

Like today, for instance. I feel so close to despair, and like I'm wishing for a curse against the cursedness, a single word, or spell, that would summon a sense of future back.

And then, on days like this, gray and weirdly warm, I leave myself back from the computer, because I've been hunched forward this whole time, like a kid practicing her cursive in one of those old dot-and-times ledgerbooks. On the desk all around me sit scraps of paper: to-do notes from yesterday and the day before and today, and they're pretty much all the same.

And they're all in a scrawling kind of cursive, untaught, unthought about, smudged by the passing of my hand across the paper.

I won't spell them out here beyond a few bits (*read, write, walk dog*) but the gist is this: maybe against repetition I can use repetition. Through repetition, through routine, through these kinds of loops, I spell a daily future; I curse, hand darkening, to move forward.

Lucy Schiller

Cursed Notes

"It would be easy to lie here and say that when I was younger, before I knew how to spell, I thought the word "cursed" was actually "cursed" with the medieval-seeming pronunciation: curse. If I was (were?) a poet I could write something about "spelling" here, about how writing something out in cursive feels like casting a curse, a cursed spell.

Today, on your tube, one (you) can watch people write cursive for hours. It's soothing and willily stressful, depending on how one is (I am) already feeling. Sometimes the script is so intricate it's impossible to see what word is being written—until, with a final flourish, the fog lifts, and the word sits there beaming all its curlicues like fairy, and is illuminated.

There are many days that the world feels cursed to me, like its blasted structures are so unworkable and unbroken that they are just an insurmountable monolith of formality. On these days I find it hard to do (or create) anything. I try to remember it's a lie, that feeling.

It's rare to use cursive now, as an adult. Writing this on the computer, I find I can barely read what I'm writing, as I go—and yet there is this beautifully strange sense of unrolling elegance, of

.....
.....
waiting to seeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
what these letters are about to look like,
all joined up to one another
likethis.

In ongoing quarantine, I envy them, rubbing shoulders like that, being loopy.

What happens when I write
ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?

The cursive options that the computer "gives" me are few, and they are likely for homemade wedding invitations, which is fine. I am not sure I want to be married, let alone send out wedding invitations. I want to note here how just using cursive has instilled a formality to my writing: in the last sentence, I wrote "I'm not sure" before changing it to "I am not sure." Besides for wedding invitations, I cannot imagine another use for this blasted font (I say "blasted" but I actually really love it...), except an ironic use, maybe. This use, the one I am using right now, is not exactly ironic. It is not exactly not, either. I am interested in cursive, and why, as kids, we all had to learn it, and be graded on our proficiency in it. I was and remain left-handed. If you write cursive as a left-handed person, you draw the pad of your hand across the beauty of the lettering as it leaves you. In other words—and here is an abridged, obviously faulty theory about why so many creative people are left-handed—the entire time you are writing, you are conscious of yourself doing so. There begins, too, a birth of some kind of irony: as you work to create something beautiful, you sully yourself. From irony, or contradiction, springs interest, I think. But I'm typing this on the computer. I mean, "I am." There is no sullyng involved. If only there were: it might feel a little weightier, a little cooler. No, no. I am just typing away, in a font called "Snell Roundhand."

I feel myself reaching for ideas to appear. Structure is breaking down. This is good in many ways. But also increasingly I feel alone. Nighttime too and a half decades ago. I drew the name of a bedrock across my blanket, with my index finger, invisible, but I was convinced I would be found out, that the script was, in fact, written all over my face. The formality of it: the tender looping of the name, and the privacy in which I looped it. Your eyes do glaze over after a while, when you read cursive. This is why it's best used in short, passionate bursts: a name, the word "Joe." But cursive used to be used as a speedier way to write long passages of text. It is also, as is any kind of manual writing, a way to more deeply forward, increasingly

Relatedly (ha! This is barely related! But maybe this is how poetry works!), On the subject of writing, I absolutely longgggggg for formality. Not in my words but Under them, guiding them, pressing them forward. Narrative works towards this end, so to speak. But alas: I fear I am unwilling as time moves