

Sister Language

Christina & Martha Baillie

I want to write about how schizophrenic
"cognitive disorganization" & "formal
thought disorder" are a piranha that turns
the schizophrenic into a pariah; but isn't
the subject too overwhelming, too great in its
scope? & to be writing from inside the
"problem"... as "the problem"....?@°

I turn the key and push. The door begins to swing but bangs against its chain—a barrier she’s fashioned from a leash. This means she’s home. Mouth to slit: “Sister, hello, sister.”

From some room she comes. The chain unfastened, I step inside—admitted. Begin by admitting. A good beginning, but how much either party will admit (or admit to) is never a known factor. I’ve brought a desire. We begin, she and I; we’ve begun before, and often. It so happens, this day, our desires agree: to discuss language—the many ways it rescues and fails her.

We are readers, she earlier and more avid than I. Much lends itself to reading. Here’s mine of her hallway and the two rooms opening off it: few sources of physical comfort. Evidence of other forms of succour—objects stacked and ordered, things grouped in evolving compositions, small and large material repetitions, an arid calm, yarn and wire, smell of enclosure, paper, paper, ink, anxiety leaking and drafting, paint, scissors, typewriter, open box of typewriter ribbons, glue, dust, more paper, language, language, language everywhere.

Randomness pulls: & something pulls back. I
am the something, but am also its attraction to
randomness: or how the random is drawn ineluctably
to it, how the random always finds it (me) out.

The proof that I exist is in transitions from
utterly random -- in the sense that it is always
roiling around -- language potential, into
whatever utterances I am: am making: these ams.
I am (what makes) these transits^{am} I am. Language
potential, unmanifest, infinite; its potentates.
Taters, ate, potent. The linguophagous am.

The following day, she brings me two typewritten texts, and a handwritten letter.

The first, titled: “Duct : I N T R O”, she explains, might serve as introduction to any number of her larger works.

I am pulled to her “Randomness pulls: & something pulls back.”

I ask her to comment on the idea of self-as-resistance.

She has taped her answer to the opposite page: “The proof that I exist... The linguophagous am.”

I think that only language "gets" my existence:
naturally, since I am made up of & made-up
(maddened-up) by language.

It speaks through me, spiels me out,
spackles me widely, wildly, it tackles & slicks,
sleeks me, I am its stippling, its spittle &
slip-ups -- & on, on, so on.

Sleep. Just out of, out of it. Might if could
I out of sleepy ams, their jottings, make something
readable -- am thinking of Renee Gladman's CALAMITIES,
Alexis Pauline Gumbs' SPILL. Do, I do wish it. What
I could -- but do it? -- I can't. Not a chance.

I don't have that ability; & am too far from life.
(If life be social, human).

When I get out of bed, undoable, unmakeable,
unfeasible (emphysema-sabotaged) paragraphs were
my plan.

I hunger for her seeming freedom. Oh, to be spied out, spackled widely, wildly tackled, slicked, and sleeked by language.

Her freedom?

Language is the whale that, swallowed, she inhabits. Sounds echo in the live ribbed vault.

I read her, then stare at my timidity, my law-abiding, linguistic prudery. For me the written word is steeped in punishment and humiliation. Memories of school—of failure at spelling, of slowness at reading—haunt the written, making it an ever-present classroom. In its defined, exacting, space, I attempt to prove myself; take covert delight, slyly twisting at every opportunity. The sentence, a most private pleasure. Beautiful alignments gut me.

fun-making

Disrespecting schizophrenics can be fun --
in a self-bolstering way.

What I do -- my shit, my wild gold -- is
a healthier fun.

Fun. I need it.

Generate fun. Do. I need to. Be at it.

(At is what s
ways in
to being
when any As
collides with another As).

She has asked that her writing occupy one page and mine the opposite page, to prevent our words from “contaminating” each other, to stop the one text from bleeding into the other.

This idea appeals to me for aesthetic reasons. Vistas open.

We’ve agreed that her text will claim the left page, mine the right.

Already, I’ve infringed, purloining some of her words (spiel, spackle, etc...).

She has not requested that I undo what’s been done.

She will admit this one slippage, permit me a singular sleight of hand.

I need to be starring & hopping. The unseen
hopping-about of stars when humans turn away.
Well past i.e. ahead of the hoping to be
stirred. The shirring, the whirring. The
antelope upstart. The starting to play it out:
that startling. The startle that is scads of
small fighting birds slamming themselves against
fixity. That cement wall, their WHACK! & fall,
their ground-sprawl, :crawl, their rearising,
their going, going at it. Never not.

wing at it

be the at-it of twinge
Ana Božićević's "sparrows'r'us," her "again
bloodthirsty sparrow."

Jana Sterbak's perforated ivory
perforate oratory

carrying-
cases for Japanese fighting crickets, that look
like eggs/flasks.

Her language pleasure, infectious, resisting quarantine.

The less medication she takes, she tells me, the more insistently words decompose. “Appear” becomes “app” and “ear”; seconds later, “ap” and “pear,” send her thoughts in search of a still life. When every word she hears, or reads, shatters upon contact—her mind a windshield, every word a mess of feather and bone, spray of blood—imposing order exhausts her.

“To shut this down takes enormous energy, which can push me to the edge of passing out.”

After that I write: Then I tried a few other things -- but they didn't fly. Flew not.

THE END

Then I was back lying in bed, hiding all of what there is of me bodywise, under a thin ivory quilt stuffed with silk thread-tufts, a blue microfiber fleece & two old gray towels. I thought: the end? NO.

Then I picked up TENDER BUTTONS, & I started out again -- startled myself out as grain -- to make a remaking principally by soundsense-aura.

So help me God. I do need to be doing, do let me be the doing of the foliolichening that I am.

Seven pages ago, you wrote, (which I loved): "Function: all (language = every thing =
ams) is.

Were you shrining, and shrinking "th." to free "ing" from the fixity of thingness, from the
weight of the bodily, material world? *

Are you making a declaration of revolt against the false authority of solidities in language
and elsewhere? *

I found "gnat-churn." back on page three, so apt a description of the pestering presence
of language; and "I stir my stateless stumps," makes me want to nudge you into saying
more about "statelessness". Do you want to be nudged?

Please forgive this spray of questions, not floral, no delicate arrangement, but sputter &
spittling inquiry?

I am, of course curious about the "sk²¹en." you mention. "Let it not shape up". But that
may be subject matter for a different conversation? "Let it breeze around."

- * Yes, yes. Also, ²¹as in math, to the nth degree; so,
everything in language is exponential(ly expandable). & yes,
shapeliness is not my thing, as I'm unable to produce it. So
I celebrate what I can do & love to do: try to put language on the
page in such ways that it is in motion, each element an asterisk,
a briefly embedded pointing-elsewhere.

Martha, "I stir my stateless stumps" is a nod to Beckett's ~~TV~~ THE UNNAMABLE. To stir one's stumps & (legs) is to get moving, the statelessness (no state, no speech) is mine. got this