



Dynamics

Georgia Lin

The folds in my sheets feel different
They contain the ticking seconds of a twelve hour day
This sick feels different.

I know enough about my swirling, inky mind
to grasp
at the gaps –

Gaps of compassion, joy, pleasure

Staccato

 Marcato

 Crescendo

Falling into the subway grates of my sweet acquaintance,
dearest, dull pain.

Articulating illness(es) fills me with guilt,
the waves of the Pacific that I long for
crashing into my fragile sternum,
indoctrinated with my cowardice.

The good Asian girl is submissive,
she is quiet,
keeps her pain wrapped in thin sheets of rice paper
bound in fumes of soft star anise,



wondering if her ache would dissipate
if she went home.

Boulders do not care if you fall,
it cares only if you hit your head,
only when the blood spreads like varicose veins
around the mossy rock.

S(mothering) and raising sickness

Staccato

Marcato

Crescendo

It wants to pacify me,
contain me in a heatwave,
Until I suffocate from recluse
Until I suffice with apathy.

It is too hot to collapse
so instead I fall inwards.
Fold my vessels into a bowline knot
until I can no longer taste sores,
Wrap self pity and menthol balm around my dry ankles
until I stay still.

I can only trust the existence of cyclones
who love to swallow my enjoyment,
demean my resistance,
twist my truths into being worth nothing more
than what is bought for me,

what sacrifices have been made for me.

My brain is a resonant gong,
surrounded by incense,
fogging my senses.

My pain presumptuously present
It is sweat and dug nails, imprinted on sullen face
Painting on my pores is release
from ignorance.

The folds in my sheets mirror the folds in my stomach
I bleed in sighs and stinging breath,
Staccato

Marcato

Crescendo

into heaves, confined in thought and memory
Cover eye bags with doe concealer
Hide puffed face with tangerine cream.

My roots are loose,
the silk string ties of my nerves
sliced by change into ribbons.
The most maddening hours of Sick
lets the sting survive for epochs.

Crumbling from scattered world,
frail time,
Sick treads into glimmering ponds, soft eggshells
waiting for soles.



I wait for a symphony to rescue me:

Staccato

Marcato

Crescendo

I look and seek and crawl and gravel for catharsis
by any means I can grasp.

mouth in hands,
stuttered breath,
fists in hair,
pendulum body
but

I cannot stop the waste of good, alive time with faulty systems.

A fragile spring

Brings about new sheets, new folds
For what is made by me is paramount

Staccato

Marcato

Crescendo

cannot contain me.

It must hold my fragilities,
pains and pores
temporal dissonances,
for I hope I can make
joys.

Joys to transcend gentle, damning memories

fighting for recognition

When it should be the daisies on my windowsill

Bursting with colour

that deserves my presence.

Critical commentary

Dynamics explores embodied moments of pain from my lived experiences of depression, anxiety, and panic disorders as a diasporic Taiwanese immigrant woman of colour. It represents my desire for care and draws from disability justice activist Mia Mingus' concept of access intimacy, understood to be "that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs" (Mingus, 2011). In the poem, I repeatedly reference musical dynamics of staccato, marcato, and crescendo, which symbolize the quickening of heartbeats and the "flight or fight" response triggered by panic attacks. I am also interested in the body as a site of both care and harm, for example, in stanzas where I write about skin and skincare as a form of self-care that can contribute to further internal marginalization of pain. My work is rooted in an intersectional feminist and disability justice praxis, with disability studies scholars such as Jina B. Kim (especially her work on crip-of-colour critique), Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Smarasinha, and Mia Mingus' writings on transformative justice serve as foundations for my artistic and academic pieces. It is my hope that *Dynamics* contributes to a future where we invest in trauma-informed, culturally competent mental health care, particularly for multiply marginalized women of colour. We can simultaneously hold pain and joy as a result of mental illness, and thus we need to recognize that though sickness can blur our conceptions of time, we can imagine a future built on access intimacy and care.

References

Mingus, M. (2011). Access intimacy: The missing link. 5 May 2011. *Leaving Evidence*. [Online]. Available at: <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/> [Accessed 19 August 2022].