

Bernard Edition

M49

Jack Bennett

***M49*: THE BERNARD EDITION**

This 2021 edition of *M49* is accompanied with a collection of ten lino-cut prints to illustrate the events of the text. Each plate was cut and printed in 2013 by acclaimed printmaker Celia Bernard in response to Jack Bennett's *M49*. The prints were, after publication, held at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. They were later bought at auction by a relative of the Óbidos Thereminist (of whom kindly gave us permission to include them in this edition but gave us a strict time window of usage as he 'struggles to go too long without them').

M 4 9;

OR

THE EVENTUAL INTERPRETATION OF

HOSPITAL CEILING TILES.

CONSISTING OF

COLLECTED ACCOUNTS, INTERVIEWS, DIARY ENTRIES, AND PROSE

CONCERNING THE

LIFE AND TIMES

OF THE

M49 DOOR.

EDITED AND COLLECTED BY

JACK E. BENNETT,

*Student of English Literature
at the University of Edge Hill, Lancashire.*

LIVERPOOL,
MCMXXI

Reader's Note

All figures named in the events of this text existed, and their stories have not been tampered with. This work is a collage of collected texts – including interviews, diary entries, poems, auto-biographical documents, and A.I. interpreted prose – all of which are smaller parts of a larger whole in relation to the mystery of the M49 Door.

Jack Bennett, the editor of the original edition of *M49*, was a student of English Literature at the University of Edge Hill, Lancashire, from 1918 to 1921. This text was the product of an assignment of the Global Archives module that Bennett undertook. In the module, Bennett was to research a subject enveloped in ambiguity, gathering sources from various archives, and produce a coherent and factual narrative to give answers to the subject. During this module, he developed a strong fascination – some critics have rather assumed it an obsession – toward a door found in his university. Via this fascination, the research project of *M49* was conceived.

Concerning the various conspiracies around *M49* that have surfaced since its initial publication, there are theories that the components of the text are fictitious, that it is in fact a creative response, and that Bennett sat outside the Door, listening, waiting, searching.

Whether this is a text to be read as fiction or non-fiction could be argued as an unproductive stance when consuming Bennett's work. One may, instead, choose to stand at the mid-point of fact and fiction to hear its utmost effect.

— The Editors of *The Bernard Edition*

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Preface

California, 1966, an old man lay in his death bed. He died before he could build his city. He used the ceiling grid to lay out the plan for his city, each panel representing one square mile. ‘They will hop on the people mover there’, he would say, pointing to a panel. His brother would smile, agree, and nod...

M49

I.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE BIRD CAGE THEATRE

Reader's Note: Inspired by his Great Grandfather's journal, the following was written by Edgar Michelangelo V in the Llanberis Review in 1961. Sections of 'The Life and Times of the Bird Cage Theatre' were periodically published in the Review over two months, though it was the authors intent to continue this story over twenty parts. He boarded the Semi-Colon in June 1962, leaving his endeavoured novel only three pages long.

Tombstone, Arizona, 1888

The first of them was found in the Wild West. Lodged between the Saloon and the Courthouse stood the Bird Cage Theatre; varment, dead space, odd stick, macabre, big bug, giving it a lick and a promise. Some of the residents made a hole in the wall of the Saloon, attempting to enter the Bird Cage, but the hole opened inside the Courthouse; the space inside the Theatre didn't exist. Everyone blamed the Door of the Bird Cage, but the Door wasn't a door at all. It was of Victorian design.

The Bird Cage was outside time. Whatever happened in Tombstone, the Theatre crouched, unaffected, unamused. Passers-by, bangtails, and the odd gunslinger ignored it, but for the residents its rot and stubbornness were a burden.

The wobblin' jaws would whisper about the Bird Cage, theorising that the Theatre was painted to appear old, that its decay and damp was an artistic

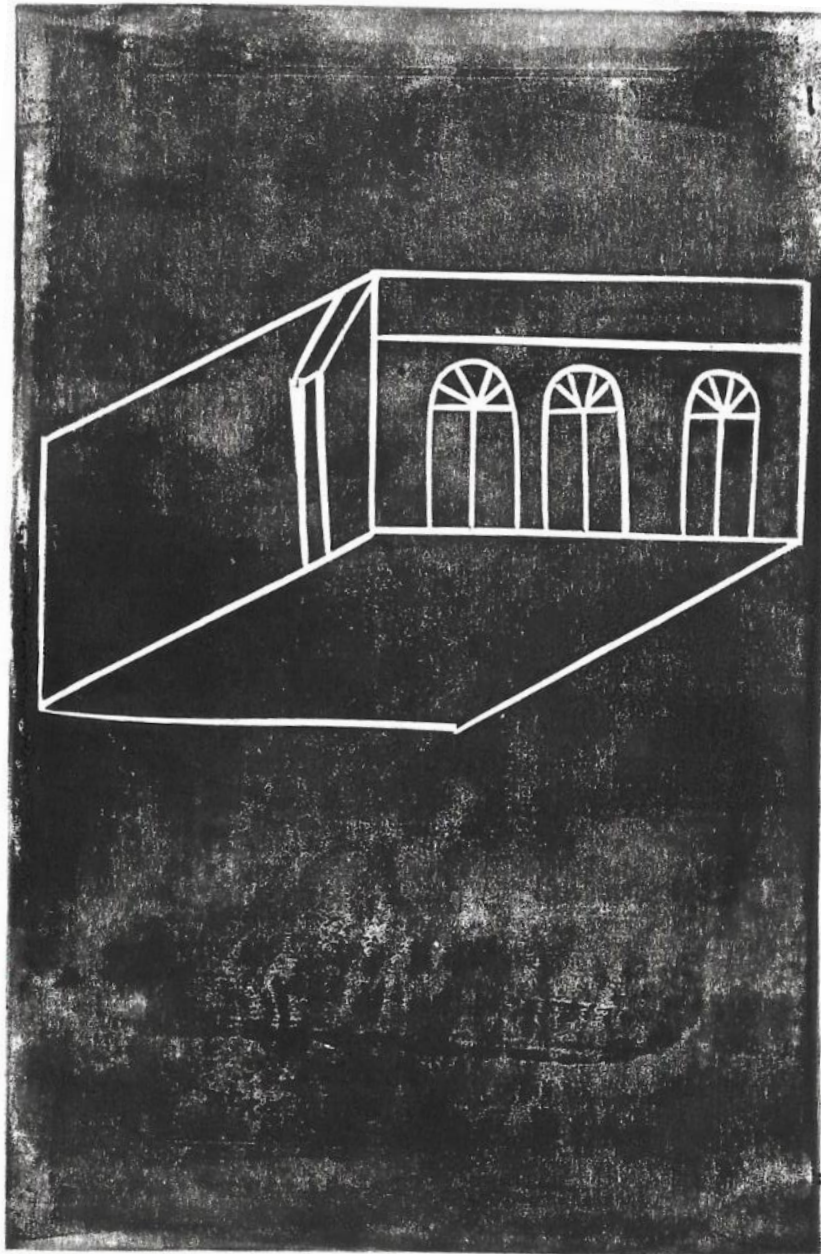


Plate 1: The Bird Cage Theatre

choice by its creator. Others would turn their heads from such daft conspiracies. *It's just an old theatre*, they'd say. *Knock it down*, they'd say. But there was a storm every time they attempted demolition of the Bird Cage. The storms were Biblical. They were the Theatre's interpretation of a grunt.

They believed the Theatre to be the towns sturdiest structure, even though its wooden skin was in a constant state of damp, with splinters and planks falling from the building in the night. Only the night.

~

Parents would scare their children with the Bird Cage, yarning the hours away about the Bird Cage. *Children who misbehave find themselves inside the old theatre*, they'd say. *The Bird Cage doesn't like it when you stare too long. Always look past it*, they'd say. *Splinters you get from the Bird Cage will turn you into wood. The splinters are parasites. Don't touch the Bird Cage*, they'd say, with their palms fastened tightly on their child's face, clamping down with, as they would say, love.

~

There was a bone orchard inside the Bird Cage.

Inside, on the front row, sat a vacuum. The vacuum would expand and shrink and expand and shrink. Sometimes simultaneously shrinking and expanding if it felt particularly flexible. The vacuum would split into other vacuums to perform plays for itself. The vacuum would peer into itself and it would see time and space fragmented. Through its vacuum, the Theatre would watch Venus pass every Thursday, it would listen to the Mars Rover sing Happy Birthday to itself, it would watch planets eclipsing into each other, it would spend its weekends watching the Roman Empire rise and fall, it would watch the conceiving, the birth, the life, and the death of whoever it fancied. The Bird Cage sat with Giorgio, it won a staring competition with Leonardo, it hugged Vincent, it cried with Edvard, and it meditated with Agnes.



Plate 2: After Giorgio de Chirico

It would, on occasion, pass through itself. It was its own time-machine. It would walk among us, playing fancy dress as a medieval soldier, a hairdresser from Aberdeen, and a taxidermist from Copenhagen.

Inside the Bird Cage is a metaphysical utopia; a collection of souvenirs; a place for the universe's lost things. The Bird Cage – bless it – is lonely.

~

A child of Tombstone, during a morning in July, peered inside the Theatre before her mother ushered her away. *No one is to look inside the Theatre*, her mother said. *Ghosts slumber, ghosts slumber*.

White figures shifting past the windows, tap-tap-tapping on the glass, white sheets hung over the ghosts, hung over moving things, ghosts heard banging on the Door, the Door wasn't a door at all, hitting it from the inside, banging on the Door, rebelling against the Theatre's paradox, banging on the Door, ghosts barkin' at a knot, the Door wasn't a door at all the Door wasn't a door at all the Door the Door

Composure...The banging of the door was said to produce shooting stars. The town, on the night of the shower, was cut into two writhing halves: one half watching stars, the other trying to get the ghosts out.

The ghost hunters went missing that night; the Bird Cage didn't like their interest, so it cast them into its vacuum. They were gone by the morning, turned into intrusive thoughts, ink blots, large moths. They were never found.

The ghost sightings increased after the night of the shooting stars, and the banging of the Door only got louder.

~

Reader's Note: The Door was discovered by Edgar Michelangelo I when travelling through Arizona. He came to America, from England, to pan for gold.

In his private journals, he wrote:



Plate 3: Ghosts of Tombstone

Tombstone was built around the Door. The Door had a gravity to it that I couldn't refuse; I mistook it for a lone tombstone at first. I sat with the Door that night as I believed it wanted company.

~

During my third day with it, I forgot about the gold. It didn't matter to me anymore. During the second week, I was stunned not to feel starvation or dehydration; the Door was my main source of energy. The Door asked me what I wanted and I said, 'A place to belong'. During the third month with the Door, it gave me hallucinations of a town I would be fond of.

~

During the end of the first year, we finished designing and planning Tombstone. During the end of the second year, the construction of the town was completed. The Door, Victorian in design, was covered in murky mint-green paint with a glossy finish. The Door, at its top, was marked: M49.

