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editor's note

Let's focus on the events that have been taking place so far. From the never-ending street riots in Athens to Israel's homicidal fanaticism over Palestinians; Brexit and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the US; Thailand's referendum and the growing sectarian attitudes in the Philippines; the failed coup in Turkey and Erdoğan consolidating his power; the recent State oppressions against Papuan students in Yogyakarta and beyond, to the ever worsening "global economic crisis." From our point of view, the world stage seems to be gradually set for a serious revolutionary and poetic transformation.

Unfortunately, however, we would have to say that these changes will be for the worse, simply because of how terrified and pacified we have all become in spite of, or perhaps because of, all these troubles the world has seen within the last month or so. And in all our tangled and worried moments, we cannot help but to turn our heads to Pokemon Go and the new Frank Ocean album. We cannot even get over the fact of how alone we really feel but are not really alone at all; that all it takes are tiny refusals and acts of resistance.

A real paradigm shift is about to occur.

Our language and voice, robbed. Our families and friends, denied existing. Maybe it is time that we use (or exploit) the silence—the silence as an astute expression of rebellion and discontent: a rebellion against the 'noise' of the spectacle, that is now situated more deeply on the level of everyday life. Because ours is a protest of men and women against inhuman(e) life—a culture of neoliberal homogeneity and its rampant philistinism. Because the struggle begins at the level of the real single individual, and because community, from which the individual in revolt is separated, is the true social nature of man—*human nature*.

What does anyone want except to feel freer?

AN ONGOING INVESTIGATION
/ SUSPECT: L.

It lurks.
A shadowy figure in a dark alley: the cliché of mystery
stories lurks in the same way,
the only difference being that
the said figure is predictable, thus always captured
by the hero in the final scene.
It, on the other hand,
is elusive.
It catches unsuspecting victims by
surprise—the surprise of speechlessness.
The shock,
an open mouth forming an O,
an eerie stillness:
Montages of language suspended by the absence of words.

It lurks around native tongues and foreign mouths,
tip-toes across the marble floors of grammatical
structures, dances with intonations, wears accents
to hide in plain sight.
It is the fugitive that has robbed everyone blind,
the one that has murdered the most delicate moments.
A true professional
is one step ahead.

It prepares itself for the endgame, but
so long as speakers speak and writers write, it will continue
to frustrate even the best detectives with
the sensation of being close,
but not close enough.



SERBA TAHU

Aku tidak pernah suka dengan keramaian. Seringkali aku dibuat gelisah oleh kerubungan bising, tumpah ruah emosi campur aduk dan segala orkestrasi kepalsuan yang terkandung didalamnya. Bilamana aku terjebak, aku lebih memilih untuk diam dan mengamati. Manusia adalah makhluk yang menarik untuk dikaji sekaligus dibenci. Mungkin aku seorang misantropis. Mungkin juga tidak. Aku tahu betul itu adalah sesuatu yang kontradiktif. Yang pasti, objek penelitianku ini serupa diriku.

Aku selalu menganggap diriku sebagai pemeran figuran dalam film yang diberi judul "Keseharian". Tak pernah sedikitpun aku merasa menjadi bagian penting dalam rangkaian rutinitas yang kujalani. Maka, menyenangkan rasanya untuk tidak memiliki keharusan menggerakkan "cerita" dan hanya berdiri disana layaknya dekorasi karya seni murahan di sebuah pameran. Siapapun bisa hidup lebih lama dan punya akhir yang bahagia, bisa juga terkurung dalam lingkaran tak berujung dan akhirnya binasa. Tak perlu susah-susah berpikir, cukup diam saja dan biarkan semuanya diadu sampai mati.

Tak bisa dipungkiri, sosial media memainkan peran penting dalam proses pemisahan antara "aku" dan "mereka". Begitupula dengan derasnya arus informasi, disaat alirannya tak terbendung, kita secara pasif menerima tanpa menyaring. Kita pikir kita tahu segalanya, nyatanya kita hanya tahu permukaannya saja. Akhirnya, masing-masing dari kita tidak tahu bagaimana harus memosisikan diri. Siapakah protagonis dan antagonis dalam film yang disebut "Keseharian" ini? Siapa pula yang berkewajiban menjadi sutradaranya?

