birthday twice and then longer than holding your breath under water or the other shoe to drop. But the leaves continued to fall and we resorted to looking at each other for some support. And eye contact confirmed that we both thought all of the leaves from the tree would fall, all of them almost simultaneously, but definitely all, in what one might collect together as one fell swoop. And they all fell and we watched it from start to finish. And then we carried on. We never said a word.

*The performers perform a dance sequence their voices speak on the soundtrack first Tara and then Karen.*

T:

Two parts of a machine, slowly approaching. a knot and a bolt, a cage and a ball, a rotor and a bearing, a warp and a weft, a one and a zero. A loom weaving a fabric, a blue on blue, in cloud and wind, abro baad. What you call marbling, I call cloud and wind. Magnified, moving, slower, in place, moving. A crescent path. Two parts of a machine, zig zag. That is the spine. Down the path, a bird sings, a knot a knot a knot in unison. One hundred forgotten questions are half-remembered. Thread it through. Measure. This is a line of flesh, of hay, of metal, of concrete, and the leaves grow in concrete because it is not impossible. And we blow the leaves because it is not impossible. Move with the speed of concrete, and again, Move with the speed of concrete. Ropes overhead. It's mayhem. Loom step, piston punch, leaf arms. It falls. It breaks. Measure measure. It's made of glass and metal. Two parts of a machine. Overlapping Zig Zags. Then there were the disruptions: My skin bled, your laptop announced the time, I thought I should run to the train station, you worried about the cherry tree. Measure measure measure. A dandelion in the ear, the rustling of leaves in a heart, your arm is up, I must hold the leaves the right way up so everything grows out of you. We dance – like two parts of a machine, working, breaking, working. Measure, measure, measure, measure. A windmill. A field with tinkling brooks. Two workers not stirring, not picking crops, not finding mushrooms. Two windmills. Two parts of a machine. Two women. Not singing. This is the room and here is the loom. Here is the spine. Here we breathe. Here we stand. Not stirring. An ash tree grows from my eye. Ever so slightly. I breathe inside a mountain. You make a house. Two parts of a machine. A wasp dies inside a fig, like breathing inside a mountain. You roll into your cocoon and I climb under my octopus den. And pea shoots grow from our fingertips. And then we stop. Have a snack. A wall is made. Everything gets dense. Warm. Wet. Two heads in a wall. Songs. Dances.

K:

I need to ask you an impossible question, or a hypothetical question, or I need to ask you a question. Maybe I can just imagine asking you.

It is about the way an idea is full of possibility until you try to write it down . . . how long can it stay alive in my mind before I have to write it down and possibly kill it by solidifying its parameters and cutting off all of the things it isn't to do with . . . finding its edges by failing to include.

The performance is fabric and we in it. And it is the idea of who we are talking to – a possible other who isn't really one person but is many or more an idea in the

head than a solidified human. We are trying to be multiple, looking for the multiple dance.

There is a string, one string, or a curve, or a wire—it might be a wire—or it is a wire with a string wound around it in loops and curls and when it is pulled the wire is taut but the string loops are undone and the white tissue paper leaves with copper wire stems fall all at once to the ground.

The machine of questions is never answered but leaks a story that builds up a climate in which the falling of the paper leaves becomes heart breaking.

A physicalisation of insignificance and freedom and the tiny difference between tied and untied.

Between us we hold the wire, we're holding it higher with slender sticks. We pull the thread/string/yarn/wire and a line of leaves falls between us—tears or leaves or tear-shaped leaves or heart-shaped tears or the contents of my body in droplets—face water slowly departing.

The growing of the plants, the fibre, the oozes, the thickness of the sheep wool, the architecture of the rope, the transience of everything, the constant doing and re-doing, machine stitch steps zigzag double stitch pea shoot arms, morphing from one state to another, the composition of questions regarding programming cards for textile machines, for computer code, for ephemerality for interlock for gates opened and closed, and for the messages inside seeds saying wherever you land, wait for the signs to be right, and when they are: GROW.

Standing still with a downward facing head. Sudden impulses intermittently enervate the body and a ripple goes through the arms and the head rises and the eyes search the space passively—where am I, what am I, it doesn't matter . . . just a question. Electrical impulse giving enough energy to look.

We are what is growing and what is making and being made, we are the plants, we are the machine. We are working the length of an average work day.