II.

VIGNETTES FROM THE SEMI-COLON

The First Vignette

Reader's Note: Most of the following was extracted from Edgar Michelangelo V during his post-mortem. Memory wavelengths were extracted, and a Plutonian Linguist interpreted them. This was a ground-breaking account as it proved the retaining of memory during sleep. Through sound, movement, and light alterations, Michelangelo built a sturdy narrative of this event while unconscious. Michelangelo died eleven years after the Semi-Colon landed at its destination. His death was harmless but quick.

1. They Started Appearing Under His Bed

Mystery: The first appearance was a sous chef attending her first shift. She appeared during Michelangelo's third night aboard the ship. She had, in her pocket, a white feather encased in phaseglass. The small block was to be *always* on her, her mother told her. It was to remember her grandmother by.

The sous chef rolled out from underneath the bed and, before making her exit, she found herself in a deep trance from the view. Saturn sent shivers down her spine. Jupiter perplexed her. Stars and satellites were suspended in a blanketed nothingness. She began to cry. She held the block of phaseglass as she looked out from the large porthole, gripping it tighter when she felt a pang of grief. She left the room quietly without waking or disturbing the sleeping old man.

The second appearance occurred the following night. He was a man sent from Earth and was to be the ships thereminist. He would perform both solo

and as part of the acclaimed Oberonian jazz band, *The Herschel Quartet*. The thereminist made a bizarre noise of confusion – a sort of muffled, shrieking hum – of which only made the old man snore louder, mumble in his sleep, and turn over. At this point, the thereminist had realised he was, indeed, underneath someone's bed. He didn't know why or how, only where.

He and his theremin snuck from the room soon after this realisation.

There was then a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth appearance under the old man's bed. The third appearance was a temporary passenger of the Semi-Colon called Mr. Mackintosh. He was visiting Samuel, his brother, for the weekend. Mr. Mackintosh had previously returned from his seventh mission to Europa, of which Samuel wasn't aware. This withholding of truth between them has put a silent strain on their relationship.

The fourth appearance, another temporary passenger, was a woman called Mary Cleveland. It had been seven months since she saw her daughter, and she was to deliver some unsettling news concerning the family's peacock, Nevil.

The fifth appearance was a barman and waiter working on the Semi-Colon. He sported an exceptional handlebar moustache, and that evening alone, he was to be given that exact compliment, on average, twenty times.

The sixth appearance was a German magician going by the stage name of the Enigmatic Ewald, specialising in coin and card tricks and the occasional anti-gravitational handkerchief routine. His partner, The Hypnotic Harrold, had just died. This was to be his first performance without him.

After the Enigmatic Ewald, the space underneath the old man's bed underwent a quiet and uneventful fortnight...

Reveal: All appearances, before finding themselves under the bed, stood on a faulty teleportation mat on HMS Venture (Orion Sector). It was their chosen method of transport to the Semi-Colon. The sous chef had contacted the teleportation company after a colleague of hers answered her question with, 'No, that's not standard procedure.'

The sous chef informed the company of the unusual circumstance, but they never responded. Her statement read:

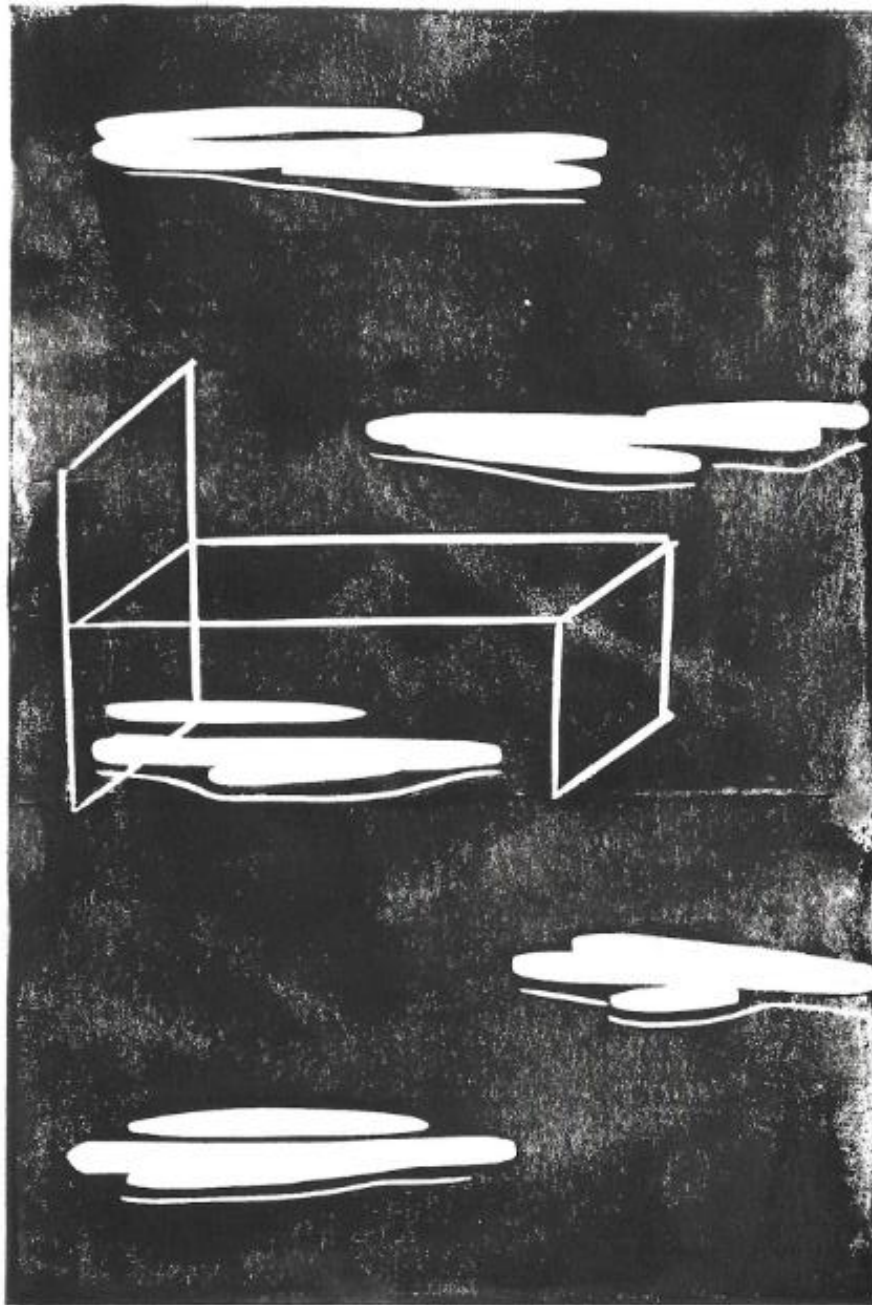


Plate 4: Apparitions

After standing on the mat, I found myself under the bed of a passenger on board the ship. Please fix any faults of your teleportation machine as soon as possible. Please respond to this message. The man appeared to be of old age; I'd hate for him to endure any form of panic from another unlikely appearance such as mine.

Two weeks later, the old man was thankfully made aware of the unusual happenings when a peacock named Nevil appeared underneath his bed.

The Second Vignette

Reader's Information: The below passages, focusing on their time on the Semi-Colon together, are excerpts from Rose and Claude's dairy. On Earth, Rose was a scholar of Modernism, owning an original copy of BLAST vol.1. She was a carer for her father and left Earth upon his passing. On Earth, Claude owned a book shop in Southport. He began writing poetry in conversation to Edward Hopper's paintings on the Semi-Colon.

2. They Fell in Love

10th July – I first saw him as we passed Clavius; he smiled at me and it was the first time I felt a sense of home on the ship. I last saw him on Monday – if there is such a thing as Monday in space – as he spoke to a member of the jazz band who appeared distressed. I watched him reassure them.

Tonight, he stood at the jukebox, illuminated by its technicolour. I watched as he smoked in slow-motion and there was a lengthy calm as we passed another satellite. I keep seeing him. I keep seeing him.

Office in a Small City

by Claude

The man in concrete wall, amongst other things,
is lost. A parade of lonely furniture drift to their next
homes, making their way through the city with a

push of warm breeze; a cabbie gives a stool an odd
look; an old man tips his cap to a writing desk. Here,
we see a daydreamer in shirtsleeves; the horizon sits
elsewhere. The sitter smiles as several birds fly past
the window. It was quiet during the summer of '53.

11th July – He sat beside me in the Main Lounge of the ship and asked where we were going. I smiled and told him it didn't matter where we were going. I saw him quake at my answer so I took him to the gallery. It was then that I realised that we were in a love story.

He held my hand, but they didn't quite fit together at first. We adjusted.

The gallery only held Edward Hopper paintings. As we circled the gallery, he told me of his auntie, and I told him of my father. I teared up in front of *Nighthawks*, he teared up in front of *House by the Railroad*, and we embraced in front of *Automat*.

Nighthawks

by Claude

Neon cannot reach the murky killers beyond
the clean, well-lit place. Dull grey begat
crimson, and crimson begat wine-bottle green.
Is that he, with his back to us? Is that he, now
walking into an old antiquity store in search of
lost memories? The hush grows quieter as he
leaves, quieter as the last call is served, and quieter
as a kiss is kissed and a cigarette glows to stump.

12th July – We made love and shared a cigarette. Our clothes lay on the carpet, frozen in a moment before sex. He walked to the window to appreciate the stars. I lay on the bed and smoothed over, with my hand, the craterous ripples his body left beside me.

Automat

by Claude

An illusion sat in limbo space. Ghost, gaze upon a coffee cup; it's the last thing to hold onto. Frothed milk hypnosis, nothing to be scared of, nothing to be desired. Radiator heat, the metal of it all, the display of light on a night-time window. She is alone in this moment. Let her be. Let her drink. Reflecting without reflection. Night shift, matinée, rendezvous, first date. Let her be. Let her think.

13th July – We sat in the Main Lounge during our first meal together. Our appetisers arrived and we discussed our lives on Earth and why we chose to leave them.

An elderly gentleman played the theremin; the same man I saw him reassure. 'Only the Walls' was the song the thereminist played first; an eclectic mess of noise, but, at the same time, beautiful science-fiction soundscapes.

It was at this point, as we sat in the bittersweet calm of the theremin, that we were interrupted by a Venusian space-bat. We were warned of them – the stewards and stewardesses would call them vermin – but it was harmless. The bat latched onto my left shoulder. Guests were screaming, making ever-so-slight fools of themselves, but we walked out to the Fifth Tier Observation Balcony calmly and unaffected. The bat trembled from the uproar; I stroked it with my thumb.

It jumped from my shoulder and onto Claude's and, pressed against the black velvet, refused to leave his suit. I stroked its head, lifted it from him and held it in my palm for a while.

I let the bat go and tears formed into little spheres. He wiped them from my cheeks and they hung in the weightlessness of space. We forgot about our food and spent the night stargazing, watching my tears and the bat drift away.