Andai saja kita tidak dipertemukan oleh teknologi serba muktahir yang kehadirannya bisa kita rasakan di sudut-sudut tersempit keseharian, interaksi antar manusia mungkin akan kembali terasa otentik dan bermakna. Leher kita tidak akan terasa pegal-pegal akibat terlalu lama menunduk ke bawah, menghadap ke perangkat serba canggih dengan jemari menari di layar sentuh. Rasa percaya terhadap diri sendiri pun akan kembali menjadi perhatian bila kita tidak pernah kenal dengan kanal-kanal media sosial yang kini sudah bermacam rupanya. Figur-figur yang tidak seharusnya menjadi panutan akan kehilangan lahan pekerjaannya. Ironis memang, ketika sang hantu dalam mesin tersebut menahbiskan dirinya sebagai "sosial" namun pada praktiknya justru malah membuat celah semakin lebar.

Kurasa belum cukup banyak buku yang kubaca untuk memahami manusia. Atau, berinteraksi dengannya secara umum. Tentu, ada pelajaran yang bisa kuambil dari serangkaian tulisan yang tersusun rapi di setiap halamannya. Namun seringkali semua lenyap seketika ketika keraguan diri melanda, seolah semua itu percuma dan terbang bersama angin layaknya bunga dandelion.

Aku menemukan banyak hal dalam sebuah buku. Baik itu jawaban maupun pertanyaan yang perlu kita jawab sendiri. Tapi, dalam proses memahami manusia, apakah mungkin aku harus membaca manusia layaknya sebuah buku?

Di titik ini aku sadar kalau aku tidak akan menemukan jawaban dari semua yang telah kujabarkan diatas karena apa gunanya berkeluh kesah jika tidak berbagi? Jadi, sekarang aku akan bertanya: Bagaimana denganmu? Apakah kau merasa serupa denganku juga?

The Aesthetics of Resistance, Yan Xing (2015)



THE BELLY OF A SHARK

Sometimes I feel like—
(sleep now)
inside the Governor's belly
that thing
yes, the trouble I have seen
his gasps of blazing fire
his misty mathematic glaze
(sleep now)
little hangman
inside his word for coins

Sometimes I feel like—
in each of his numbers a starling
in each of its beaks a startled knife
Sorry, we are that knife
(sleep well)
we are cold and bleak

Sometimes I feel like—
a million shuttered doors
of meat and blazing stars
it is 8:01 exactly
Golden night
its livid sentence punctured
its canned laughter
(wait)
his automatic claws
his staggered scrape of convicts
(stop now)
his million punctured doors

Sometimes I feel like—
a bird within its shell
(stop now)
desolate drinkers
metronomic and scared
inside his word for the Party
inside his luxurious office
inside our wages
of dragonflies and moths

Sometimes I feel like—
(stop)
Oh, graceful city
graceful colour of ash
a poisoned lark is shrieking
his golden voice is leaking

Sometimes I feel like—
a rim of cutting wheels
inside the Governor's belly
his stocks and with his chains
steal away
(fuck it)
the trouble I have seen
(sleep well)
bureaucrats and bandits
inside their mouth a printed rag
inside that rag a midnight hag
Oh, public debt
Sorry, we are not that debt
And music for our sorrow
I have not slept since '08
yes, have never been awakened
(stop it)

Sometimes I feel like—
your silver and gold
(stop)
we are your midnight lasers your ritual and your razors
(stop)
Oh, spectral city boiling
its bitter coins are burning

Sometimes I feel like—
a motherless child
a long way from my home

Stills from *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom,* Pier Paolo Pasolini (1975)



