

A Practicum on Divination via Cleromancy

a post-existential fantasy
generated through a
non-idiomatic improvisational creative process

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*To those awakened and directionless
wandering toward yonder abyss
I say “not that way”*

—Keiji Haino, Pathétique, P.S.F. Records, Tokyo, 1994,
translated by Alan Cummings

Each of the three-hundred sixty-five passages in this book was written in its entirety to the accompaniment of a recording of a particular piece of music. The work is identified at the end of each passage. As an oblique explanation for this process, the following two quotes are offered.

*“Good Evening. I hope you don’t mind if I say a few words. If you can’t hear them or you can hear them but you don’t understand them, it’s alright. They don’t really mean anything. Their purpose is to occupy the left-hand side of the brain while I’m playing. Some people smoke. Some drink. I talk to myself.”**

“It was also made clear in this exchange that music can be viewed as a consequence of active listening; it is, at some level, through informed listening that music is constructed. Placing the skillful listener in such an active role explodes the category of experiences that we call listening to music, because it allows the listener the improvisatory freedom to frame any moment or any experience as a musical one. The improviser is always listening; the listener is always improvising.”†

An index of musicians appears at the end of the book, as do several other related indices.

*Derek Bailey (January 29, 1930-December 25, 2005) from “Aida”, side C: Introductions, HJRLP205, Honest Jon’s Records, London, 2018 (originally recorded 1980).

†Vijay Iyer (October 26, 1971-) from “Why Roscoe Mitchell is Important”, Table & Chairs, 2013.

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About the Author

It can be said that the fruiting body of *Hebeloma Crustuliniforme* sprouted from an extensive subterranean network in response to a spring rain, sometime during the last quarter of the twentieth century. She pursued an eclectic education, typically outside the institutional credentialing process. She has worked in Europe and America as an anthropologist and as an editor. She currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Exploratory Meta-Living* and occupies a similar role at the Poison Pie Publishing House.

Her interest in cleromancy arose naturally from her study of apophenia, the human perception of patterns and intent in random or meaningless data. Common examples of apophenia include seeing a man or a rabbit in the surface of the moon, or hearing a message when an audio recording is played backward, or responding to tragedy with the sentiment, "Everything happens for a reason." There are, no doubt skeptics, who might well consider cleromancy an exercise in apophenia. To be clear, cleromancy is a conscious, willful act of apophenia, seeking portents in random processes.

Hebeloma admits apophenia. She embraces it because she associates the rejection of apophenia with the acknowledgment that she is a purely biological organism limited to reacting to physical processes. Without pretense, she accepts that she is governed by a relatively complex set of physical and chemical systems, both internal and external. It is also easy for her to admit without embarrassment that existence as a purely biological organism is unsatisfying, if not unpleasant. Since ancient times, people therefore have accentuated existence with arbitrary decorations, such as morality, in order to construct a framework in which they can come to comfortable terms with the premise of their existence and their role within it. From this perspective, apophenia can play an important function. It helps create an environment where people are able to make peace with themselves and to allow others to do the same. There is a great joy in what others might refer to as a deep self-delusion. *Hebeloma* asks the readers' indulgence to allow her to share that joy.

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