

Attempting Embrace: Notes on Form(ing)

“Our dialogues are often mute. This does not prevent them from taking place.”
Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints*

“It is only in love that we want to know the origin, the genealogy of someone.”
Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints*

1.

What I recognize is that the confrontation with my sister (who spoke a foreign language yet bore my name) was both a generative and destructive mechanism in my life. I always feel that my attempt at capturing it doesn't do justice to the actual—because it isn't a “story” and shouldn't be one; it was a physical shift, a change in (of) the body. And I know that, but don't know what it means and am not sure how the body remembers or how the body tells, except that maybe it just essays (attempts).

2.

Two languages coming into direct contact.

And then I spoke and what I said was no longer comprehended. And then she spoke and I found a lack where moments before there had been meaning. This is the awakening of the eyes. A world of images and voicelessness. In that year my voice box receded into my body; an extra layer of muscle burying it inside my throat. The new difficulty of speaking loudly, of speaking at all. Our first conversation was performed by the body. An electrical charge, the light of sentences. An encounter. Martin Buber writes, “When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them.” Did we meet death and see God there, a streak of light between our edges? It is true I could no longer say the word “I,” to bear meaning. I flat-lined into “beyond the body,” a darkness spreading, darkness gaining shape and I saw the pupil of my eye forming, and then I saw her black hair.

3.

The body does not have the same ideas that I have.

Goulish, Matthew. *39 Microlectures in Proximity of Performance*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

“A more correct view might be: my body is not mine; my body is not myself...Performance, like dreaming, presents us with intersections. In a performance, a performer is not a single entity. Instead of a unit, a performer is an identity in motion in a particular direction. A performer is a BECOMING” (78).

“How does the dream divide from the body;
how does the body divide from the dream?” (85).

4.

The verb form of *twin* means: “to put asunder; to separate, disjoin, disunite, sever, part, divide; to deliver, set free; to distinguish.” *Embrace* is a division. It is the similarities, not the differences, that cause us to remain apart. But my sister and I are not twins. I have tried many times to find us there. Studies on twins do not describe us. We are not inseparable. We are not alike in our appearances. We have no telepathic powers.

5.

Notes From Other Bodies:

We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics. Ed. Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue. London: The University of Alabama Press, 2002.

Cooley Nicole. “Painful Bodies: Kathy Acker's Last Texts.”

“...the experience of the suffering body can only be experienced by the autobiographical subject as a performance, a series of gestures or acts that the body takes on” (199).

Frost, Elisabeth A., “In Another Tongue” : Body, Image, Text in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*.”

“*Dictée* raises the possibility of a 'bothness' of word and flesh that might negotiate between the empirical body and the constructed body, transparency and opacity, original and translation. The tongue becomes a figure for such a border zone: forger of words, organ at the boundary of the body and the symbolic, the tongue retains a stubborn corporeality (more pronounced, for example, than that of the eyes, figured as transcendent 'soul')” (189).

“...the 'you' is positioned in an impossible space, in which physical location has dissolved and the shattered subject struggles to keep the body whole” (191).

6.

A loss of tongue= a loss of home.

There had already been a loss of location. An orphaning in the space of the home. A birding as I flew / migrating from one state to another and back and back and back. The replacement of voice, of name, of cultural mother is more than a slap in the face; it was an undoing. I felt it as my ribs unfolded, a betrayal in the genome, this new collision with open air. To become this monstrous body, my sister Andrea and I found two options, to invent new forms, or to strip the current one; to strip it, then shoot it up with heroin.

I was the heron; she was the heroine, of course.

7.

“One should never see with one's eyes of flesh / The metaphors hidden / In human beings.” Helen Cixous,
Rootprints

One should never vocally attribute to the body the secret shape and form of that body. One should never say,
Your metaphor is showing.

8.

Hejinian, Lyn. “Two Stein Talks.” The Language of Inquiry. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

“A phrase or sentence is not obliterated when an altered or even contradictory version of it appears. In this regard, the frequent use of “and” in Stein's work is an important indicator of inclusion, just as the use of the gerundive is an important indicator of the continuation of anything” (117).

Saussure: “In language there are only differences.”

Stein: “Grammar makes it be different.”

9.

Metaphor is a suspect device.

But one cannot ignore the multiplicity of *and* in naming: *andrea and andrea*. One cannot ignore the reversal of it: as *dna*. A name begging to be magnified, a disease perhaps, inside the string of that name. As in: *evil and live*. How the two become mirrors of one another. It is in mirroring something that its reflection, a reversal is found.

“...And the movement whereby each opposition is set up to make sense is the movement through which the couple is destroyed.” Helen Cixous.

10.

“Narrative deletes its centre.” Lisa Robertson.

“...you go back through the texts [of others]; can only circumvent yourself, go around yourself with the interruption of the others. In relation to the biographical starting point, writing seems to take a double path: to the periphery of me by means of the others; to the intimate by means of the intersections of these, yours—others.” Mireille Calle-Gruber.

11.

A crisis in form[ing].

“This is the eternal origin of art that a human being confronts a form that wants to become a work through him. Not a figment of his soul but something that appears to the soul and demands the soul's creative power. What is required is a deed that requires that a man [do it] with his whole being.” Martin Buber.

“This deed involves a sacrifice and a risk. The sacrifice: Infinite possibility is surrendered on the altar of the form; all that but a moment ago floated playfully through one's perspective has to be exterminated; none of it

may penetrate into the work; the exclusiveness of such a confrontation demands this. The risk: the basic word can only be spoken with one's whole being; whoever commits himself may not hold back part of himself; and the work does not permit me, as a tree or man might, to seek relaxation...if I do not serve it properly, it breaks, or it breaks me." Martin Buber.