

On "Prufrock 1919 scattered across landscape Var. II, 2006" by Peter Ciccariello



When I met Prufrock's paralysis, his etherization, his apparent inability to go anywhere or do anything, sometime in the late 1960's, I was struck by the dreamlike fragmentation of the poem's structure. The poem seemed to have been sliced apart and reassembled much the way Tristan Tzara or might do. One night I took part of the poem and converted it into a terrain texture which was then collaged with real world photographs of sand, rocks and soil and wrapped it onto a landscape model I was working on in a 3-D modeling program. The terrain skin was stylized with a digital texture of itself which echoed the sinuous forms of the letters themselves. I liked the idea of scattering the poem across a landscape as if the letters were leaves blown about by the wind as far as the eye could see. The vastness of the landscape and the richness of the sky dwarf the letters of the poem, the words now bereft of content have lost any hope of meaning. There is a futility in this, a futility that I found in the original poem, a displacement of the human soul signified as an object.

Prufrock carries his past like a stone around his neck, here the poem's letters are literal stones that make up the landscape of the poem. One can't help but think of walking across that plain and picking up the letters that would then fall into some magical sense of order and the poem would rise up again and be what it was.

The opening line of the poem - "the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table". Was the catalyst for the action, spreading the poem out against the sky, an infinite etherized sky that seems to keep the scattered poem in place, "scuttling across the floors of silent seas". Mostly I like the sky, the wide-angle perspective distortion giving an emphasis to the isolation of the fragmented words, and the sky, in the distance, leaving those last lingering hints of warm light as the sun, and the rest of the poem disappears forever.

My intention was to do this with other poems, perhaps Emerson or Frost, or even a Weldon Kees or a Hart Crane, experimenting with the "sense of place" of the poem, objectified as landscape, terrain and sky, teetering rather hopelessly towards "Placelessness".

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Peter Ciccarriello is an interdisciplinary, cross-genre artist, poet, and photographer. His work is a pastiche of language and text in 3-D digital environments. Recent work has appeared both in print & online in, amongst other places, Poetry Magazine, New River, a journal of digital writing and art, dbqp: visualizing poetics, Oregon Literary Review, MOCA The Museum of Computer Art, Otoliths, and *Word For/ Word – A journal of new writing*. His work has been exhibited at Harvard University, Boston, MA, The University of Arizona Poetry Center, Tucson, AZ, and at the “Interruptheque – Language driven digital art” Festival, at Brown University in Providence, RI.