

Dear Hanna,

Thank you for your beautiful letter. I have read it over and over since you sent it last week, and in the process I've thought about how much of our friendship has been formed through written words. From the start our connection has been intellectual and debauched, romantic and platonic, professional and personal. I came to know you so well, for instance, in the process of helping you edit the first essay you ever wrote in English. "Writing," as you quote Hélène Cixous as having said, "forms a passageway between two shores."

Your letter also quotes Sara Ahmed, whom I have never read, but who I have heard much about from you. "Bodies acquire orientation by repeating some actions over others." I write to you from Los Angeles tonight. For the past nine months I have been in constant motion, never in any place for more than a few weeks at a stretch. Peripateticism as reorientation. I'll see you in Stockholm in eleven days.

There is a mode of feminist genealogy I learned about recently called *affidamento*. Put forth in the early 1980s by the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, *affidamento* riffs on Luce Irigaray's politics of sexual difference and calls for the construction of a female symbolic. How can we talk in other ways, you ask in your letter, when we talk to one another? The seed of *affidamento*, which Teresa de Lauretis translates as *entrustment*, is formed between two women who have disparate relationships to power. In this vertical interpretation of power differentials, the mother-daughter formation becomes the metaphorical root for a public and political collectivity of difference.¹

I am wary of pressing too hard into my gloss of an idea that emerged from a context so different than our current moment. To say the least, what did they mean by "two women"? Our generation's concept of sexual difference, I would venture to guess, is far more variegated than theirs. What can we learn from them though? What value is there in continuing the feminist riff and rippling on forward through time chewing on particles of language formed in an era just barely preceding our own? You write in your letter, "My purpose in posing all these questions is not to find a path to answers. Rather, I long for the simple act of how to go looking for it."

The word *entrustment* charms me. I trust you. I entrust my love and my ideas and my energy to you. I receive your friendship and your thoughts and your attention with respect and care. We learn so much from one another. We hold each other up. We bear, endure, sustain, and support. Our trust – our friendship – is multivalent. An asterisk appears in my mind. Could this little star be our "female symbolic"? A cluster of lines shooting out from a

center made solid by their convergence. A symbol used in writing to indicate an omission of letters or words, to denote hypothetical or unattested linguistic forms and various arbitrary meanings.² It is an open-ended symbol rife with possibilities.

*Our birth is the confluence of language and sex
As a result of a human desire to transcribe on ourselves
The story of our past and future.*

The above is spoken by the steady female voice narrating Sara Magenheim's recent video, "Slow Zoom Long Pause." Life itself as the written word. Later in the video the woman asks, "Can you think of a thing that itself is a symbol too?" She answers her own question without hesitation: "A."

Sara Magenheim will be traveling from New York to Stockholm to join us on June 15th. Sara, a dear friend of mine, is an artist whose practice traverses sculpture and video, collage and sound, writing and performance. We have been deep in conversation (both privately and publicly³) for more than a year now, and the invitation by c.along marks our first opportunity to collaborate among a live audience. To quote again from her video, "We two do not look alike, but we are classified as the same because of the way we sound." "It's our opportunity to unlearn the lessons we didn't know we were receiving."

Inspired by the concept of entrustment, Sara and I have begun compiling knowledge passed forward to us by various older women in our lives. Teachers and lovers, mentors and friends. A personal epistemology made public and therefore political.

I can't wait to talk with you, and with yours.

Love,
Corrine

1) *Italian Feminist Theory and Practice: Equality and Sexual Difference*; edited by Graziella Parati and Rebecca J. West. Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002

2) Merriam Webster

3) "Spotlight: Slow Zoom Long Pause: Sara Magenheim in Conversation with Corrine Fitzpatrick." *Cura Magazine* (Rome) No. 19, Winter 2015