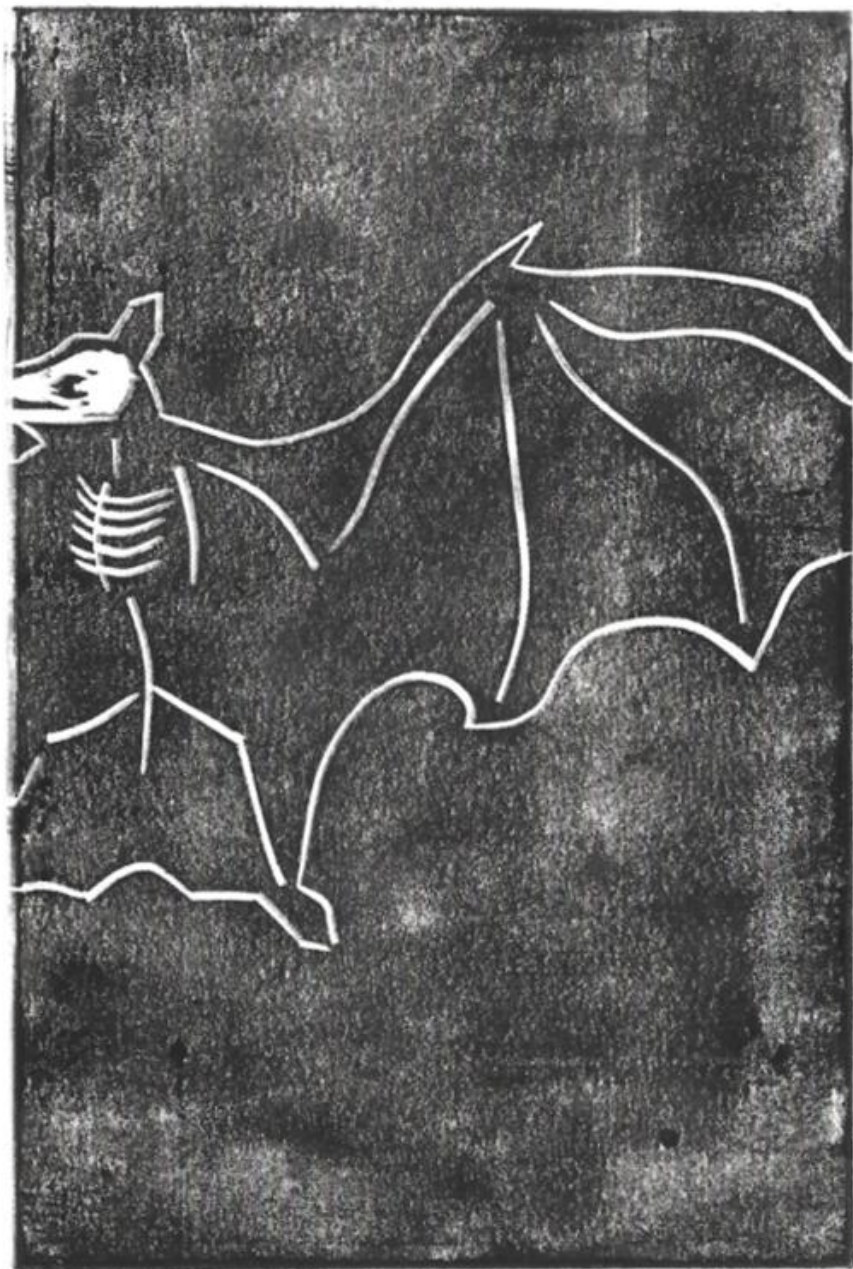


Plate 5: The Venusian Space-Bat

Western Motel

by Claude

When all this is over, I'll take you to Virginia. When
all this is over, we'll sleep in a Hopper. They say
the sun is gentler over in Virginia, they say it sits
on your skin, as weightless as the warm breeze, in
Virginia. We can give life to the inanimate, we can
breathe...if only for a moment...we can meditate
in Virginia. We'll sleep in a western motel, together.
I'll feel the warmth of you, once more, in Virginia.

30th July – I love him. I love him. I truly love him.

Second Story Sunlight

by Claude

Hold, in my hand, your thoughts. Paint your
pigment on white nothings and ponder, for a
moment, the maroon of a post-box and the
ochre of curtains sprouting ornate flowers. Yes,
the trees overhead appear to edge closer,
but they are rooted as firmly as my hand in yours.
My friend: you need only consider canvas-white.
You need only hold, in my hands, your thoughts.

5th August – Claude and I revisited the Observation Deck tonight.

We decided – two hours later – to leave when a door emerged from the
depths of space, moving alongside the ship, humming. It passed us and we
watched it pass the length of the ship. The space behind the Door was so
abstract I could ever so slightly hear whispers. Only silent sounds. Silent
sounds.

INTERMISSION



It is 1943. The blueprints of the Semi-Colon have just been conceived in Liverpool. Tombstone is abandoned; no theatre, no Door. The aforementioned Mr. Mackintosh, many years before finding himself underneath the bed of Mr. Michelangelo, finds himself on Europa for the first of ten missions.

The mission consists of three astronauts, and with it being Christmas Eve and with all three having young children, they want to be anywhere but Europa. Their own breath shimmers through their spacesuits. They are anxious. They know what they're looking for...

Hark! they have found it, finally, standing tall and proud on the Galilian moon. A door, a murky mint green in colour, Victorian in design, labelled 'M49'. *A Victorian door on a Jupiter moon*, Mr. Mackintosh thinks to himself, *how many now?*

They prepare to take samples but the Door refuses. It attempts to speak to them but Ligetti's *Requiem: II Kyrie* comes out instead, deafening the astronauts from their suit's speakers. M49 disappears for a third time, waiting, searching.

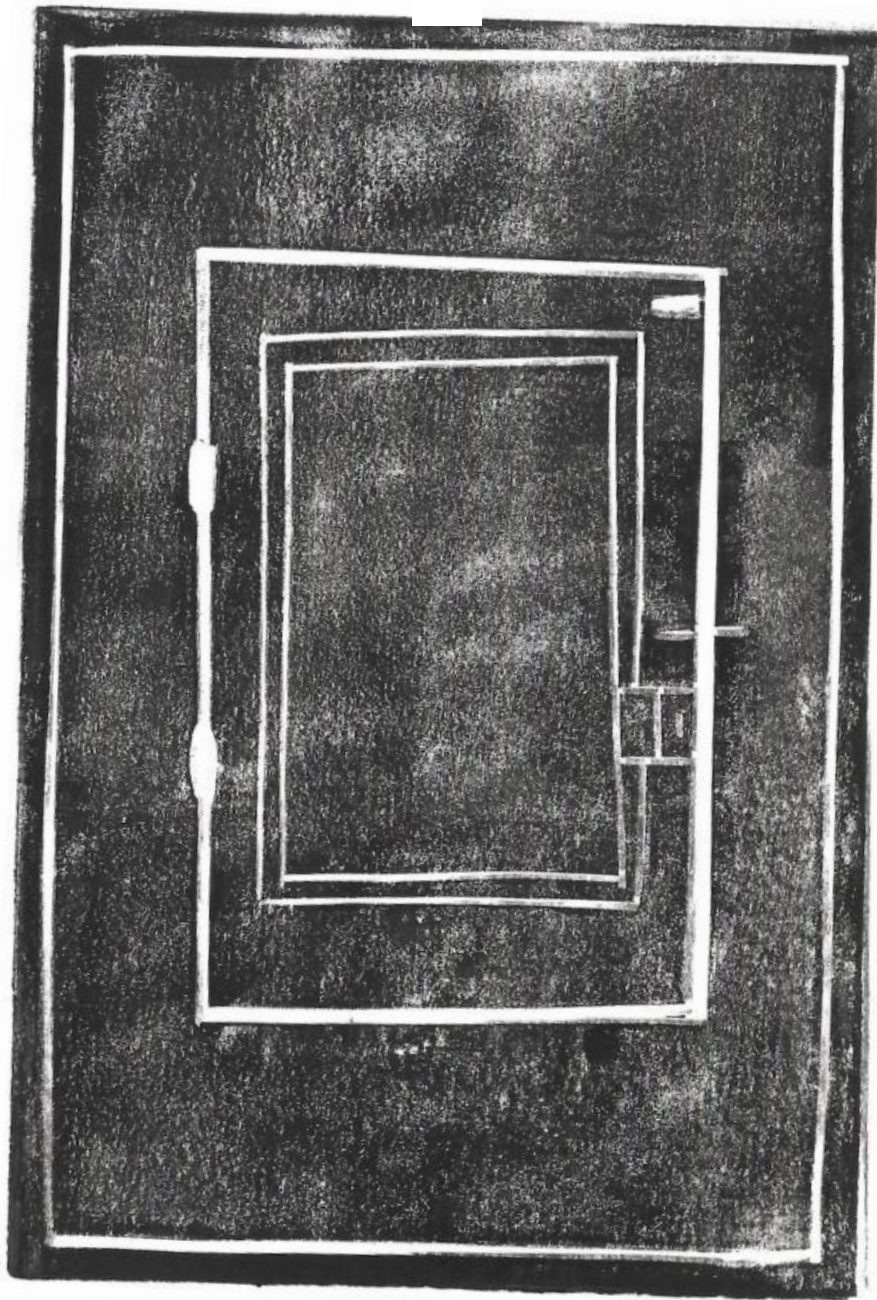


Plate 6: The Europa Discovery

III.

INTERVIEW WITH THE ÓBIDOS THEREMINIST

Q. Can I ask about the Door?

A. Not yet. I'm not ready yet.

Q. That's okay. In your own time.

Q. Where did you first encounter a theremin?

A. My uncle used to have a villa in Óbidos and we would go there on family holidays. Near Óbidos, there was the largest and most disturbing building I'd ever seen. Large is relative, of course, and I speak from the memory of my former, younger, shorter self. The building was the Santuário do Senhor Jesus da Pedra Cathedral. I call it 'the Sanctuary' as that is the only word my father knew how to translate for me. When I was eight, we went to the Sanctuary and inside was a woman playing the theremin. She let me hover my small hands over the two prongs and my eyes filled with tears. It was the most beautiful sound I'd ever heard.

