

Slow Fuse of the Possible: A Memoir of Poetry and Pyschoanalysis

Kate Daniels

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Poet Kate Daniels's memoir *Slow Fuse of the Possible* is about a three-year stint in psychoanalysis, where attention to language and the fall into the unconscious are likened to poetry itself.

Daniels entered into psychoanalysis knowing that her unconscious would be plumbed, and expecting to attend sessions several times a week. Her analyst, called Ama, came to the profession in her middle age; she worked with Daniels in her first year of training. A longtime professor of creative writing and literature, Daniels acknowledges that she was a difficult patient; she knew many of the techniques and tactics used in therapy: "isn't psychoanalysis a hermeneutical practice? An exegesis of personhood." However, aside from Daniels's mastery of language, the relationship was fraught: the pair were a poor fit.

The tension between Daniels and her analyst is palpable; it grows over their time together. Daniels conveys the intense sessions in tight prose and with dramatic attentiveness. She acknowledges the connotations of each exchange, breaking down sentences and comments and making sense of how small infractions, like a misspelled name, became devastating in the context of intimate therapy. Such mistakes, she says, can be acts of negation, of erasure, pushing two people further apart.

Headed by quotes from people ranging from Emily Dickinson to psychologist Donald Winnicott that serve as metaphorical dives into their subjects, the chapters experiment with language and different lenses for processing Daniels's experiences. Her continual emphasis on language is no accident: she shows the ways in which the processes of analysis and writing mirror and inform each other, delving as they do into what's figurative and metaphorical.

Slow Fuse of the Possible is a compelling memoir about tense and turbulent experiences within an analysis relationship.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (January / February 2022)

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