

James Weeks

Signs of Occupation
(2014)

for clarinet in B \flat and speaking voice

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perusal score
not for performance
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Signs of Occupation

for clarinet in Bb and speaking voice

Duration: 13'

Text: James Wilkes, 'Approaching Cleavel Point', from the collection *Weather A System* (London, 2009), used by kind permission of the publisher, Penned in the Margins.

Notes for performance

The piece consists of interlocking paragraphs of material for speaking voice and clarinet. Coordination of starting points for each paragraph is indicated in the score.

△ a short pause (a few seconds)

⌒ a longer pause (about 5 seconds, or as indicated)

Signs of Occupation was first performed by members of Plus-Minus Ensemble at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, on 24th June 2016. It has been recorded by James Wilkes (speaker) and Andrew Sparling (clarinet) for the CD 'Signs of Occupation' (Métier, 2016).

1. Once I halted on the wide grassy plateau over Ower, stopped at the Private sign. Now I can say: I passed that sign, crossed that cattle grid, went down that track. I have been trying to read signs of occupation off the land. The new ones are not always obvious. The old ones buried, broken, scuffed.

5s

$\text{♩} = 104$ ritmico

I

(begin after 10s of I)

2. *Marine transgressions*, meaning silting and erosion went to work here. Medieval furrows interrupt Romano-British. *Islands of survival*. The poetry of archaeology is a palette of description, just as exact and just as broad as it needs to be.

10s

3. The first was in a boiler suit and said, I wouldn't bother, I'd just go down there. He was raking something down from the hedgerow, or perhaps he was cutting it. What was he doing? Working. Sorry to interrupt you. ↓ II The second *was* down there and though at first I hesitated, his evasion suggested no more right to be there than us. It's right here – when cornered at the water's edge – it's right here just go round the corner, and his excitable lurcher pawed my father with red tinsel in its collar. *Hedged in with a surer pale than wood*. All on a Boxing Day trespass. The gate was open and the pumping station hummed.

II

p

poco

attacca

III

lilting

p

4.

(begin after fourth phrase of III, as marked)

4. A technical language, a thing of beauty, a palette to work in, to grind and puddle. Δ

Animal bone, marine molluscs, burnt bone, shale; Δ

Ill-defined gullies and scoops; Δ

'Burnt' soils varying from dark grey through light-brown to bright; Δ

Marine molluscs, undulated lenses; Δ

Mottled muddy clay, raw white clay; Δ

Marine shell, briquetage, crushed charcoal, flint.

10s

5. Left of the door, an earplug dispenser. Do not enter pump room when red indicator is illuminated.
Check status of fire and gas panel. ↓ IV This site has been de-classified to a non-hazardous location. Ex Certified Equipment is not essential for safe operation. Right, a fire alarm weathers to pink.

(begin during penultimate phase of IV, as marked)

6. *Artefacts perform active metaphorical work in the world in a manner that words cannot. Λ*
They have their own form of communicative agency. Λ
I felt it gently between my fingers, but found much earth mixed in.

10s

legatissimo

V

(begin directly after third phrase of V, as marked)

7. Brent geese, afloat in the offing, covertly synchronous. Impossible to detect the moment they swing, but now all weakly magnetised another way. Perhaps a net, of edging relations between neighbours, and Purbeck edges into harbour, back and forth through abutments, mudbank, channel, reedbank, marsh, puddle, piling, inlet, flintbank, creek, shingle, deep, lake.

come prima

più ritmico, furtive

VI

(begin after 5s of VI)

8. *Trespases of vert and venison
that Henry Smedemore, John Stoppe, John Cole junior,
and others whose names are given
entered the King's warren in the night
of Sunday next before the feast of St. Valentine
with a net and a dog
to take the King's deer
and the said Henry and John with their net and dog
are now in the castle of Corfe*

(begin directly after end of VI, no pause)

9. The archaeologist's descriptions are care embodied. There is a particular language that objects speak, an oblique, obdurate song. Notate, translate, publish.

⌒ (VII begins during pause)

This is salvage poetry, and the jumbled mess I've made of numbered pits and kilns *occupational debris*, more like looting. The legality of this occupation is in question. When is it not? I've disturbed the context, covered the paw-prints tracking back and forth.

legatissimo, sinuous, espressivo

VII

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

10.

(begin directly after fourth phrase of VII, as marked)

10. *When the tide ebbs*

*it has the appearance of a vast swamp. Nothing
under the idea of landscape can be more
disagreeable.*

*In some parts, when the tide is full,
and you can get a few
trees into the view, you have a tolerable Dutch
landscape*

human encounter
territorial thrashing
production & waste
rusting trough
mineral prospect
clayed fingernail

10s

11. Karen shows me a few sherds from when she worked on the dig. All black burnished ware, BB1, the local stuff, thick, dark, unglazed, each fragment dense to the hand, rubbed to a polish when leather-hard.

(VIII begins during pause)

The silent conversations of things
fill the air
throwing human shapes in sharp relief.

Here was formerly a pottery.

VIII

pp darker

poco

↓ 12.

(begin during last phrase of VIII, as marked)

12. The sun slips into the fabric of the reeds through listed fragments of imported Arrentine ware.

⌒ (5s)

- ↓ IX
- a) Slip, red, mirror bright; extremely smooth; \wedge^*
 - b) Slip, thin and washy, very variable through dull red-brown to orange-brown; \wedge
 - c) Slip, thick dark red-brown, smooth; \wedge
 - d) Slip, very smooth; scorched. \wedge
 - e) Fabric, pale buff to light 'dirty' yellow; \wedge
 - f) Fabric, pale-pink, with plentiful mica; \wedge
 - g) Fabric, pale; scorched; \wedge
 - h) Fabric, pale, somewhat coarse; very slightly burnt.

IX

poco

* each spoken phrase should begin during the clarinetist's rest between phrases, as marked.