Q. Do you just have the one uncle?

A. No. I have three.

Q. Are you happy?

A. On occasion.

Q. Kids?

A. No.

Q. Pets?

A. Yes.

Q. Dog?

A. No. Cat.

Q. Shame.

A. It's the next best thing. My wife is allergic to dogs.

Q. Where did you find your wife?

A. I didn't find her, she found me.

Q. She found you?

A. Something like that, yes. Something like that.

Q. Have you been to Óbidos recently?

A. Yes, I live there now.

Q. How nice. Tell me about the Sanctuary.

A. We got married there and it was the happiest day of my life.

Q. Tell me about the Sanctuary.

A. It scares me.

Q. I know.

A. It's too big.

Q. I know.

A. Why do they make them like that? They're always so big.

Q. Something to do with feeling small.

A. Something to do with feeling small?

Q. Something like that.

A. Small to who?

Q. Small to God.

A. Small to God?

Q. Yes.

A. How tall is God? Taller than us?

Q. Too tall for his own good.

A. Too tall for his own good, indeed. Have you ever been to the Sanctuary?

Q. No, I haven't.

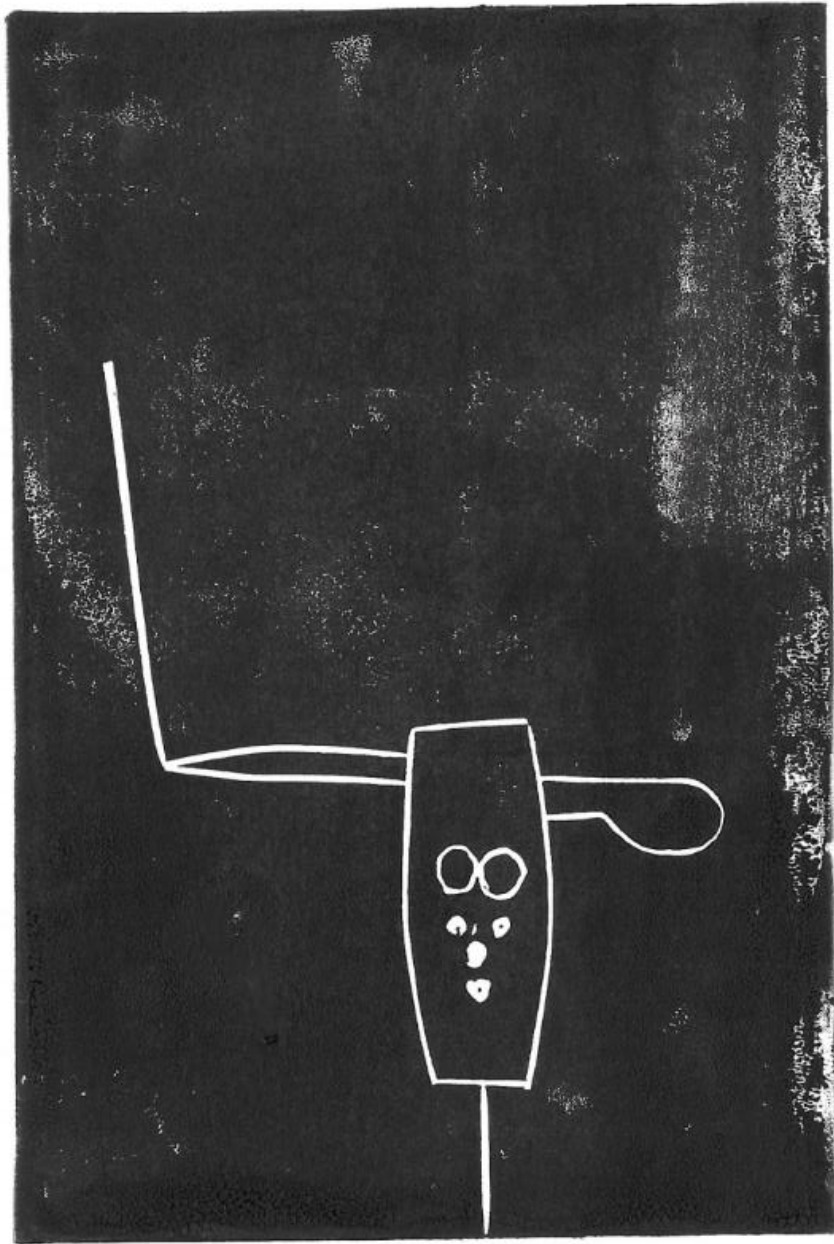


Plate 7: Theremin

A. Have you ever felt small to God?

Q. No. And always.

A. Have you ever heard the sound of the theremin?

Q. No.

A. That saddens me. I would very much like to play for you.

Q. I'm free on the 2nd. I'll fly over.

Q. When was the first time you saw the M49 Door?

A. Not yet.

Q. You're not ready?

A. Not yet.

Q. That's okay. In your own time.

Q. Have you released any albums of you playing the theremin?

A. Yes. Two last year.

Q. What are they called?

A. One is called 'Walking Towards the Sanctuary and Feeling Anxious' and the other is called 'Walking Away From the Sanctuary and Feeling Happy'

Q. Do you like the Sanctuary?

A. Yes.

Q. How does it make you feel when you go inside?

A. I try not to go inside. I have only been inside twice.

Q. Why?

A. The outside is much more beautiful than the inside.

Q. Why?

A. I struggle to understand the outside.

Q. And understanding something is unproductive?

A. Understanding something is very unproductive.

Q. Why?

A. Because you are more likely to forget about it. Confusion is an essential part of life and to embrace it is to truly be content. I think about the Ship of Theseus daily.

Q. Are you ready to discuss the Door?

A. I will tell you about the coin instead.

Q. The coin?

A. The coin, yes. My Grandmother, when I was sixteen, gave me a coin that her mother gave to her. The coin was old and had been thumbbed so much that I couldn't work out the date or the face. I researched it and it was a Cartwheel coin. All Cartwheels were made during 1797. I have lost it three times and every time I have found it without meaning to.

Q. That's incredibly lucky.

A. No, it isn't.

Q. It isn't luck?

A. Not at all.

Q. What is it, then?

A. I have no idea, but luck doesn't come into it.

Q. How did you feel when you lost your coin the first time?

A. The same feeling I felt when I saw the Door for the first time.

Q. How did you feel when you found your coin most recently?

A. The same feeling I felt when I saw the Door for the first time.

Q. Do you like the coin?

A. Yes. It is my most valuable possession after my theremin.

R. It's completely okay if you don't want to discuss the Door.

A. The Door is a trauma of mine.

Q. I know.

A. I didn't process it well. One tends to do that with trauma.

Q. I know.

A. It made me feel wanted.

Q. Isn't feeling wanted a good thing?

A. No. I was happy the way I was.

Q. It's completely okay if you don't want to discuss the Door.

A. It made me feel like I was wanted elsewhere.

Q. And you didn't want to be wanted elsewhere?

A. No. I was happy the way I was with my wife and my theremin and the walled city.

Q. It's completely okay if you don't want to discuss the Door.

A. Thankyou.

Q. It's been a pleasure to talk with you.

A. It didn't belong there.

Q. I look forward to hearing you play.

A. It didn't belong there.

Q. It's completely okay if you don't want to discuss the Door.

A. It didn't belong on the Sanctuary.

Q. I know.

A. I'm ready to discuss the Door now.

Q. I'm not ready to hear it.

A. It's completely okay if you don't want to hear about the Door.

Q. Thank you. I look forward to hearing you play.

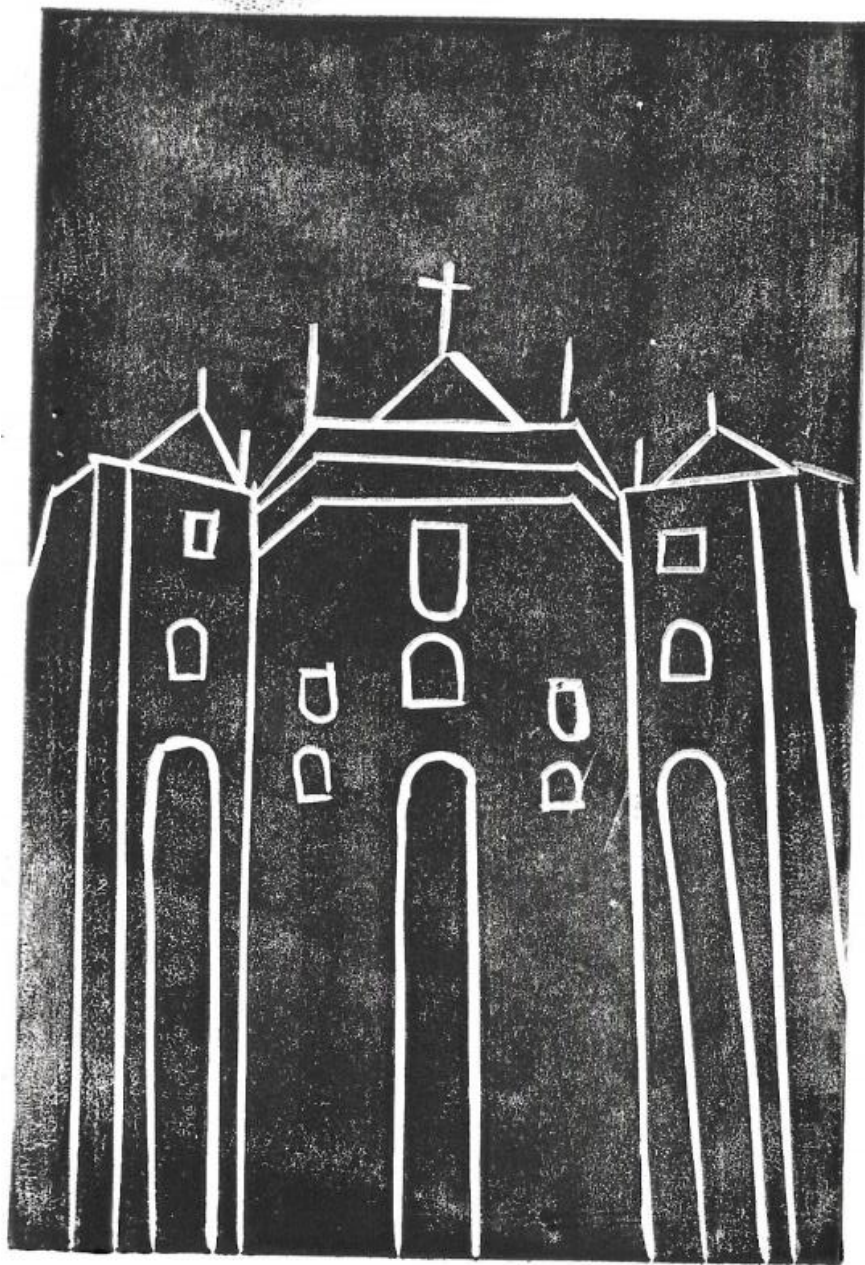


Plate 8: Sanctuary

IV.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE GHOST HUNTERS

In 1888, while the rest of the town enjoyed the shooting stars, twelve residents of Tombstone hunted for ghosts inside the Bird Cage Theatre. Lazarus Lineboro, undertaker of Tombstone, was one of the twelve. They held items they believed would fend off ghosts; some with pitch forks, some with cutlery, others with pistols. Lazarus held a lantern; he was a religious man.

The Theatre, to their surprise, let them in. Lazarus' wife, Delilah, held onto his hand from their first step inside the Theatre; she was holding a photo album compiled of images of her life. The last photograph in the album was to be her final picture taken with nineteenth century equipment.

