

Hollywood Notebook by Wendy Ortiz

written by Alex Kalamaroff | May 27, 2015



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The day as a constellation of quiet moments: snippets and skraggles of thought that suffuse us while we wait for the bus or stroll along the ruddy sidewalk or tree-shaded trail—just another day, another night, one more step onward, one more laugh, a last drink before we head to bed and start it all over again.

In *Hollywood Notebook*, Wendy C. Ortiz explores the daily ramifications of the joys, melancholy, and gratitude it's so easy to forget we feel with every breath. Ortiz is concerned with regular stuff, our walks and waits at the bus stop, the splendors and hardships of the quotidian. She's been back in L.A. for a while now and spends her time "riding the Metro five days out of seven to a job, wondering about love and obsessing about sex and publishing and what will happen next."

Reading *Hollywood Notebook* is like spending an intimate afternoon with an old friend, where the devastations of time and our own guardedness no longer rule, where our favorite songs sound just as good as we remember. Ortiz quotes her friend S. about the need to "somehow carve out a little space against the cruelties of the world." And every short chapter here has that quality to it: as a carved-out little sanctuary, a halcyon amidst the hubbub.

Ortiz is deeply invested in how we make sense of these quiet moments and how we communicate their impossible significance. Whether it's "[a]nother night of drinking, back at Ye Rustic," or contemplation of "the places where my soles have weathered from the repetitive pacing," she is always wondering how to give due diligence to what surrounds us, to the people and places we cherish.

Ortiz begins one chapter by writing: "The sense of rushing around and only living to get somewhere else." This is the challenge. Like most of us, Ortiz is caught between the nagging pull of the possible and the desire to find comfort in what we have. As a "writer [who has] this job that's about not-writing," Ortiz is constantly thinking about the next steps in her artistic career while constantly being constrained by other obligations, namely the need to pay rent and go to work on Monday.

The pain accumulates day to day, payday to payday. And what should we do, Ortiz asks, how can we make meaning out of all this pain? The break-ups and heartbreaks, the death of Willis the cat, rejection by an online lit journal that calls Ortiz's writing "fine enough," the inevitable falling-aways, and

“the palpable struggle” to make the world an (at least mildly) better place—how do we manage this?

Here is chapter sixteen in its entirety:

And if you're the type of person who likes to sit with your pain and work it, knead it into a ball you can throw, more power to you.

And if you're the type of person who hates to sit with her pain and wants to throw it out the window in its unknecedness, its messy sticky goo state, I want to give you a compass to lead you back to where the pain came from.

And if you prefer to drink too many beers in Elysian Park then take two hits off a joint and beg your party date to keep talking as he drives you home so you have something to concentrate on, then barely make it upstairs where you'll puke three times then maybe just maybe be able to come despite all the booze an drugs loaded up in your blood, well,

I call you sister, twin.

For immense pain is a part of our stories too. Of course, Ortiz charts more banal problems as well. “The time spent with friends threatens the time I spend with books,” she says, describing a dilemma we've all faced at one time or another.

Yet there is solace to be found everywhere—not a way to negate the pain, but a way to place our pain in a broader context, into the giant rainbow tapestry of life.

A little generosity of spirit goes a long way. Let your days be filled with these quiet moments, Ortiz encourages. Carve out a little space so each skraggle of thought can radiate. Spend time with loved ones or by yourself. Seek camaraderie with nature, with “the ocean who's known me forever.” And always, always, hold onto this: “remembering to stop and stare, remembering to breathe deep,” remembering everything we cherish and share, here in our hearts where each loud beat is overflowing with consequence.