Silence, Dignity and Forgiveness

“To live through the days sometimes you moan like deer. Sometimes you sigh. The world says stop that.” You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior, and these identities, you stop. “Another sigh. Another stop that.” Because the world does not want to hear it. They do not want your narrative, your exhaustion, your emotion. Your emotion breeds discomfort. “Moaning elicits laughter, sighing upsets. Perhaps each sigh is drawn into existence to pull in, pull under, who knows; truth be told, you could no more control those sighs than that which brings the sighs about.” And yet you must. You must stifle and confine and silence. But is it you who is doing the silencing? Does a double injustice make a positive? Do three left transgressions make a right? Pg 59

“The sigh is the pathway to breath; it allows breathing.” It is the single most human thing there is. Is it our breath that ties our humanity together? Or is it the forced commonality of it that divides us? “That’s just self-preservation.” Inhaling and exhaling. Unhindered. Uninhibited. Unassisted. Unnoticed until it is amplified. “No one fabricates that.” But should you crave more air; more than your fair share, more than what is absolutely necessary for survival, you ask too much. “You sit down, you sigh. You stand up, you sigh.” You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior and these identities. You who has these emotions and you who knows not how to express them except for to sigh. “The sighing is a worrying exhale of an ache. You wouldn’t call it an illness; still it is not the iteration of a free being. What else to liken yourself to but an animal, the ruminant kind.” The kind that should not sigh. The kind that no one pities. The kind that must be overlooked in order for us to push forth with our blinkered dogmatic existence. Pg. 60

Who are you to sigh? To scream, to rage, to fight, to falter? You are no one. Because you cannot conform. You are other. You are what the world doesn’t want to be reminded of. You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior, and these identities. Your sighs remain unwanted. Ahistorical. Undignified.

You cannot possibly posses dignity. Dignity must be earned. And you have no past from which to earn it. No resume of accomplishments, no title of distinguishes. You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior, and these identities, you cannot have a history that allows you dignity, because you hold no history. Others hold it for you. Instead of you. Over you.

“You like to think memory goes far back through remembering was never recommended. Forget all that, the world says. The world’s had a lot of practice.” Your body does not deserve to remember. Someone else will remember it for you. “No one should adhere to the facts that contribute to narrative, the facts that create lives.” Because the facts are only as good as the world’s reception of them. Of the world’s perception of them. A perception that is far too often the comfortable narrative that forgets your history and replaces it with clean, linear sentiments. Cold, rationality rather than feelings. But, “To your mind, feelings are what create a person, something unwilling, something wild, vandalizing whatever the skull holds. Those sensations form a someone.” A someone to whom, though? You are not allowed to have those feelings, to recall the genesis of those emotions. The spark that caused you pain, or joy, or sorrow, or suffering or relief. That is not yours. So are you no one? Are you just barely less than a someone? “The headaches begin then. Don’t wear sunglasses in the house, the world says, though they soothe, soothe sight, soothe you.” You have nothing to be soothed of. The world has deemed it so. Pg 61

“The world is wrong. You can’t put the past behind you. It’s buried in you; it’s turned your flesh into its own cupboard. Not everything remembered is useful but it all comes from the world to be stored in you.” And it fills you up. And you think you are full. You are at capacity. But minutes bleed to hours, and hours bleed to days, and still there is more. There is nowhere else to put it now. So you move some things around, readjust, realign, and you find just a little bit more space. A corner you have not yet filled. But you wonder how many corners are left. “Who did what to whom on which day?” This you place behind your right kneecap. “Who said that? She said what?” There’s room in your left elbow for these. “What did he just do? This you place just behind your right eye socket. “Did she really just say that? He said what? What did she do? There’s space in between the toes on your left foot for these. “Did I hear what I think I heard? Did that just come out of my mouth, his mouth, your mouth?” There should be some room under your left thumb nail. Is there? How much room is left? “Do you remember when you sighed?” Do you remember every transgression committed against you? You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior, and these identities. Do you remember because it fills you up? Or because you must carry it with you, looking, searching, seeking, hoping, there is just a little bit more room in your right hip socket. In your left calf. In your right armpit. Pg 63

“Do you remember when you sighed?”

