
LIBBY SCHEIER

There Is No Such Thing as Silence

in the longest and deepest silences I hear my organs heaving and hauling in their daily labors, moving blood and tissues, inhaling / exhaling, perceiving, touching, sensing—what noise, what noise the body makes when the mind is listening, and in the deepest silences the mind foments raucous storms, sometimes it zings out the same string of lightning ten times, then a thick black cloud descends, humming, it lifts and the sun goes pop a few times like a specially bred dog, a dog bred to be small and whiny and weak and delicate, the sun goes pop pop, weak like a chihuahua.

so it is a myth about silences, there are no silences, whenever you desire with all your heart a great silence and start to sink into it, you sink into the splash and plash of the body and the bang and pop of the mind.

why are there no silences? we desire nothing so much as a perfect long black silence. but life is filled with noise. I suspect that death too is noisy. what is this yearning for silence? perhaps it is the rock in me, the ancient lava, the sea floor, the hardness and roundness of my skull like a boulder, and my bones like petrified wood that lies quiet in dark forests. perhaps it is the sea salt in my blood, the salty blood in motion like the sea.

bones bring us back to the silence of minerals, the hardness of stone. bones are only invaded by marrow, a noisy substance, full of direction and self-interest and the need to survive.

follow the human fetus as it develops. it justifies darwin and reproduces the evolution of the species. tail, gills, whatever you want. and at early stages the sex organs are the same in female and male. later the little bump becomes clitoris or penis, the shapeless folds become labia or scrotum. like our ancestral ameba, we pass through androgyny, or, to be clearer, the absence of gender.

as the stages of the fetus prove our lack of species originality, prove our link with all animal life, so do the bones, the skeleton that survives after body death, prove our oneness with the elements of silence, with the minerals that rested here before the commotion of cell life began.

I want to tap into my bones tonight, I want to drain the marrow, I want to tap into the silence.

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Libby Scheier is the author of three volumes of poetry, co-editor of an essay collection, Language in Her Eye, and author of a new collection of fiction, Saints and Runners (Mercury Press 1993). She teaches creative writing, Canadian literature and women's studies at York University.

MARG YEO

might there be finches

i don't know how to
say it any more or what there
is to be said about
anything

or there is just too
much pain (and ecstasy) too many
complications to be old and wise and
wicked with words

i can't ignore it nothing
helps my nightmares belong to other
women they are so
frightened nothing i
do or think nothing i write makes any
difference

still this morning there are
snapdragons lemon butter
yellow on the balcony drinking the sunrise
down their pale throats and the cat
curled there in a lawn chair is suddenly
platter eyed and quick to
attention (might there be
finches? could it be
spring?)

i won't forget anything
important outrage
aches in every bone and still those
snapdragons keep turning their buttery chins
up for more
mouthfuls of the sun

and a flutter of iridescent starlings are
always housekeeping above an english
kitchen window i needn't see them to
know they are noisy and
busy in the fallout and the
rain with twigs and ragtags
and tidbits of
string making homes and
lifetimes

and lifetimes in the
sun in the fallout
in the rain

Marg Yeo has published six volumes of poetry. Her most recent collection, Getting Wise, was published by Gynergy Books in 1990.