

Maria Cozma

notes on silence

January 2021

I thought about my time I spent in Frankfurt. My friend mentioned Tom McCarthy's seminar. I didn't feel like going, since my fear of speaking in front of a group of people was too great. He tried to recall what Tom McCarthy said about (the act of) writing during the class. Writing as a process of digesting something that has already been digested. I might understand his approach to writing on my own terms, nonetheless the sentiment has helped me with my own writing.

I thought about: speech failures, misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, mishearings, stuttering and stammering, about the inability to grasp a joke or to tell a joke. I thought about casual talk and trash talk... I thought about episodes of muteness and then again about stuttering. I thought about not understanding a language. I thought about loneliness through language. I thought about saying nothing at all. I often thought about 'No'.

I thought about Anne Boyer saying: 'Saying nothing is a preliminary method of saying *no*. To practice unspeaking is to practice being unbending, more so in a crowd [...] never mistake silence for agreement. Silence is often conspiracy as it is consent. A room of otherwise lively people saying nothing, staring at a figure of authority, is silence as the inchoate of a now-initiated *we won't...*'¹

I thought about artists that stopped making art in order to do something else. I thought about Lee Lozano, Lygia Clark, Charlotte Posenenske and all the others who stopped making art, in order to do something else.

I thought about how much I generally enjoy speaking to my Mami². Then again how hard it is to talk to her about the things I do. I thought about the doubts I have towards the things I do. Once again I thought about the recurring question of what it is that we're doing. And about all the answers, that are changing over and over again and never seem sufficient enough.³

I thought about how much I like it when things are apparent at first glance. When they appear obvious from the start. I thought about how similar that can be to reading.⁴ There's a stage and on top of it a microphone. I thought about how this could be the beginning of a conversation. Once more I thought about my Mami.

I thought about what kind of artist my Mami would have been. I thought about the way she writes and the small objects she collects. I thought of her as a poet with a certain interest for painting and our common admiration for the work of Moyra Davey. I thought about my Mami not being able to understand the language around her for a long time.⁵

I thought about my experience as a friend, daughter, tenant, student, consumer, patient and employee. I thought again about my experience as a consumer and about my finances.⁶

I thought less about what we do, but more about what we say we do.
I thought about saying nothing.

¹ From Anne Boyer's, *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate*, No
'...Poetry is sometimes a *no*. It's relative silence is the negative's underhanded form of singing. Its flight into a wide-ranged interior are, in the world of fervid external motion, sometimes a method of standing still.'

² I call my Mother Dorina Mami.

³ At this point I would like to mention Andrea Frasers work 'there's no place like home'. The essay stayed with me for a long time and while writing this text it was very present in my mind. 'What indeed is this discourse which speaks of the social or psychological world as if it did not speak of it, which cannot speak of this world except on condition that it only speak of it as if it did not speak of it, that is, in a form which performs, for the author and the reader, a denegation of what it expresses.'

⁴ Fernanda Laguna describes this in a similar way in an Interview with Chris Kraus. The preoccupation with elements that are definable/recognizable at first glance, build a characteristic that reappears in most of my works. I liked it very much how she described naming things as a form of reading. 'It's like inviting the audience to name things as if they were reading [...] To name something out loud is a way of touching it lightly and trapping its essence.'

⁵ I especially thought of Moyra Davey's works as our common interest, since her works deal with continuous collecting, sending, receiving and remembering. I imagine her liking the subtle and at other times clear references to movies and books.

⁶ The text to D'Ette Nogle's exhibition 'bleeding canvas' kept repeating the phrase 'I thought about....'. I liked how it allowed loose associations to thrive.