

from **COMPOSING LISTENING** (2011)

by Bill Dietz

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*While the tub fills, he sets up a small CD-player and looks for his most recent bath mix. He tests the water occasionally, adjusts the volume on the small CD-player. Not too loud. Making the already tinny sound even thinner. It blends with the rush of the faucet. He strips, gets into the tub one foot at a time, slowly lowering himself into the hot water. Easing the more sensitive parts of his body in. The tracks on the CD are essentially static – instrumentals, soundtracks, lower tempo dance numbers. Often, he immerses his head in the water, hears through it. The CD repeats. As the temperature changes, he lets out water to make room for more hot. The hairs on his body sway. His genitals float. He comes close to sleep. He adjusts his body to the metal of the tub, listens with one ear submerged. The CD repeats. He imagines, fantasizes, masturbates a bit. His fingers and toes prune. He washes himself, leaving the water foamy. He stays in the tub as the water runs out, feeling its light receding tug and his own weight returning. By the time he's standing, he's returned, forgotten listening.*

**THE YELLOW WALLPAPER** (1898)

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

proposed by Hilde Heynen

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I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel base-ly ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I

should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committed every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hate it!