The Theatre, before their arrival, painted its vacuum, its thick coats of nonsense, onto every surface of its interior. Delilah was the first to touch it. She sat on a chair facing the stage, instantly disappearing from her time and place as she touched the crimson cushion¹. Lazarus felt her hand vanish from his; he felt his fingertips touch the pads of his palm. He screamed as she disappeared. The first stage of grief is denial: he sat on the chair she faded from².

¹ The Theatre, knowing its own future, sent Delilah to her intended place: a 1960s American hospital.

² The Theatre sent Lazarus to his intended place: the cockpit of the Semi-Colon, a ship with no destination. M49 gave Lazarus Lineboro – now Capt. Lineboro – complete knowledge of how to pilot an intergalactic colonisation ship, but he doesn't know where he is going. He is deeply hypnotised from gawping at the void of space for too long. His eyes water, his jaw droops, his tongue loosens, his hands slacken from the ship's wheel.

M49 appears for the fourth time, waiting, searching for a home. It stands in the blackness, lit only by a distant planet and the dim glow of the Semi-Colon, The Wild West was afraid, Europa was stained with science-fiction, and Óbidos chose the music instead. A clicking sound comes from the Door and the Captain snaps out of his gawp-state. The Door opens and the Captain watches, perplexed. He believes it to be a mirage or a hallucination until the Doors creaking cringes him fully awake.

The Door asks the captain what he wants and where he wants to go. The Captain dreams of a utopia. The Door opens silently and completely. Sat inside is a hospital ward with an empty bed. The Door expands to the height of a moon and the Semi-Colon sails through. As it enters, the ship interprets the ceiling panels, and the hospital ward undergoes a metamorphosis. The destination of the Semi-Colon is Progress City.

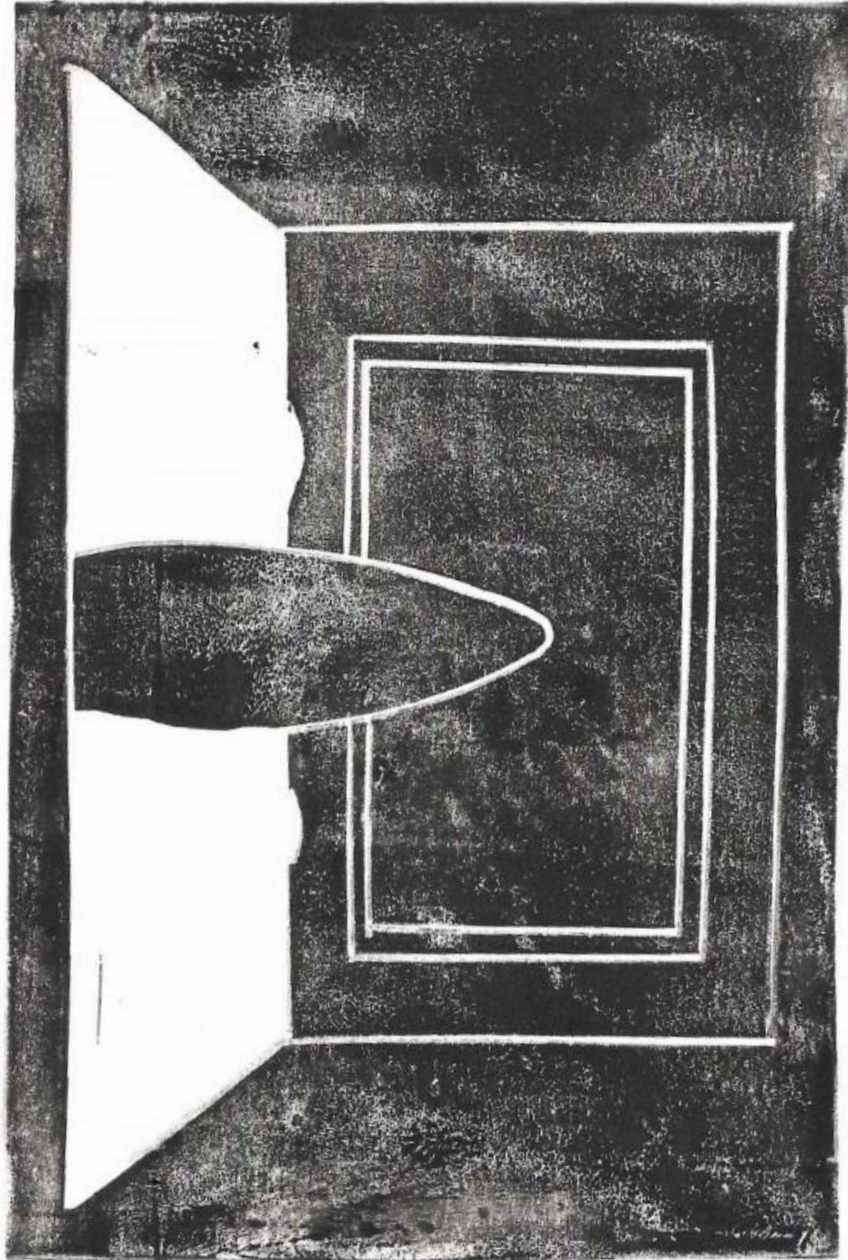


Plate 9: Destination

APPENDIX

Reader's Note

The following is a critical essay by Prof. J. Disraeli concerning the text, in which he discusses the way in which Bennett constructed *M49*. The essay was originally published by Taschen's '100 Years of the Creative Response' in 2005.

M49' and the Importance of Taming, Harnessing, and Displaying Ideas

by Prof. J. Disraeli



Fig. 1. Bird Cage Theatre – Tombstone Arizona
1937, Historic American Buildings Survey of the Bird Cage Theatre

I am part of the camp of scholars that believe *M49* to be a novella of fiction, a complete fabrication, and ultimately a work born from the obsession of a mystery. To fully appreciate this text, we must first understand the brevity of that mystery: the M49 Door existed, and still exists in a pocket of Edge Hill University. It is said that during his second year at the university, Jack Bennett and a friend of his found the Door and began to fixate what was behind it. He would later say in an interview regarding that experience, ‘I loathed the lock when I was twenty, but in hindsight, now an old man, if the Door was

open it wouldn’t have been half as fun.’

Bennett wrote *M49* during the outbreak of the 1920 Spanish Flu. Housebound, he accumulated a large collection of books that both inspired his writing and quenched his need to travel the world again. I will further discuss these areas of inspiration to Bennett in the below paragraphs.

The first book was *Tombstone* by Jane Eppinga, in which states, ‘When Tombstone’s boom turned to bust in 1899, the Bird Cage was sealed and boarded up with all its furnishings intact.’³ The image of the theatre being simultaneously intact and derelict was poignant for Bennett, and

³ Jane Eppinga, ‘Tombstone’ (Chicago; Arcadia Publishing, 2003) p.61



Fig. 2. Glass Tears
1932, Man Ray (photograph)

it stuck with him when penning the Tombstone section of *M49*. ‘The notion of the theatre as a dead space upset me,’ Bennett said, ‘and something – perhaps the theatre herself – tugged me to reanimate it.’

Another of Bennett’s muses was the Modernist movement of the early twentieth century. The year of the text’s conception marked a somewhat highpoint for Modernism. Bennett drew from the Cubists’ fragmentation and their disjointed and displaced viewpoint of the image – a technique James Joyce, among others, was using in literary – the Surrealists’ fascination with the dreamlike, as well as the Dadaist’s neglect and

distance of the artist. His main artistic inspiration, however, was an artist attached to a lesser-discussed movement of Modernism: metaphysical art. Giorgio de Chirico, creator of metaphysical art and catalyst for such movements as Surrealism, painted images that Bennett would visit when stuck in a writing slump. Bennett stated, when discussing de Chirico’s work, that ‘[His] paintings are so repetitive and fresh; Giorgio would repeat images – trains, curving arches, marble monuments – but each painting somehow differed from the last. I endeavoured to implement repetition



Fig. 3. Sanctuary of Our Lord Jesus the Stone
2014, Richard F. Ebert (photograph)

via the Door and freshness via my changing forms, narrative voice, genre, and tone.’ It must be added that Bernard’s prints were aware of de Chirico’s effect on Bennett and based the print entitled ‘After Giorgio de Chirico’ on his work.

Authenticity was also important to Bennett. *M49* (as well as *M49*) dances between genre and form (the Wild West, the frontiers of space, romance, and an interview, which was an aesthetic and formal element undertaken by Bennett to convey the eclecticism and eccentricity of the Door.

Housebound, Bennett couldn’t travel to such places as Arizona or Óbidos for research, therefore it was near-impossible for him to get the true

authenticity he intended. Unable to physically travel to the locations in the text, comprehensive research into genre and form was crucial. An example of this is found with his usage of phrases such as ‘bangtail’, ‘old stick’ and ‘big bug’, all of which are time-specific dialects from the American frontier.

As well as these technical obstacles, the author’s personal situation inflicted his writing. Bennett chose to bookend *M49* with Progress City. The city was Walt Disney’s idea of a utopia. I deem this ending of the text to be an optimistic one, and one must admire the strength of optimism when in the events and period in which Bennett wrote the text. As a

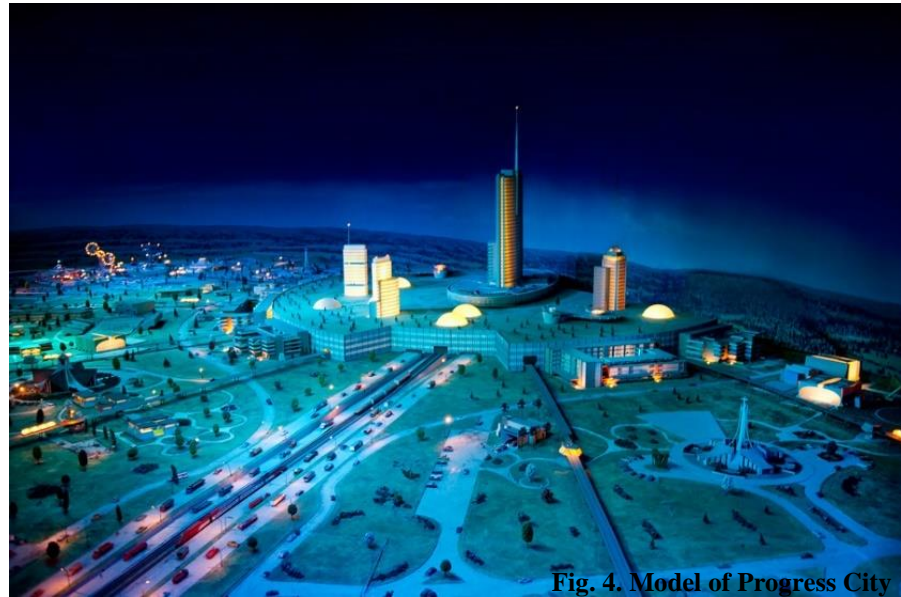


Fig. 4. Model of Progress City
2011, J. Fickley-Baker (photograph)

penultimate remark, I declare my appreciation for Bernard's inclusion of her 'Destination' print, a piece that perfectly encapsulates the transference of states, whether that be emotional, physical, metaphysical, or spiritual. There was a definitive shift in Bennett's work after *M49*, and Bernard's hint of this hasn't gone unnoticed amongst readers.

