

## After the Airforce

**Author :** Jasmine Dreame Wagner

**Categories :** Featured

**Date :** 27-01-2017

In 2014, Jasmine Dreame Wagner, Sondra Sun-Odeon, and Charlie Rauh staged a multidisciplinary performance at The St. Marks Poetry Project in New York City. Using Wagner's long poem, "Rewilding," as both script and score, Sun-Odeon and Rauh wove a fluid improvisation of melody and rhythm over Wagner's narration. After the performance, the three artists made plans to convene again to capture the original impulse of the collaboration and to further question the divergent forms, rhythms, and palettes available to them and to find a way to resolve the forms' differences.

Above a harmonic baseline drawn from Sun-Odeon's personal sound aesthetic of dark folk tunings and angular, post-punk machinations, Rauh's swooning Nashville-raised country jazz soars and fades with Wagner's lyric. The two guitars, sometimes in conversation with each other, sometimes diverging and lapsing into their own territories, prod the liminal space between collaboration and conflict. The guitars aspire to sonically embody the words spoken, swelling and withdrawing in tune and time with Wagner's apocalyptic imagery. Midway through the poem, a story attempts to emerge and is thwarted. Urgency grows in the images' jarring discontinuities and in moments of lyric abstraction. "Black silos bloom inside our bodies," the voiceover discloses, the guitars quiet, and the conversation pivots.

"The film is intended to be viewed on mobile phone," says Wagner, a poet and a multidisciplinary artist whose work uses the written word, songwriting, and discarded media to explore the post-industrial landscape and the natural life that persists in the face of environmental degradation and decay. "The film is meant to be viewed the way it was captured: small-scale, lo-resolution, just like our oldest memories." Wagner's work in her first book, *Rings*, and her performance-printmaking-Polaroid project "The Streets of My Hometown | Pakri Peninsula" explores how the landmarks that linger in the margins of everyday life (abandoned industrial areas, vacant lots, exurban space that has fallen into disuse) depend on memory's labor to co-exist with us. Wagner's media formats fall into obsolescence with the paths and the landmarks they preserve.

"I had to find a way to lie in the background while providing a bed of ever-present ill-ease... speckles of sunlight... sharp skyward towers..." says Sun-Odeon, a singer-songwriter and artist working in performance, movement, and spoken word. Sun-Odeon's musical endeavors include two releases by the psych-rock acid-folk band Silver Summit and a solo album entitled *Aetherea*. Often working with drop-tuned and open-tuned guitars, she alternates between delicate finger-style picking, neck bends that intentionally detune her instrument outside of melodic possibility, and noisy blues-inflected slide guitar to explore realms of ill-ease and transcendence.

"Cold starkness, rockiness, stillness," lists Rauh, whose collaborations with choreographers and dancers have brought his work into venues including Merce Cunningham Studio, The Kitchen, and Alice Tully Hall Lincoln Center. "When I began to play what I was seeing [in reading the poem as a score], I realized I couldn't imagine a way to move. All I could do was try to make the sound of being static in a space."

Deeply reverent of Chris Marker's films (*Junkopia*, *Sans Soleil*), grainy selfies and grainier YouTube cell phone music videos, "After the Airforce" spans both critical and pop territory, each performer grasping for structure and finding instead, improvisation at the edges of their practice. "After the Airforce" is a

powerful first-time collaboration between these multidisciplinary artists.

Note: Best viewed on a mobile phone.

---



[Jasmine Dreame Wagner](#) is an American poet, musician, and multidisciplinary artist. Her first book, *Rings*, won the Kelsey Street Press Firsts! Contest, selected by Elizabeth Robinson. *On a Clear Day*, a full-length collection of lyric essays, is forthcoming from Ahsahta Press in 2017.



[Sondra Sun-Odeon](#) is a Brooklyn-based singer/musician and artist working in performance, sound, image, and voice. As vocalist and guitarist, she co-wrote two releases for the psych-rock acid-folk band, Silver Summit, and a solo album, *Aetherea*.



Guitarist/composer [Charlie Rauh](#) has been awarded grants from The Klaustrid Residency, Meet The Composer, and The Herndon Arts Council. His debut EP as a solo artist, *Innocent Speller*, is available from Composers Concordance Records/Naxos of America.

---

Attributions:

The poem "After the Airforce" first appeared in print in *Verse, Rewilding* (Ahsahta Press), and *Rings* (Kelsey Street Press).

---

Soundtrack available on [Bandcamp](#).