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what if all this made sense?

a caffeinated inquiry in 5 parts, 9 installments

gw raspberry
the old school house
yarker ontario



[this may or may not be a draft copy]

writing matters 1, shards of anne sexton

*The business of words keeps me awake.
I am drinking brown cocoa,
That warm brown mama.*

*I would like a simple life
Yet all night I am laying
Poems away in a long box ...*

*All night dark wings
Flopping in my heart.
Each an ambition bird. ♪*

writing matters 2, goldberg variations

*I think the secret
yearning here is, how do we*

encounter our own

*minds? We are searching
for the core of our lives; our
culture intuits that writing,*

*that ancient activity,
might be a
pathway.²*

writing matters 3, to the motion ...

*Stay awake, keep
moving. Clinging to the raft
won't help.³*

writing matters 4, difficulty and ease

Why does it have to be so difficult?

Writing is thinking
out loud on paper.

The more we write the more
we are asked to consider our thoughts

and our thoughtmaking
processes. This is not

necessarily a comfortable process, nor is it necessarily
an uncomfortable process. It simply is: a process.

We create our own
invitation, an invitation into

ourselves: within/without
with others with careful

consideration and a certain
recklessness.

So, what are we: thinking?
These thoughts: vapour trails that make

for curious fascinating
skywriting. Write them

down: we become
what we pay attention to. Write

them down. Always
and forever learning

to trust our own thoughts, learning
to trust our own minds, hearts.

The bodies that house the beating
hearts. All this time, all this way,

always returning, always starting

again, starting

over. There is no shame
in ink given over to make such thought visible.

What appears in the guise of intimacy
and reveals us as persons negotiating

the personal also becomes
the collective building itself with

and without us. The signposts can throw us off
the trail. Pointing the way, pointing

the way. Distracting us with the obvious:
You are here.

Learning to trust
our own minds. Learning

simply, to trust. Ever and always,
intrigue involved, a maze, perhaps,

or a labyrinth thrown
in for good measure. Beginnings

that imagine
endings. Endings that don't.

Writing is thinking out.
Loud. Writing is a form of

inquiry. Writing is
inquiry. Writing is

inquiry. Writing inquiry.
Writing is.

*Why does it have to be so difficult?
Why would we want it any easier?*

writing matters, 5

...this is my research, my act of fiction, an act of passion. [4](#)

what matters, installation #1

So you want to write
a Song but the tune emerges
as a business memo, the lyrics faxed

one day late.
It's the same. It's the Same
for everything: Everything.

You want this Thing.
What is it?
Why must you have it?

Who is it for?

[And who recalls beauty as the crumpled
note in your back pocket?] So much

to remember that is worth
forgetting. Why? Why now?
Language can't touch without one of us

getting hurt. This doesn't mean Stop.
No, it means go. Accept translation as your first
language. Architecture will invite itself

between the covers and under
your skin and into your veins.
Milk and honey. Love or Money. Form

and function. Parallel park enough times
and your poems will fit
into the tiniest spaces. [Your

dissertation proposal
will receive its own
approval.]

The mixed metaphor promises revelation. Committee
members eventually come to recognize movement
as that which takes place below the surface.

Invoke ritual: spawn
upstream, smoke for clarity. Consult no Style
manual. Notice light at any hour. Be willing.

Change your strings—
for rehearsals, even. Bend
sideways. Stand

tall. Place all anger in
the margins, then change your cartridge.
Make only enough copies.

Footnote regrets. Work from the inside
out while skating backwards. Watch
for Openings. Offer invitation(s).

Write the word 'defense' on a pink
slip. Try not to think of your children
at times like this. The urgency of idle love.

Whole days spent kissing
the backs of their necks and whispering
their hair into poems. Try not to use the word

'precious' in your talk
of Methodology.
The rain can fall

harder and it
will. Don't confuse feelings
of hope and clarity with songs sung

just out of your range.
Nurture cliché: work with it, make it
your own best friend.

Count on nothing, depend
on others. Stand on shoulders for different
perspectives. Love tallness for the view.

How willing are you
to be hurt?
Follow the least likely

plot line but do not under *any* circumstance
tug on the thread that seems most likely
to give way.

Having Faith and being Faithful
are two completely different
epistemologies.

The first chapter may in fact be your last.
Writing words down and asking them to stay
will surely tire you out.

[Make good use of exhaustion.]

Liner notes are fine but don't expect
we'll use them
wisely.

I *really* am trying to talk about why
it's important for you to record
your First Album. It certainly can't be

about the diploma or
having your picture on the dust
jacket.

What matters? Can you
finish the task without
knowing?

what else matters, installation #2

What happens if you don't
write it down? [And if you do,
do you expect to get it right
the first time?]

Might crayons better serve
your purpose? Imagine irony
moving across the skyline, cynicism
moving after it, both receding.

Playful: the sun
not only being able to afford
but also enjoy the drop
below the horizon.

[What else matters.]

How alone are you
in pursuing what solitude might expect?
This *is* for you, after all, and yet as one begins
to recognize *this* face of writing it has moved beyond

the one: ah, lower case transcendence ...
What words to choose? There are so many, so
many, so many, so many. What principle, what
theory, religion, archetype, conceptualization?