To conclude, an essay regarding Bennett's inspirations can't go without mention of the titular Door. Bennett spoke of the importance of harnessing ideas, and many believe this to be in direct allusion to the Door. In a journal of his housed many theories as to what was behind *M49*, what its place was in the universe, and what it wanted, etcetera. Penned in his

text is just a handful of his theories. Lecturers of Bennett's, as well as peers that attended Edge Hill at his time, encourage the myth that before leaving university in 1921, Bennett visited the Door for a final time. He sat with it, finally accepting

its silence, before slipping his diary under *M49*. He was tired of waiting for its music, so he gave it sound.

— Prof. J. Disraeli

The Disraeli Gallery

Disraeli curated a gallery to illustrate and accompany his essay. The following pages show the works of art and albums of music that inspired Bennett's writing of *M49*.



Fig. 5. The Elephant Celebes
1921, Max Ernst (oil on canvas)



Fig. 6. Violin and Candlestick
1910, Pablo Picasso (oil on canvas)

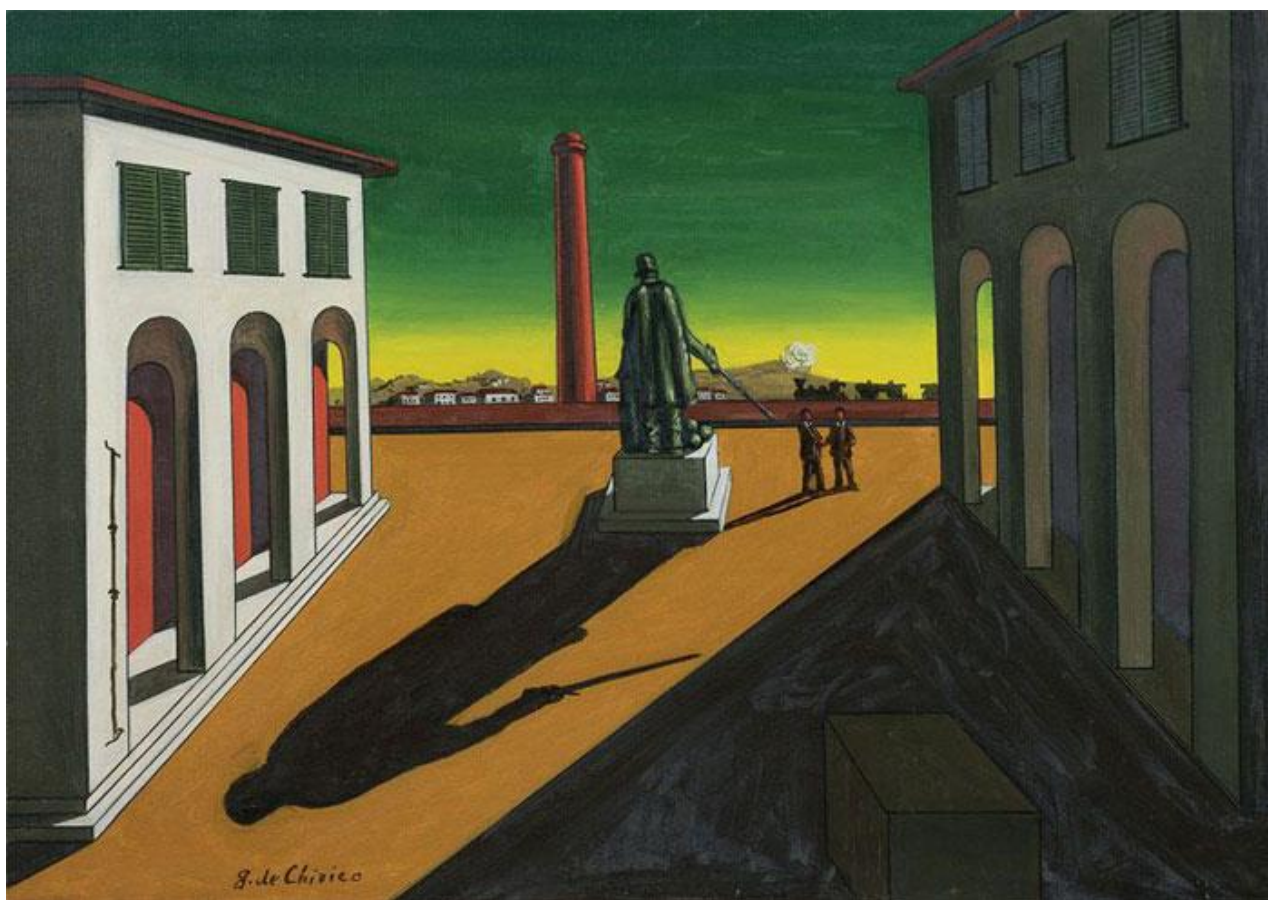


Fig. 7. Italian Square
1959, Giorgio de Chirico (oil on canvas)

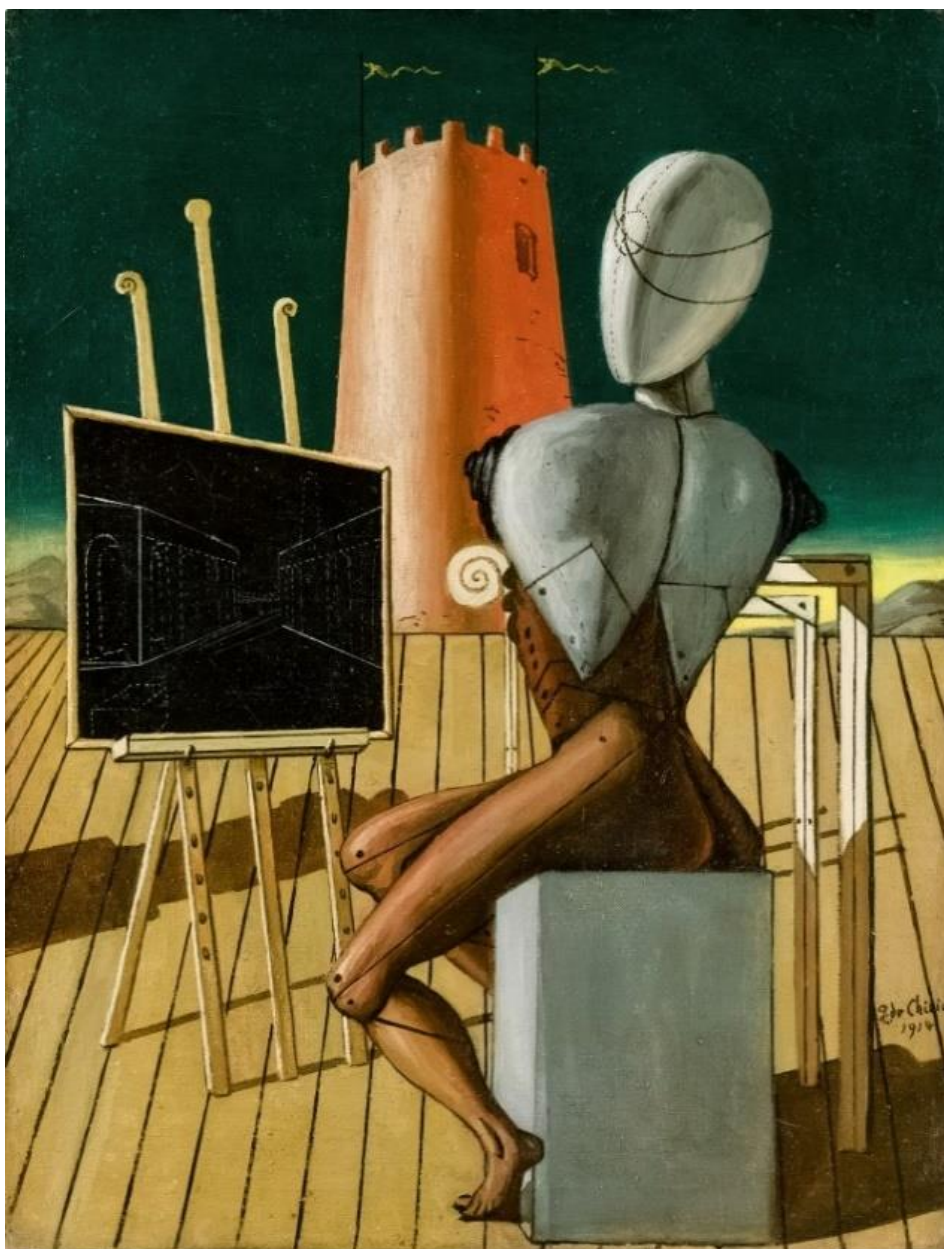


Fig. 8. Il Vaticinatore
1914, Giorgio de Chirico (oil on canvas)



Fig. 9. Blue House on the Shore
1930, Paul Nash (oil on canvas)



Fig. 10. North Shore, Lake Superior
1926, Lawren Harris (oil on canvas)



Fig. 11. The Kiss (Kyss)
1895, Edvard Munch (etching and drypoint)



Fig. 12. Skeletons in an Office
1944, Paul Delvaux (oil on canvas)



Fig. 13. The Sheridan Theatre
1937, Edward Hopper (oil on canvas)



Fig. 14. Clara Rockmore's Lost Theremin Album
2006, Clara Rockmore and Nadia Reisenberg



Fig. 15. Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino
2018, Arctic Monkeys

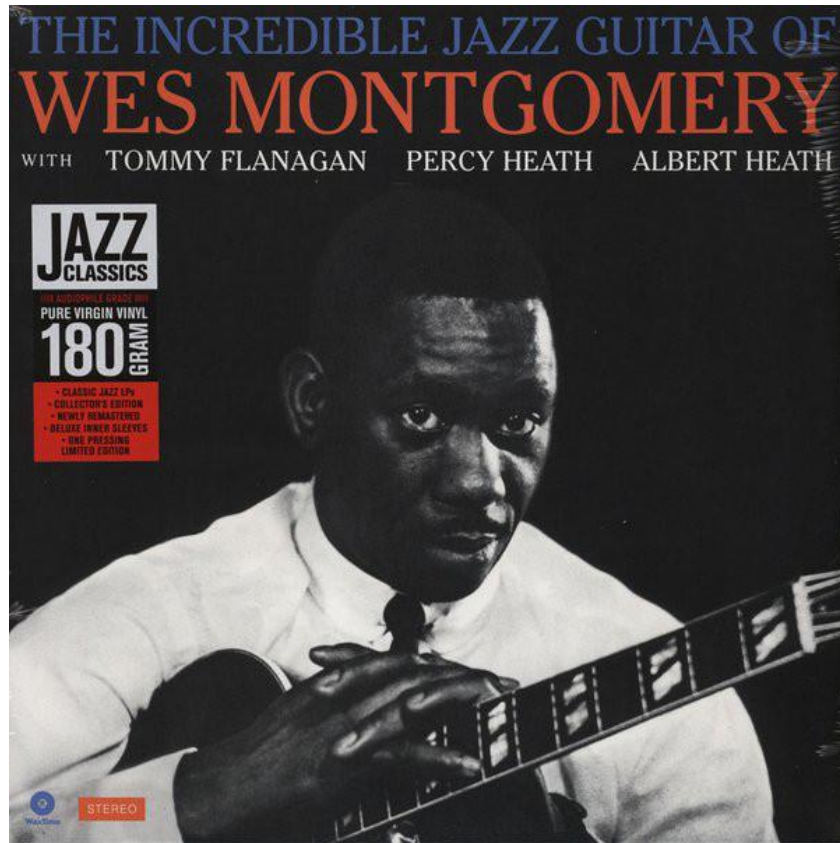


Fig. 16. The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery
1960, Wes Montgomery