EXECUTIONER'S SALT

The wealthier homes
have occupied my voice
I cannot say nothing now,
my language has cracked
It is a slow, crackling fire
It deadens my eyes, in
high, contorted concern
fuses to protein and rent

Because your mouth is bitter
with executioner's salt, perhaps
when you die, perhaps
you will flutter through Hades
invisible, among the scorched dead

May you vanish there, famished
through the known and unknown worlds


TANAH DI JUAL
LT 524M LB 120M SHM
LOKASI JLN. RAYA SETU DEPAN STTD
KAVL
KAVLING
SHM LOKA

GRIYA

I.
Between the quiet pauses
of a Saturday night

I always hear
Police sirens approaching me
See, ambulance sirens blazing through me

But I will never know
Who is calling whom.

II.
In one household
where three men breathe

The Mother
is the toughest being.

Skull and life mask of Phineas Gage, Warren Anatomical Museum, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine



KARAT

Di saat layar hitam yang tak bernyawa memantulkan kosong
Sisa dari sinonim keseharian yang mengagungkan citra
Di situlah seseorang akan semakin memahami dirinya
Dan semakin jelas pisau-pisau halus yang Ia tancapkan
Pada gumpalan darah dan karat yang Ia namakan sebagai Akal

Pada kosong itu berkaca
Yang mengharap lelap menjadi tebusan
Mata seorang yang penuh akan lelah

Pemahamanku akan dunia mungkin tidak seberapa,
Ia berdoa,
Selagi masih ada kesempatan sedikit lagi
Setumpuk dua tumpuk
Sebelum rubuh
Akan kuceritakan semua kepadanya

Karena di balik bibir itu tersirat
Sejarah untuk yang tak bernama
Bahasa untuk yang terlantarkan

Retak dan merekah
Majasmu berdarah
Tidak akan mengubah apapun untuknya
Selain mengambil kembali secara paksa
Kata yang akan mengakhiri pertunjukan

Selagi mimpi Ia tersadar:
Apalah dia jika bukan segumpalan Bahasa
Yang hanya ingin menyampaikan pada mereka
Bahwa Ia akan kehabisan kata-kata



SOME REMARKS ON THE AFFIRMATION OF “NO”

There are many reasons that compel a person to write. There are also many reasons that compel a person to do the exact opposite, and that is to not write, or to stop writing.

In today's textually productive world—though not necessarily in the literary sense—the absence of even an unpunctuated sentence on a *timeline* within a period of 24 hours is enough to spark concern and brief episodes of content withdrawal. While comparing the content of an essay or poem to that of a casual tweet may seem pointless and irrelevant, the social or creative pressure to produce either of the two types of content does exist. And this is exactly where the problem lies.

Silence—especially when it comes from someone who has produced written work with enough consistency—is generally regarded in a negative light. In terms of literature, not writing is often seen as a loss. It is not regarded as the result of a conscious decision, but as an admission of defeat. *I confess! All those words finally got to me! I have nothing left to say!* But if it were really that simple, if silence really were that empty, why do the words—poems, novels, essays, blog posts, status updates, book reviews—that seem to pile every minute give us almost no sense of fulfillment? There is so much to be said, yet so little to be understood.

So why is silence despised? The question is important because other than its rich symbolism—shyness, detachment, oppression, weakness, avoidance, mystery, fear or perhaps even laziness—silence per se rarely becomes the center of attention. There is a lot of talk of it, but not *about* it. It is never what it is but what is around it. It is negative, not constructive.

To indulge in that line of thought is to agree that silence carries little significance. Given that the golden mantra of this century's cultural world is Productivity, choosing to *not* do something may appear to be regressive, or reactionary. The writer has stopped writing because he or she has become lazy. The writer has run out of ideas. The writer has given up. While these are plausible reasons, they are still based on the belief that silence is something one involuntarily falls into.

This takes us back to the second statement in the first paragraph. What sorts of reasons was it referring to? Why would a writer or poet deliberately abandon his or her task (temporarily or permanently)? What pushed him or her to choose, rather than surrender to, silence over a prolific career?

