

anti-statement

Here's the truth: I take it all back.

All the syllables, each line, each dip of punctuation, all the consonants and vowels, every serif. Let's pretend I never wrote them. My poetic statement, my desire to write or not write, to leave insect scratches on heavily processed wood pulp, let us call it nothing, a zero sum.

Whether I do or do not write a single line is temporal. No matter how effective a word or image might be, its power and value fades as soon as the memory of it leaves the reader's head. Some echoes may last longer than others but the echo is still trapped in the fogginess of temporal life, in the space between breaths.

An absence is simply an absence.

The anti-statement speaks for nothing. Says no words but rather hums a low-grade fever of a tune in which you cannot catch distinguishing features. We all write in 4/4 time, stumbling up and down the rectangles before us, collapsing their shoulders with our tilted paleographies, dating ourselves by our generational slant, by the preformed alphabet soup of kindergarten teachers. Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta Echo Foxtrot Hotel India Juliet Kilo Lima. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Let us pretend I never wrote anything. That you never heard any of it or read any of it or remembered any of it. Let us pretend we are illiterate. The words I'm typing have no meaning. All we see are the edgelines of curves and sharps. We may note the symmetry of the word processor's formulaic typesetting. We may look at the depth or shade of ink.

If this paper were physical object rather than a digital one, we might examine it for flaws, a watermark or an unusual colour, although we'd likely be holding a machine poured, machine set, machine cut slice of alabaster. The sheet would be the same as any other sheet in the printer's paper tray. Doppelganger substrates. This sameness might be reassuring. Let us pretend we are anonymous cellulosic material.

The words I type are only contrast. Placement might tell us their importance. Or someone literate might read them for us; could explain the symbols and turn all these flat angles into speech.

Maybe we will languish in a pile of similar pages or better ones. Kick the clock hand forward several decades and our sheet will yellow and become brittle. Or maybe it was recycled and remade into notepads or shredded years ago for a bird cage lining. Or maybe water damaged or mould damaged or rodent gnawed or insect venommed. Even if someone were to find us, there would be little meaning to an isolated page, to stringed words floating without provenance.

A snowflake loses coherence in a snowstorm. Whatever beauty or uniqueness it may possess, this will be lost in the rageful obliteration of too much else. What does one poem, one page, one

poet matter when there are many? (Although if we extend the too-cute metaphor to include frozen landscapes, the delicacy of snow threaded across the horizon, black ice crazed onto pavement, is there beauty in the oblivion, in being nothing but still part of something larger?)

This is an anti-statement, something premised as refusal. Poets may be magicians but they can also be liars. So which do I believe, statement or anti-statement? Neither. Both. I negate the negation but white out still beckons.

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