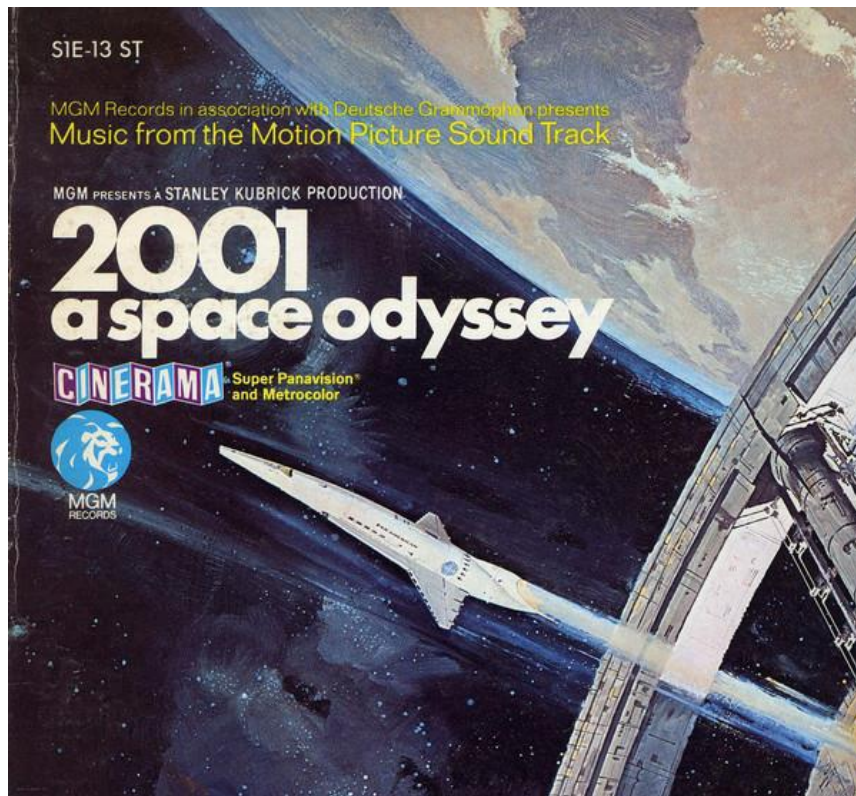


Fig. 17. 2001: A Space Odyssey
1968, Richard Strauss

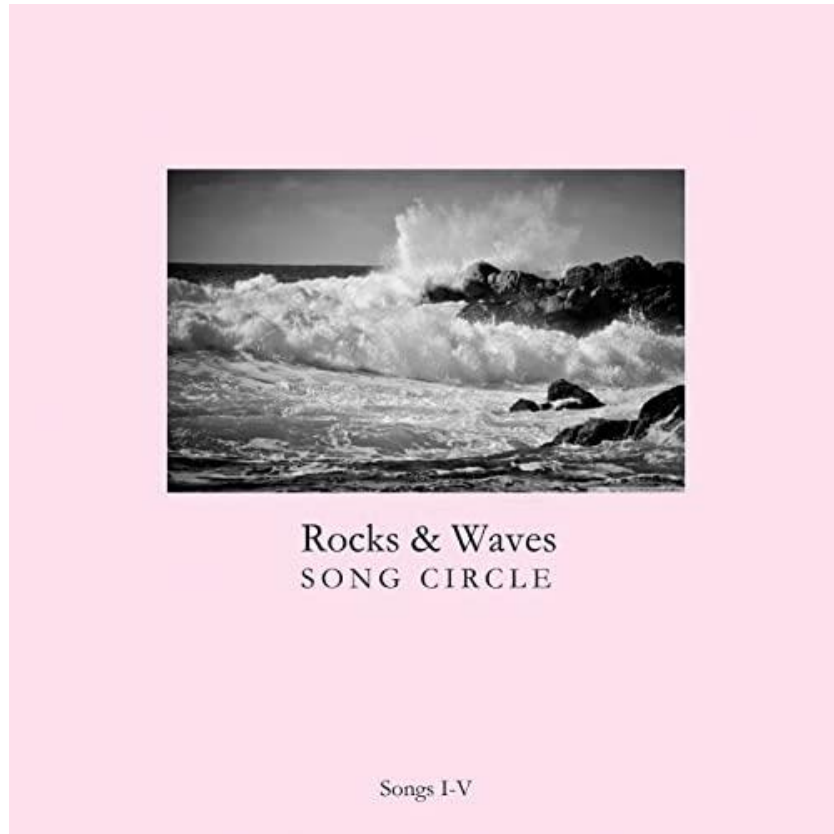


Fig. 18. Songs I-V
2016, Rocks and Waves Song Circle

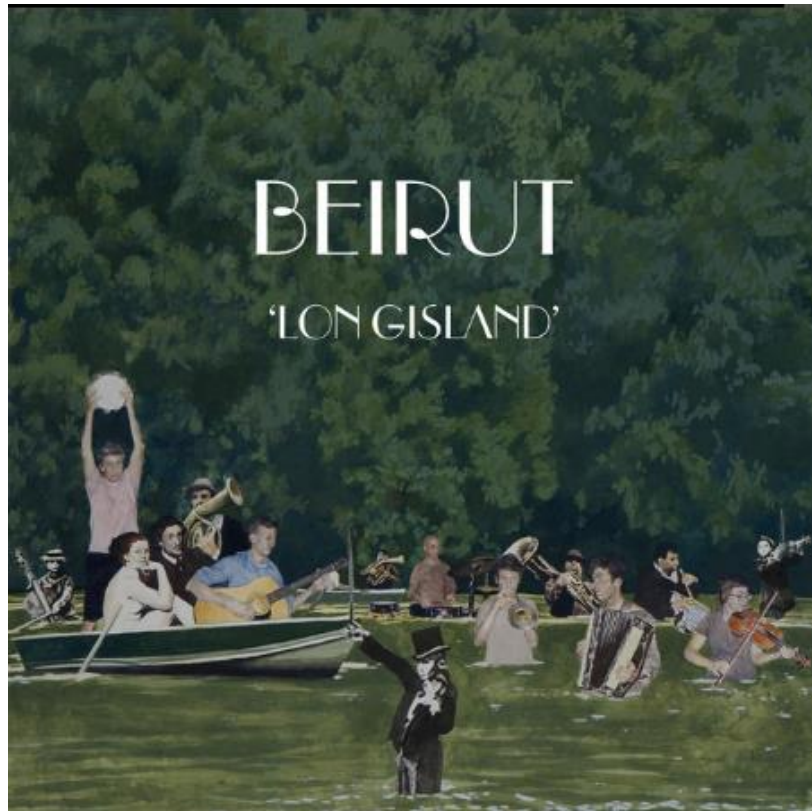


Fig. 19. Lon Gisland
2006, Beirut



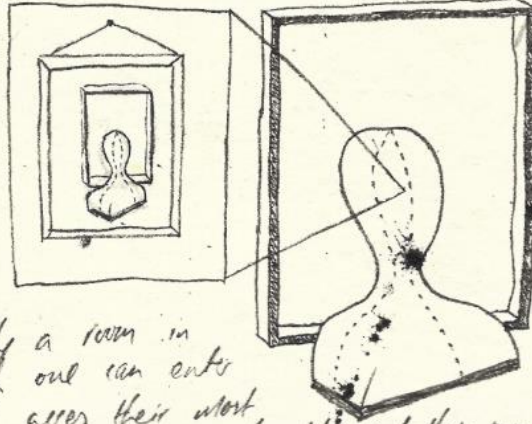
Fig. 20. Once Upon a Time in the West
1972, Ennio Morricone

Excerpts of Bennett's 'M49 Journal'

Pages from Bennett's journal that housed his many theories regarding the M49 Door. Some of these theories made it into the text, others were left out. Those who deem *M49* to be a non-fictional text believe these pages to be forged and not of Bennett's doing.

Metaphysical Still-Life

M49 is a



case of
Self
Reflection
and
nothing
else

Possibly a room in
which one can enter
and access their most
intrusive thoughts (at their own request)

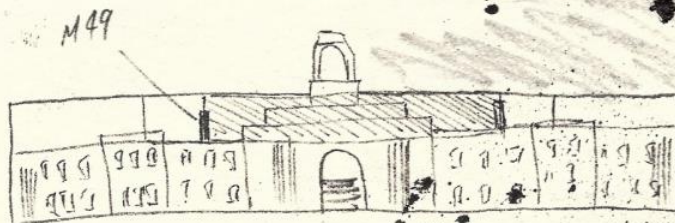
There is no space behind
the M49 Door. It is a
long solid block of unknown
material.

The door - with ~~enough~~ enough
force - can be removed from
its socket in the university.
How long is it?
Perhaps as long as the length
of the University.



