



She offered some notes on The Host

You said, Clarice said *'we oscillate between flight and longing, coherence is mutilation, I want disorder, a disintegrated self — inarticulate experience, coherence, I don't want it anymore'*. With her strange lyrical syntax and introspection, Clarice Lispector I presume. And her female protagonists who recognise the limitations of language and through their individual experience shed light on their awareness and to some degree self-knowledge. Looking like Marlene Dietrich and writing like Virginia Woolf, I feel discomfort as I read this.

One thought and then another, a slippery consciousness, as you say you are both sides of the conversation, one persona to the next, and in the mirror of the bathroom she is unable to distinguish out of all the women's faces which is her own. Her edge's friable, a dissolution? Or more precisely an in-between state, sound is a compulsion but how do you write? This itch, this scratch an insatiable longing, a torment, repetition and an incessant cough. Clearing the throat to make way for the opening sentence, but you keep waiting, suspension? Or something more troubling, inertia? Metaphors for this anxious state of creativity? An unconscious scratching as the thinking takes hold, welts on her skin, a physical example. The writing process as distracted, uncomfortable, inhabited. The song settles inside of the body it follows, a rhythm, a persistent jingle, a pleasure turned to irritation, eventually a contagion, that must be passed on.

Shelley Duval sings the refrain over, as the fat, comic sound plods. Another woman with a practical and kind voice says something like *'narratives of repetition as punishment torment'*. But the bodies keep dancing locked in a refrain of inane moves, mimicking one another, synchronised, mesmerised, on mass, hearteningly mindless. They hold the rhythm and the shapes get thrown, safety, support in a group dynamic, homogenous, I see you, you see me, together we can't stop. And Shelley Duval sings the refrain over, as the fat, comic sound plods and the crisp, repetitive tap of the shoe possesses the single dancer, urging her on, locked in a set of physical actions that create a satisfying tap. An occasional, outside voice (each time male) offers direction and encouragement, these kindnesses jarring. And earthworms. The varying monologues of personal recall, experience shared, wikiHow reassurance and halted or stuck lyric — one kind of consciousness, near the surface, cerebral, spoken, announced and the other in the body, felt, pulsating, rhythmic. Which strangely can be heard. Internally. From the mouth to the ear. Or the body travelling in another direction to the mind. The body taking pleasure, soothing and then betraying in the casual repetition of the refrain that things run away from us. When we least expect it our anxieties are performed in body like the phrase in house, grinding teeth, leading to weakened enamel, leading to abscesses, leading to root canals, leading to teeth being removed, low level worrying, casual but forever persistent. Can I be me? Or rather here I am in the experience of aliveness and creativity. As Clarice said creating and writing are synonymous with living itself.

Inside the car, a non-space on route, the mind is free to roam songs, diversions from the boredom, where the skin can bristle with the emotional rub. As she says by necessity there is a little melancholy in the happiest of songs. Fleeting sensations of completeness, spirits uplifted, on the road to achieving something, or a rhythm in which to see yourself anew. The young girl catches herself in a moment of self-projection, mesmerised. Songs as an invitation to imagine yourself differently, a coercion or permission. It can be difficult to understand self-care which is really self-preservation, she remarks, especially if it isn't a favour to any one else. And of course our lives lived rest on the lessons we are taught: familial, societal and social. Do not over use writing punishments or she will neglect to see writing as a liberating and expressive form of communication and instead view it as unsatisfying work. Female volition? Oneiric images, hairballs chocked up, parasites wrestled from the chest, toilet doors left open, a persistent potential in hoped-for acts of creation for embarrassment to be overridden in waking life.

A long potentially comic scream, a parody of despair, she's thinking this shit through and temporally we shift back and forth between the 1890s and the 1990s: a Victorian voice, a regional accent, a pragmatic TV tone, an authoritative voice, a conspiratorial or disclosing voice, a sharing voice, even a male voice spoken by a woman; in transit between declaration, doubt, self-assertion, anxiety and self-actualisation. Chewing gum may aid writer's block. To search for and find one's creative voice, she remarks ironically. Hell why not sally forth with a jab at the problem of writing itself as Lynne Tillman's Paige Turner — the writer's protagonist a writer, remarks to herself in *To Finds Words*

*'The Body has a Mind of its Own
The Mind Speaks through its Body
The Body Speaks its Mind
The Mind has a Body of its Own'*

'To write a story is to be in a state of hysteria. Writers call up from their minds and bodies (I do not make a separation) memories, ideas, fragments of thoughts, images. The fragmented story is symptomatic, and like a symptom of the hysteric, who cannot retrieve the whole, it is stymied by a regrettable and important loss from a particular scene that would make the story complete. But even the narrative that we think of as well-formed, the traditional narrative, with a beginning, middle and end, that too is of necessity a fragment, which the writer, to counter loss, is impelled to produce. All writing is hysterical. The body always speaks.'

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