Last Year at Betty and Bob's: A Novelty
Sher Doruff

Published by Punctum Books

Doruff, Sher.
Last Year at Betty and Bob's: A Novelty.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/84177

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2917359
As the weeks pass, Bette B has resigned herself to manifest change at its most indisputable. She can cover the blotchy patches of thickening hair on her legs and arms with appropriate clothing. Or take a razor to it. Or visit a wax bar. Anxiety has become a permanent condition peppered with frequent scratch attacks on her own flesh and any material object in her vicinity. Her tactile curiosity intensifies in pace with her sensitivity to hearing and smell. Even the way she moves around her apartment is exaggerated now as she dashes to the toilet and darts to the door. The pronounced skittish tics in her head and shoulders are of the wary type, on perpetual look out.

RatTat operates like many fashionista ornaments: the piercings, jewelry, henna tattoos, and accoutrements of urban costume. Millennials are particularly lavish, at least to her face, with their kudos. As one put it, “the elegant calligraphic gesture of the spectral strokes in tandem with the brilliant dynamic flux of fluorescence is so dope”. Though some peripheral friends evasively distance themselves, she feels more adored than abhorred. For now, she keeps to herself as much as possible and waits. Expectant.

The journal she’s been keeping documents her encounters with the variegated realities of daily existence. It’s
proved to be both a solace and a surprise. The 24-hour cocktail of waking life and somni-life explodes in the brainspill that rushes from immobilized REM atonia to hyperactive scribble every morning as she jolts to life. For 178 consecutive days she’s recorded this in-between spacetime. Like well-kneaded dough, she folds futures and pasts, thinking and the unthought, into every entry. Absently flipping through the entries, she re-reads an anecdote from a conference excursion last September:

*I’m on a train from Copenhagen to Aarhus, riding backwards from the ruins into the future like Walter Benjamin’s *Angelus Novus*. “His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread.” Sitting opposite me is a twenty-something Danish man in a black zip-up all-weather jacket, immersed in the glare of his laptop. Many people refuse to take a seat on the train facing the vantage of their departure, backs to the future. It disorients, gives a sensation of unease, or nausea. These folks insist on facing forward to meet what’s forthcoming head on as it passes them by. Personally, I’ve never had an uncomfortable visceral
experience while riding backwards and often prefer a good long look at what I’m leaving behind.

This brief passage strikes her given the intensity of “changling” perceptions these past few months. Other notably banal passages produce similar intrigue. Lurking between the lines of automatic writing lays her quest for a peek at the imperceptible movement of her favorite mystery being, the dark precursor. It’s a topic she frequently alludes to though it’s clear she hasn’t formed a coherent idea of this thing. In the very first journal entry for instance, she reads from an extended reverie on the relevance of dream states. In her near illegible script, she writes that this figure of the dark precursor: tends towards simultaneously generating divergent histories multiplicities relational events. The becomings impulsions of past child and future adult are overlaid in superposition [potential], in quantum effect ... here, there, everywhere, nowhere, before, after ... micro-perceptions swish and snag in the folding. As the dark precursor goes about its surreptitious business, shit happens and then you die. Events flash and pop as PAAF! and BOOM! and then ... emergence emerges as something different. What the fuck!

Leafing through the scratchy traces of last year, she finds these offhand conjectures amusing and oddly reassuring though she doubts she fully grasps her own musings. What is this thing, or no-thing she calls potential anyway? She thinks it oscillates between stuff, between PAAFs and BOOMs, reds and blues, tires and gravel, desire and pain. If she tries to pin potential down to a definition it’s no longer what it might become. Her brain hurts, her face is swollen, her feet cramp. Strewn with piles of paper clippings, cut-outs, magazines, moldy cheese chunks, and cracker dust, she dives beneath the duvet on her futon, spilling the guts of reconnaissance and sustenance around the room. Opening her eyes to absorb the diffused light passing through the paisley patterned linen
of her bedware, she obliquely feels “potential” affects the nebulous activity that communicates difference between the different. Finding a piece of yesterday’s croissant in her hair, she snacks, re-considering the curiosity that is the unseen force convolving dark matter and dark energy into a palpable magical, alchemical protagonist. Drum-roll, cymbal crash, voilà! Bring on the black-cape shebang of The Dark Precursor!

Still tracing the spermy, teardrop pattern on the bedcover, she recalls how she once caricatured this black-caped figure as a faux Marvel Comics superheroine with the nick ZeNeZ, a palindrome for quirky zigzagging qualities. The tipsy middle “N” snakes between a Zen dynamic and a French nose. She had attempted to create a conceptual comic strip but eventually abandoned the experiment. Under cover this morning, it’s the nosey reference that tickles her immediate attention again.

What was meant as an epistemological irony has become a weird portent. Scrambling from her bed she rifles through a stack of plastic binders on a bookshelf and pulls out a laser print of the first and only issue of her zine – ZeNeZ and the RE[a]IDShift Boom! Reading through the obscure thought bubbles, a factive mix of science and poetry, she recalls with a start, the philosopher’s muted warning: “the dark precursor is not a friend.”
If you blot out sense and sound? What do you hear?

"The concept of energy (called Ki in Japanese) in the meridians lines is defined by kyo and jitsu. The two concepts are very similar very yin and yang. Kyo is the cold root of deep rooted energy [...] while jitsu is the condition of excesses energy..." (Masunaga, 1977, p3)

jitsu: high frequency abundance. Tends towards the blueish in the visible light spectrum.
kyo: low frequency emptiness. Tends towards the reddish in the visible light spectrum.
A nose is a knows
is a noise is a noise

Nose : Knows :: Red : Read

A LONG DRESS.
“What is this current that makes machinery, that makes it crackle, what is this current that presents a long line and a necessary waist.

....