

## On Writing Itself

*Yanika Bugeja*

I think: there at the point where thought joins with me I am able to subtract myself from being, without diminishing, without changing, by means of a metamorphosis which saves me for myself, beyond any point of reference from which I might be seized. It is the property of my thought, not to assure me of existence (as all things do, as a stone does), but to assure me of being in nothingness itself, and to invite me not to be, in order to make me feel my marvellous absence. (Blanchot, 1988, pp. 98 - 99)

I get up and head to the kitchen. I stare at the kettle as I wait expectantly for the shrill whistle that means my next coffee fix is up. I half-hope it would speak to me, provide me with something concrete to focus on or maybe trigger some memory that would inspire me. I need a subject to write about, and I need it fast.

The problem is never that there isn't anything to write about; on the contrary, there is always far too much. There is always more than my brain can handle, in fact. At times, it seems as if there is a perpetual overload of things that require my attention – not just fleetingly. That is normally when I am right in the middle of a project, probably uncomfortably close to the deadline too. At that point, I always know, at least vaguely, what is to come next and how I would want to go about it. Indeed, the closer I come to finishing whatever is at hand, the sharper the ideas for my next endeavour become. The sleep-deprived state in which most things get written

is probably when I am most lucid. But when I finally get to go to bed, with the characteristic super wide eyes and faint dizziness, all of it seeps out of mind.

As the adrenaline leaves me, so does every good and worthy idea. I wake up to nothing but fuzziness and a particular feeling of uneasiness that I have forgotten something important. It often feels as if things got jumbled up during my brief hibernating spell, and I put it down to the need for a break from my laptop screen and the books. The frustration starts mounting when sorting out thoughts seems to become a task verging on the impossible. There is always a sense that I am on the very brink of coherency, because I would know that I had had it before. I tidy my desk. And then I get out my coloured pens (and sometimes a new notebook, depending on the scale of the impending piece). With the road to hell being paved with good intentions the way it is, I eventually switch on my laptop again, and open a new document. I still don't have anything concrete, but putting the date into the header and the page number into the footer serves to fill me with resolve - which quickly gives way to a feeling of accomplishment when I save the thing. And then, I log on to Facebook... and ASOS for good measure. After a day of scrolling down my newsfeed and saving a variety of structured handbags 'for later,' I decide to start writing something, just to get going. This is it.

In an attempt to empty myself of the white noise that deafens me, I write. I write of nothing, numbly, in the blind pursuit of meaning.

The silence, the real silence, the one which is not composed of silenced words, of possible thoughts, [has] a voice. (Blanchot, 1988, p. 90)

It all boils down to inspiration. I am not certain as to which moment exactly I refer to by that term. On the one hand, one could say that one is inspired at the moment when s/he manages to hit upon the subject which truly interests them and which is, at the same time, relevant. For me, I think inspiration is more of a mood than an instance... it is probably that precious window during which words truly flow, when thought thinks itself. Sometimes, I almost believe that the subject itself does not even matter all that much. I speak of the minute when the words write themselves, when thought is not fully pre-meditated. I find myself thinking about writing, essentially, about thinking itself. "I [make] a supreme effort to keep outside myself, as near as possible to the place of beginnings," (Blanchot, 1988, p. 97). How is it that words fail me when I need them most? How is it that I find nothing upon which to settle my attention when I really need to? I try to think a bit more, even as it all starts going a bit blurry around the edges. Why do I want to write in the first place; what are my motivations? Why is it so difficult to stall my mind a little and zoom in on one particular thought? Why are my thoughts chasing themselves, the threads becoming undone? What do I do with this tangled mess? Am I scared?

"I understood that she was passionately searching out the cause of her discomfort, and when she saw that there was nothing abnormal [...], she was seized with terror," (Blanchot, 1988, p. 100). The rain freaks me out a little. When it refuses to stop, all night long, it makes me quietly anxious. The sound of it pelting down

relentlessly brings to mind a familiar strangeness: a tension in the muscles that produces a deep shiver all over, a vague feeling of an expectation that is never fulfilled. Nothing gains an air of tangibility. It is as if I keep waiting for something to happen. Even when the sun starts to rise and light takes over the night, there still remains a particular emptiness, a lack of meaning perhaps. A sort of disorientation settles in; a defamiliarisation that renders the old new, at once robbing it of any sense. Then, just like that, there comes that instance at which I stop trying. Then, I understand. The minute I give up on my efforts to structure meaning, I sort of see the whole picture for a second and the misty haze clears, if only for a while. And that one brief moment is enough: it justifies the before and crystallises the after, making it all worthwhile. Then, it flows... until it exhausts itself of words once more.

To write: to refuse to write - to write by way of this refusal. So it is that when he is asked for a few words, this alone suffices for a kind of exclusion to be decreed, as though he were being obliged to survive.  
(Blanchot, 1995, p. 10)

## ∞ **References**

Blanchot, M 1995, *The writing of the disaster*, trans. A Smock, University of Nebraska Press, USA.

Blanchot, M 1988, *Thomas the obscure*, trans. R Lamberton, Station Hill Press, USA.