Trust, faith, patience. Each mean nothing but:
trust, faith, patience. Someone else's offerings.
Careful, we move now into knowing ...
Better yet: The Art of Not Knowing.
Making good use of what is just beyond
our knowing. Working the wheel
until there is some sense
of edgy comfort that begets more knowing

knowing knowing knowing knowing
knowingknowingknowing.
Knowing there is so much
more just beyond

our knowing. A moment arm. A playground
slide or swing: close, far, close, far. Close.
But is it necessary to be so cryptic at times
like this? Why not just come right out

and say it? A bridge. The water's
surface. Rainfall. A flash
of colour. Dreams that dissolve and come
apart. Sometimes, there is nothing

to say. There are notes and there are spaces.
Be generous with yourself and your
writing. Place duct tape on the delete
key. Don't be afraid

to make your own
theory.
There's nothing wrong
with napping, either. Perfection is so

damaging. Read things that aren't good
for you. Resist names and naming
until you're certain
you can pull the same card out

of the deck four times
out of five. Choice without
limitation, can there
be?

what else, installation #3

Isn't it just the slightest bit troubling to you

that writing only matters *after* all the words
have appeared?

Go behind the sun or wait for moonless
nights to write. Arrive complete. Show no rough
work, nor marginalia, nor unpolished thought.

Where are the writing workshops, public forums, chat
group sessions? [maybe they're held underwater, in private, or else on low rooftops, poorly drained,
black tar holding.] Clandestine.

Cry cry cry.
Coffee the stains. Drink if you must. Worry
not. What happens when you follow yourself
downstream and the meandering becomes you?

It was supposed to be the first
chapter but ended in a celebration
of the beauty of box scores taken
from browned-out newspapers in the back
shed that you should not have been burning
on this particular day but the writing
was tugging on no vein and the third shelf
from the top of your tiny study caught your eye
with a title that begged

to differ with your doctoral reading list
and low clouds and hints of some other season's arrival but in the end everything has been feeding your
questions and the permission slip you gave yourself has given you back answers and so
this is the voice that seems to work best. How did this happen?

Idleness, circumspection, detour, distraction,
dangerously imaginative forays, caffeinated visions.

Is *this* The Art
Is *this* Is *this this* The Art
Art Is *this* Is *this this this* Is *this* Is *this*
The the Art of of Writing Inquiry?
is this this Is *this* Is *this*

Doggedness, misplaced confidence, lovely naiveté, regression, open windows, wondering,
concentrated diffidence, animated theory, wandering passages.

Open to *this* or *this*?

what, installation #4

Where are you listening when you
write? What place finds you? Who will you
know? How far, how far?

Place yourself amid distraction, then remove all
spellcheck functions. How has research
claimed you?

The thin skin is the first
to be sloughed off. Ideas,
ideas are different. Permanent: a tattoo to
talk about but no one mentions the blood,

only love and the pursuit of Design
or a sentence that might last longer
than the paragraph containing it.

Look for no wisdom, now. Certainly not
here. Don't even mention voice. Not here, not
now. Courage, Vision: yes and no. (Fortitude
maybe.)

Exercise futility and then some. Maybe a cloud, maybe a group of notes played through a funnelator,
slightly delayed and some distortion for effect.

What if all this made sense? Isn't that what
we all hope for? To understand. To be
understood. Insights exchanged, passions
tested under laboratory conditions. But

all this time alone can't be good
for you. Line breaks cutting you off mid
sentence. Playing chess by yourself, no one
to even stare you down or help put away all
the pieces.

Writing researches like this
all the time, sometimes
without witness.

else, installation #5

When words are what we pay attention to, so much
can go wrong. Things fly apart.
Leave you staring at the space where
meaning wants to be. Used to be.

We never mean for this to happen but
it does. It does. Stare at the words you've gathered
together. All the work required. Meaning less
and less and less sometimes. Language demands
more and more and more. And more.

It's a landmine of clichés: *one step
at a time*, only. Until you don't get it enough
times that it comes around and then
asks that you repeat yourself,
differently.

Research writes itself like this all the time
sometimes. All the time all the time
all the time time time time sometimes.
Witness it and remember
to keep a back-up
copy.

more what, installation #6

Should patience be mentioned? or
perseverance strength humility
serendipity courage vulnerability
fortitude delivery fear honesty

generosity invocation. A calling?

less what, installation #7

A tentative manifesto for those pursuing graduate work:

Yes, you are willing to bend.

*No, you are not willing
to be bent out of shape.*

more or less what, installation #8

Some will be
disappointed.

You, too, likely (I know
I am).

It seems there is less and less
to say just at the point where more
and more is required.

Questionable fulcrums feed the constant
sense of disorientation.

There are so many
sources, the flow will never
falter but it will always be
in the finding, in the
telling.

Some will be
disappointed.

matters, installation #9

I wish for you,
your cello
slowing canyon traffic
to a whisper.

Wind blowing
your spring skirts
open and then
what we pay attention to
becomes unhinged, wind
moving. Whisper traffic
slowing. Slowing.

Cool wind warms us.
Wishing becomes whisper and then
we pay attention. The cello like-day,
wood-warmed cool canyon.

Interior stretches, slowing,
becoming attention. Spring
traffic, open and slowing.
We wish we wish.

What now? When

there is nothing
but ...

¹ Ann Sexton (1999). *The Complete poems of Anne Sexton*. New York: First Mariner Books. [taken from her poem “The Ambition Bird”]

² taken from Natalie Goldberg (2000) *Thunder and lightning: Cracking open the writer’s craft*. New York: Bantam Books. p. 44.

³ from the foreword to *The art of writing inquiry*. (2000) L. Neilsen, A.L. Cole, J.G. Knowles (Eds.) *The art of writing inquiry*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Backalong Books.

⁴ taken from Rishma Dunlop’s essay “Boundary Bay” in *The art of writing inquiry*.

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