

OCEAN MOVEMENT STUDY
(*rhythms*)

St. Augustine Beach, 1996

So much motion all at once.

Sand drifting in a chaotic pattern, whipping toward me
like fast smoke.

Sand pipers repeatedly-mostly fruitlessly?-sticking beaks
in the sand.

Child of undetermined sex, toddling, holding daddy's hand.

My hair catching in my mouth.

Ocean waves not fierce but relentless in their advance toward me.

White car passing, guy watching me write.

Large black dots on my shirt vibrating in the wind.

Tan woman wrapped in towel, washing suit in ocean.

Man and woman truck driver, matching shirts, cab running, on foot advancing to water,
bending in unison to touch it.

Foam scuttling across the beach.

Sandpipers darting.

Fat brownish birds looping overhead.

Waves, brownish green, growing bigger.

Chair rocking in the wind.

Only a thin strip left for beach driving.

Scattered gray clouds-fairly stationary-obscuring blue
and white skies.

Couples passing-all shapes, sizes, degrees of whiteness.

Man with small tan and white long-haired dog rolling
in the sand.

Guy with big stomach advancing, passing behind me.

My black dots fluttering.

Surfers, lounging against car behind me.

Growing darker.

Ocean advancing.

Sandpipers running.

Foam collecting.

Colder.

Boat light flickering on the horizon.

Waves rougher, more waves further out.

Trucks appearing, one green, one dark blue.

I want the waves to come get me.

Moslem couple, woman with head covered, carrying
a purse, walking in damp fringe.

I want to be sitting here and the waves come up and kiss my feet.

Foam collecting.

Piece of white paper dancing over foam on the beach.

Guy in glasses, green shorts, baseball cap on backwards riding bike.

Waves crashing, still advancing.

Froth moving toward me.

Water very frothy now. Big advance. Only a car length between us.

People smoking.

Car lights hitting water.

Surfer leaving the water.

Flash. Man photographing the ocean.

Pregnant woman and man walking.

Woman with cane walking with man and child – “Navy” written on their shirts.

Another big advance. No longer room for cars. Come get me, ocean.

Down the beach, man in red shorts.

Almost dark. Looks like rain.

Lights at both ends of the beach, north and south.

Waiting.

Water no longer advancing.

Receding.

Waiting.

Still stirred.

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“Ocean Movement Study” published in html online at *Light and Dust*, New York, NY, September, 1996.

OCEAN WITH SOUNDS

A score is a recipe “not a batch of beaten biscuits.”
Virgil Thomson

My afternoon walks focused on light, as sky and clouds met ocean and beach. A visual connection. I missed the ocean music.

1) Crescendo 1776: Italian derived from the Latin. Direction to play a passage gradually increasing in volume or intensity. From Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root *ker-* “to grow”). Crescendos are an oceanic specialty.

2) Obbligato 1724: An indispensable part of a composition that musicians are obliged to play. *Noblesse oblige*. Ocean music is *obbligato*, not *ad libitum*. The sea doesn’t bargain for the right to roar. Don’t debate the right to say ohh, ahhh, thank you.

3) Glissando 1854: From the French *glisser*, to glide. A rapid slide up or down the scale. On the beach, a man sits at a baby grand, interprets Virgil Thomson’s *Double Glissando* (Aeolian Harp) [instrument played by wind]. The music accompanies an ebb tide – fingernails/fingertips skim keys, tickle the ivories. He rolls the piano forward, pursue the refluent waters.

4) Arpeggio 1742: Ravel dedicated *Une Barque sur l’Océan*, *Miroirs III* 1904-5 to painter Paul Sordes, fellow member of *Les Apaches*, a group of rebel artists. Composer notes: “*D’un rhythms souple – Très enveloppé de pedales.*” The piano sensuously builds patterns that flow and pause. Arpeggios and changing intensities create an unbroken sea of sonority.

5) Harmony 1650s: Claude Debussy freed harmony from tonic-dominated chord attraction. Chords could float in a more polyvalent, even ambiguous affinity.* In “Dialogue Between Wind and Waves,” third symphonic sketch in *La Mer*, 1903, waves move inland; water undulates in place. Melodies advance in time; under-lying harmonies and sonorities remain fairly static.

6) Muffled: From the beach, hearing waves break, sounds seem deeply percussive, like cloaked drums or restrained thunder. After cresting, wavelet-escapees come ashore, fractured into lighter, higher pitched sound-sprays.

7) Ruffled: The rooster – neck feathers rubbed the wrong way – puffs up, struts in circles. Air currents wake the ocean, whip the water into sound and fury. Wind sweeps over the surface stirring strident, stringed sounds, as well as a flute or two.

8) Sonic Hues, Pink Noise: If grafted, the tide's rising and falling motions land midway between random and ordered. Many of the world's phenomena (traffic flow, stock market) show up in the *zona rosa* between chaos and control.

Sonic Hues, Brown Noise: a darker shade of pink with a bass-like rumble, analogous to ocean waves. The noisy color I want to paint my lips. Nature has washed its hands in brown noise, come ashore to reclaim us. We cry out "Ecrû, Brutus, we're still in the pink."**

*John Adams, "Debussy, the First Modernist," a Book Review of *Debussy (a Painter in Sound)* by Stephen Walsh, *New York Times*, Nov. 19, 2018.

**#8 torn, and knitted into *intarsia* with material from an article by Meghan Neal, "The Many Colors of Sound," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 16, 2016.

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