Taking the breadth of the subject into account, no quick answers will suffice. And this is where the creativity of Enrique Vila-Matas might come in handy. He explored the theme of not writing in his novel, *Bartleby & Co.* The narrator, who is unnamed and has little to no luck with women, admits to being so traumatized by his father's reaction to the publication of his first book that he did not write for 25 years. He awakens from his long literary slumber by starting a research project of writers who, like Herman Melville's Bartleby, "would prefer not to" (2) write. Vila-Matas refers to them as "Writers of the No." The book itself is a collection of the narrator's notes.

Bartleby is fascinating because its hilarity does not downplay the seriousness of the book's core themes. Literature is immediately turned on its head the moment the narrator announces his plan to dive into the realm of the No. It is a section of literature that rarely gets to see the light of day because it is a threat.

To call it a threat, however, implies that saying no to writing is the same as denying its importance. Interestingly, it also suggests that a word as little as "no" stands for dissatisfaction and contestation. In addition to being a declaration that is indispensable to the dissolution of literary mundanity, the confrontational silence obtained by No also reveals the (current) boundaries of literature. The writer/poet realizes that there are things beyond his or her reach, and that continuing to write for the sake of producing content would do more harm than good.

The decision to "take a break" and contemplate on the limits of literature as well as the writer/poet's own relation to those limits may not sound like a very confrontational strategy. But asking questions is what usually sets things in motion, and the narrator of *Bartleby* does exactly that in the early stages of his investigation:

> It is my intention, therefore, to make my way through the labyrinth of the No, down the roads of the most disquieting and attractive tendency of contemporary literature: a tendency in which is to be found the only path still open to genuine literary creation; a tendency that asks the question, "What is writing and where is it?" and that prowls around the impossibility of the same and tells the truth about the grave, but highly stimulating, prognosis of literature at the end of the millennium. (3)

What is writing and where is it? Such questions are crucial because they reveal the distance that separates the writer and his or her pursuit—not to mention the one that stands between the pursuit and the imagined, ideal goal. Once again, the writer is forced to confront the possibility that continuing to write may not provide the answers.

Writing is driven by an urgency to choose; not only the right syntax or the right words, but also the right amount of silence. It is not simply a matter of leaving a chunk of words out or not presenting them at all. Maurice Blanchot points out that "to write is to make oneself the echo of what cannot cease speaking—and since it cannot, in order to become its echo I have, in a way to silence it" (27). In this context, silence is not an omission, but a necessity. It makes Blanchot's "incessant speech" intelligible, or in his words, "perceptible."

As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, silence is not always involuntary—and for it to carry any weight, it cannot be. It stems from the need to resist excess and to turn that resistance into an effort to build something new. Not writing, which is the very embodiment of literary silence, may seem like an extreme measure. But if we can "open paths" by doing it, it should not be dismissed as a hollow rejection of literary progress. Being a Writer of the No may very well be the only radical solution.

Blanchot elaborates on the intervention "which the hand that doesn't write retains—the part of the writer which can always say no and, when necessary, appeal to time, restore the future" (27). He suggests that the writer's privilege to restrain himself by exercising the act of the No has a lasting impact on the present, as well as the future of writing, of literature. Vila-Matas shares Blanchot's vision through his narrator's mission statement, "Only from the negative impulse, from the labyrinth of the No, can the writing of the future appear" (3).

Having said that, before any meaningful discussion of the future can proceed, it is essential to find and experience a combative silence—silence that is more than the mere absence of words or sounds, and certainly more than clichéd poetization. A combative silence, as opposed to the passive and subservient kind, is earned. It must be sought in what has already happened, what has already been written. It must be sought in reality, amid the cacophony of our existence and collective experience.

That reality moves in language, *is* language. Without language, any attempt to touch upon even the outermost layer of silence and (not) writing will be incomplete, because it is language that makes the two possible. However, the scope of language calls for a series of separate investigations. We shall begin with silence, and work in reverse.

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