The world remembers. The world remembers when you sighed. Because that is not allowed. You mustn’t do that. Stop. Stop remembering. The world will do it for you. And they will be selective. Picking out only the good parts. Only the comfortable parts. Only the parts that fit their narrative. Not yours. You are not yours. You are theirs. And you mustn’t remember that.

Let it fill you up. Cram it in. But don’t remember.

“The commentator wonders if the player will be able to put this incident aside.” No. He doesn’t wonder. He hopes. Because if you can’t put it aside, then you force him to acknowledge your history. You, you who has this body, with this exterior, and this interior, and these identities, you think your past has a role to play. But I assure you it does not. “No one can get behind the feeling that caused a pause in the match, not even the player trying to put her feelings behind her, dumping ball after ball into the net.” Stop sighing. Breathe. In and out. Inhale and Exhale. Nothing more, nothing less. You don’t deserve more. Stop. “Though you can retire with an injury, you can’t walk away because you feel bad.” That does not fit the narrative. That is not dignified. That is not…stop. Pg 65

“Feel good.” Forget “Feel better.” Forget. “Move forward.” Forget “Let it go.” Forget “Come on.” Forget “Come on.” Forget “Come on. In due time the ball is going back forth over the net. Now the sounds can be turned back down. Your fingers cover you eyes, press them deep into their sockets-too much commotion, too much for a head remembering to ache.” Forget. “Move on.” Forget “Let it go.” Forget “Come on.” Forget. Pg 66

Let it fill you up. Cram it in. Now forget it.

Epilogue

Forget, forgive, repent, release, remember, no don’t do that. Don’t remember. That’s not yours.

It is not yours because you are an ahistorical body. So how does an ahistorical body forgive? When the moments that must be forgiven have been erased with their past? When the moments that must be forgiven are so often moments of discomfort, discomfort that the world has no desire to remember or acknowledge. And what are you forgiving? The dominant narrative that society imposes on you? The singular moment a transgression occurred? The person who committed that transgression and their whole person? And should you decide to forgive, do you surrender power or glean it?

If you forgive an act of bigotry against an ahistorical body, against your body, do you forgive the affront on your morality, on your person? Would that not relinquish your power? Relinquish your citizenship? Or can forgiveness also be an act of power? Can forgiving a wrong, instead of silencing a past, acknowledge that there is a context to the wrongness, a past that must be recognized, and human being at the receiving end of that wrong. I posit that to forgive is to claim a citizenship that must be accredited because it forces into the light the notion that there is something to forgive, and a past that is wrapped up in the pain that that wrong has caused.

This logic yields to the question, however, of how to forgive when those who have wronged you don’t want your forgiveness and therefore refuse to acknowledge that a wrong has been done. Reinforcing instead of dismantling ahistoricism? I suggest that it depends on what you hope to get out of forgiving, and how much power you wish to retain or create.

Forgiveness can be a powerful catalyst for change, for initiating an understanding of commonality and humanity. But in order for change to occur, we so often must oblige by the dominant narrative. Especially if forgiveness is politicized or sensationalized for the purpose of generating change. In this sense, forgiveness walks the line of both acknowledging a history and erasing a history, as it creates its own narrative within the normative. It simultaneously brings to light that a wrong has been done, while burying the rage that that wrong invokes. You allow others to remember with you, but still, that past is not fully yours and can never again be claimed as yours. Because once forgiveness is public, it is ours. And therein lies the risk. It is up to the individual to weigh the benefits.

Questions to consider

Does forgiveness give or rescind power? And how do we view forgetting our past, erasing our past and regretting our past through the lens of forgiveness. What external pressures are acting upon us in our acts of forgiveness, towards ourselves and others, and who deems our acts of forgiveness appropriate, dignified if you will.?

Ideas

* Forgiveness
* Utility of the past
  + Utility only if it belongs to an historical body.
  + Non-utility should it belong to an a-historical body
* Does forgiveness equal an erasure of the past, or a reconciliation of the past?