It was a funnel shape with an internal spiral. Parts of it were held together with old fashioned floor nails—large metal pins. A series of circular holes indicated a kind of central spine, a spine missing its bone, an air space, a spine of absence—or room for entrance or idea.

And once again we've learned that when a person makes a choice, so much happens by night, underground, or just out of sight that the chooser is the last to

know. And from a novel in the dead of night I read “You can’t see what you don’t understand. But what you think you already understand, you’ll fail to notice.” I did have a dandelion growing in my inner ear. It did torture me for some quite a few years. I have agreed to cohabitate.

I did see the heart of an eight-year-old boy who fell ill suddenly not long after falling from a tree. The label on the jar says : he suffered from a vegetative growth. The heart itself appears to have the trunk of a miniature tree taking centre position and pushing out in all directions.

And what about the Secret Forest:

“You and the tree in your backyard come from common ancestor. A billion and a half years ago, the two of you parted ways. But even now, after an immense journey in separate directions, the tree and you still share a quarter of your genes . . .”

Here is my question:

What isn’t the performance?

*The shape of a tree is poured onto the floor.*

*The performers take position behind two piles of sheep wool. Tara sings in Farsi.*

*The performers take position either side of a large lung construction. Text is heard over the soundtrack. They alternate reading numbered questions sometimes reading several in a row. (Near the end of the text they take turns pulling a long cord and the lung makes a kind of screaming sound.)*

1. Is this the beginning?
2. Is it too soon to start?
3. Is everyone breathing?
4. Did your breath change when I asked?
5. When have you lost your breath?
6. Is forgotten the same thing as lost?
7. Can you forget to breath?
8. Is everything inside me growing?
9. Did you feel a momentary jiggle?
10. Have you ever lost track of your breath? of your breathing?
11. Did you count to ten?
12. Is this where I come in?

*Always Already*

*a performance installation by Karen Christopher & Tara Fatehi Irani*

13. He'd somehow inhaled a pea and it lodged in his lung, somehow it sprouted there in the warm and the wet, in the fleshy lining and with plenty of oxygen. Eventually, after some weeks of discomfort and struggle, the body ejected the pea shoot with a powerful sneeze. How did a seed grow in a lung without windows, without light?

14. Is there room for a loom or is the room itself the loom?

15. Last night I saw my lungs. Oh my... Two monstrous piles of flesh with interlocking trees. How do I forget?

16. Can I talk about breathing as binary because it is either in or out?

17. Is the shadow of the future looming over the performers?

18. The word for brown is coffee. Mustard is mustard. The word for pink is face-like. Is my face pink?

19. The lungs are not symmetrical. Do they leave room for the heart?

20. Shall we say this together?

21. What have you inhaled?

25. What if we had pins for fingernails?

30. Is there a dandelion growing in deep in the ear canal, the feathery feel, the tickle deep in, the dangling roots inside the leafy thrust out to the light?

36. What did I inhale? Or did I become more than one thing?

49. Steam, Big monumental hulk of metal... will it ever stop turning?

50. If the body is on the ground, lying down on the ground, and the head is tilted to the correct angle, can the sun find the seed?

۵۱. نور چطور از حنجره رد می‌شه؟

55. Can we have a moment of silence in which all of the leaves of all of the trees fall all at once from their branches to the ground?

۵۷. دست‌هامون تا کجا می‌تونن تاب بخورن؟

59. How long have you been doing this?

60. Does it not hurt your arms and legs?

72. By taking control of breath, override the automatic process of your normal breathing, and convert yourself into a kind of conscious machine, can you stretch a story to its longest length?

86. The roots were breathing under my feet and I didn't know where to stand, not to suffocate the huge breathing roots, going up and down at every breath. And I thought how come I'm only seeing this now?

92. His heart was found displaced to the left, his death revealed an invasion of lace in both ventricles of the lung, a thick velvet having lined his stomach only the appearance of a circle of mushrooms hinted at the fertile nature deep within him and a strong central trunk.

96. Once the body is imagined as an engine, where does motion begin?

*End of 1-hour performance, top of the hour alarm sounds.*

*Following the one-hour performance, the final hour of the installation is focused on the slow, delicate dismantling of material arrangements interspersed with performative fragments from the preceding seven hours.*

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## *Always Already*

*a performance installation by Karen Christopher & Tara Fatehi Irani*

*June 2021*