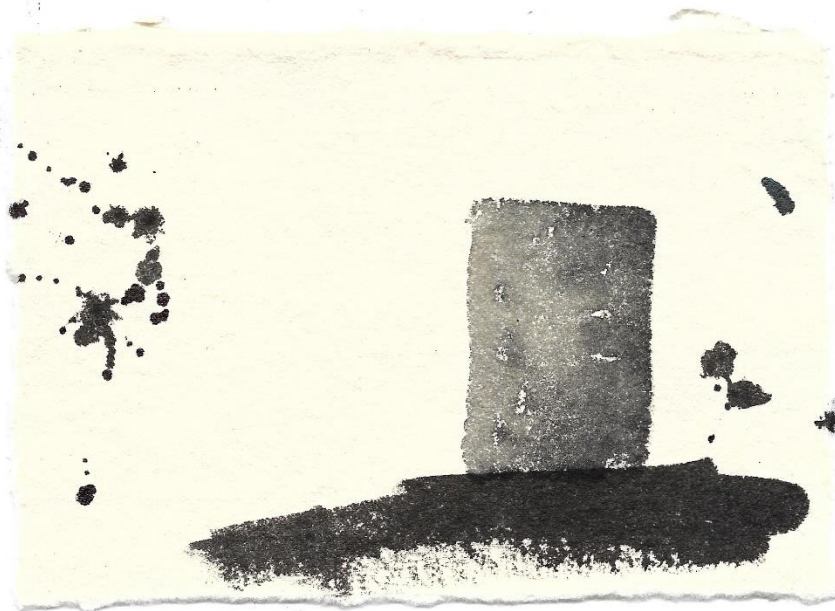
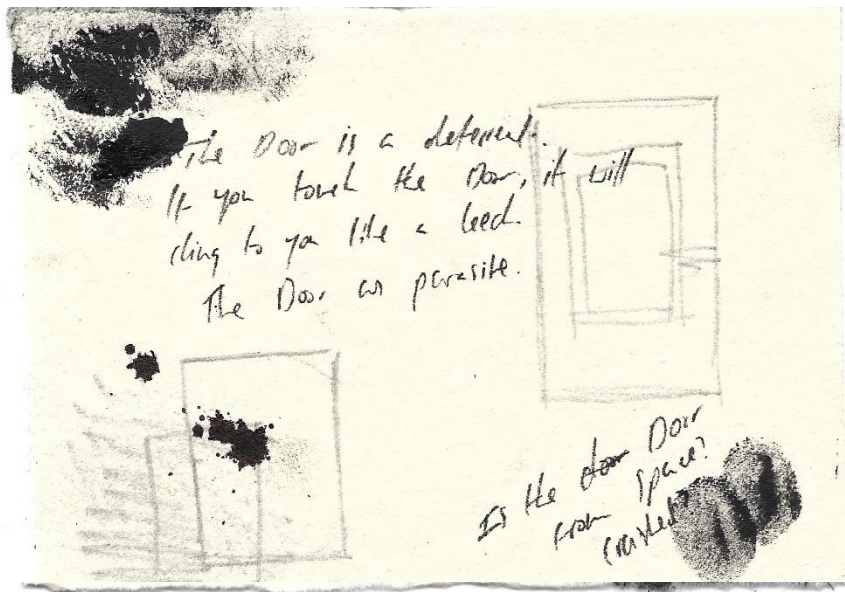
~~The Door is just a space
for meditation, for action,
and for thinking. The
Door was put there for
artists and poets to tell
and think about.~~

The Door is just a door.



* An illustration of the University. The grey space is 'empty space'.
A possible second/parallel door in the opposite side of
the building. The space between M49 (I) and
M49 (II) is empty space.

RESEARCH 'BIRD CAGE
THEATRE' !!!



~ BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES ~

Arctic Monkeys, *Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino* (2018)

This concept album gave Bennett an audible inspiration for the Semi-Colon colonisation spaceship.

Beirut, *Lon Gisland* (2006)

An album of songs Bennett reflected on as being 'reminiscent of my trips to Europe – particularly the song 'Elephant Gun'.

de Chirico, G. 'Il vaticinatore' (1914) *The Museum of Modern Art*

The figure in the painting was Bernard's model for her 'After de Chirico' print.

de Chirico, G. 'Italian Square' (1959) *The Museum of Modern Art*

An important piece of art for Bennett who admired the 20th Century metaphysical art movement.

Delveax, P. 'Skeletons in an Office' (1944) *Museum of Jerusalem*

'I was unaware of it during my research, but the parts that make up 'M49' is riddled with death, grief, and the moving on from loss.' – a quote from Bennett in the later years of his life.

Ebert, R. [<https://www.encirclephotos.com/image/sanctuary-of-our-lord-jesus-the-stone-in-obidos-portugal/>]

A photograph Bennett would look at during his sections regarding the building. He missed Portugal dearly; this was his window to it.

Ernst, E. 'The Elephant Celebes' (1921) *The Tate Gallery*

An amalgamation of parts to make a larger, surreal whole; an archetype of 'M49'.

Fickley-Baker, J. [<https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2011/08/a-closer-look-at-the-progress-city-model-at-magic-kingdom-park/>]

The destination. 'I didn't expect or intend 'M49' to end at Progress City', Bennett said, 'but it felt right.' He would later write of the City in the summer after his writing of 'M49'.

Hopper, E. 'The Sheridan Theatre' (1937) *The Newark Museum of Art*

The warm, contemplative, and lounging aesthetic Bennett envisioned the Semi-Colon to be.

Jane Eppinga, 'Tombstone' (Chicago; Arcadia Publishing, 2003)

Bennett would later visit Tombstone and said of his time there, 'Much like when I revisited the Woodleigh and Dolbadarn after writing of them, Tombstone was a transformed place.'

Lawren, H, 'North Shore, Lake Superior' (1926) National Gallery of Canada

The main focal point in this painting is a monolith, reminiscent of the Door.

Montgomery, W, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* (1960)

One of two soundtracks of the Semi-Colon.

Morricone, E, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (1972)

The soundtrack for 'The Life and Times of the Bird Cage Theatre'

Munch, E, 'The Kiss (Kyss)' (1895) Museum of Modern Art

A frame of reference for the second Semi-Colon vignette. Bennett intended this to be a breathing point for the collection – more so than the Intermission.

Nash, P, 'Blue House on the Shore' (1930) Tate Gallery

'I am fascinated with things that appear out of place,' Bennett once said, 'The blue house on the shore, much like the M49 Door, is lost. I empathise for them both.'

Picasso, P, 'Violin and Candlestick' (1958) The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Like 'M49', this painting demonstrates an image displaced and fragmented, and one that the viewer can see from a variety of angles.

Ray, M, 'Glass Tears' (1932) J. Paul Getty Museum

Bennett appreciated the movement of Dadaism, particularly the distance and subtraction of the artist from their work.

Richard, S, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)

Stanley Kubrick's science fiction opera was a goliath insight and creative inspiration for him. The soundtrack as well as the film was as epic, as emotional and, at points, as anxiety-inducing as how he intended 'M49' to be.

Rockmore, C, *Clara Rockmore's Lost Theremin Album* (2006)

A second soundtrack for the Semi-Colon. Themes of loss are woven through this text as well as in the title of this album.

Rocks and Waves Song Circle, *Songs I-V* (2016)

An album Bennett associated with Portugal, with memory loss, and with the bittersweet.

~ GLOSSARY ~

‘Only the Walls’ – a quote from Bennett: ‘Only the walls know the music behind M49.’

A lick and a promise – to do haphazardly

Anti-gravitational handkerchief routine – an illusion invented by the Hypnotic Harrold; an illusion made famous by The Enigmatic Ewald once Harrold died

Bangtail – wild horse; mustang

Barkin’ at a knot – doing something useless; wasting your time; trying something impossible

Big bug – big bug; an important person

Bone orchard – cemetery

Coffee-boiler – shirker; lazy person; would rather sit around the coffee pot than help

HMS Venture (Orion Sector) – a hub for interstellar travel; home to the first in-space Starbucks

Ligetti’s *Requiem: II Kyrie* – the sound of Bennett’s anxiety and melancholy

Nighthawks – at the left-hand side of the painting, slightly in the dark, is an old antiquity shop; Arden left years ago

Old stick – eccentric person

Phaseglass – a material mined from Neptune; four-quintillion times harder than diamond; usually owned only by the rich for jewellery

Plutonian Linguist – an artificial intelligence programme designed to translate and interpret memories and dreams

Progress City – a future endeavour

Theremin – the sound of Bennett’s inner peace, his sanctuary, his contentedness

Varment (or Varmint) – wild animal or a bad man

Wobblin’ jaws – talks too much

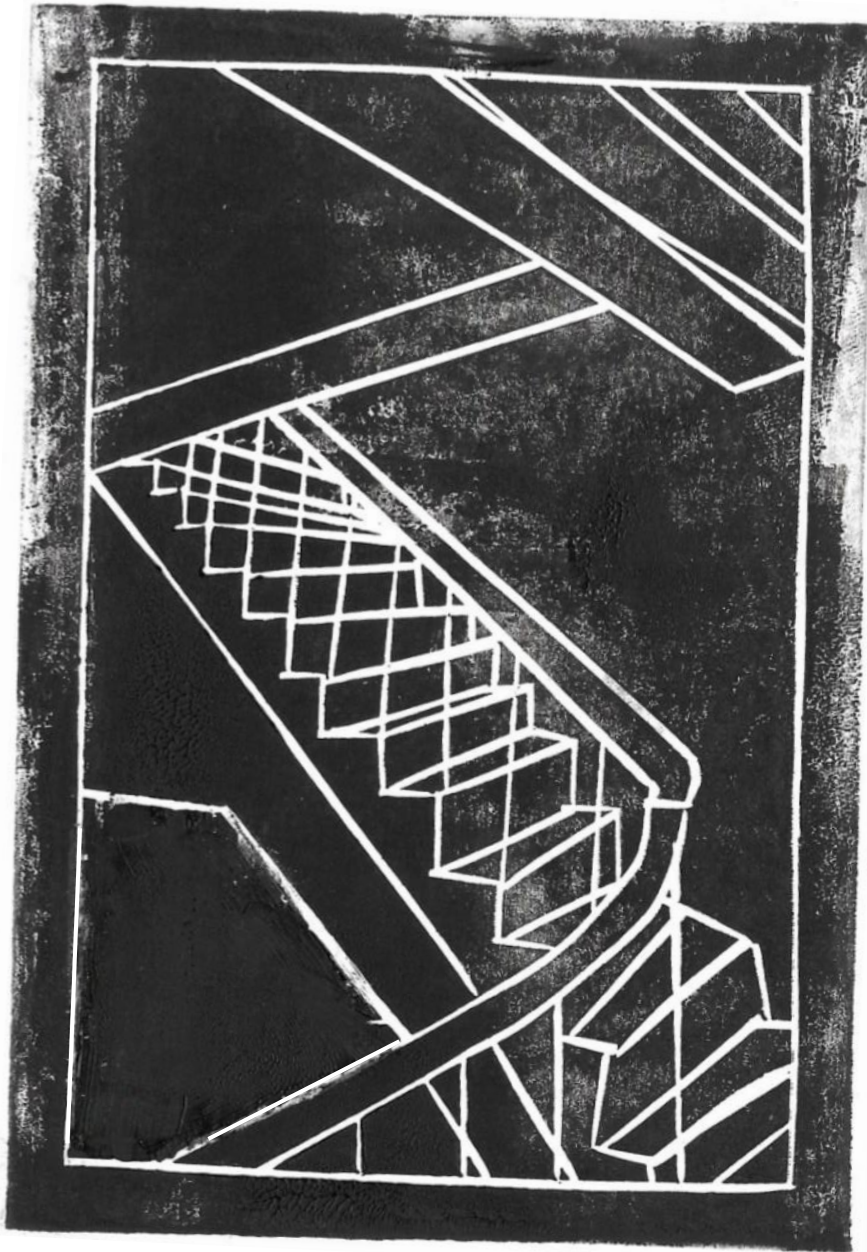


Plate 10: Stairway up to M49

FIN.