

Erik Ehn

Still Small:

Contemplation in action

Then [God] said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but the LORD was not in the wind*; and after the wind an earthquake, *but the LORD was not in the earthquake*; and after the earthquake a fire, *but the LORD was not in the fire*; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

(1 Kings 19:11-13, New King James Version)

On a careful path, silence (especially collectively held) may give rise to language rooted in trust (trusting what wasn't language, and what won't be language). And then the language that arises from a shared sense of mystery, directed through a covenant free of predetermined aim, recommends a program of action that relies on care and aware interdependence.

There is a thread to follow from contemplation through creativity and into compassion. Patience in silence yields an excess that finds language; language inscribes mutuality; a language arising from an ethical, generous, and mutual silence promotes an ethic of hospitality.

A model for this practice is found in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, which adapts to a generative arts practice focused on social change.

The art practice here is playwriting, as a case.

The reflections that follow set out with academic intentions, drop into personal struggles with vocabulary, and move in the end to manifesto and its black-powder expiration into ranting, giddy, weepy and weird.

The pattern of ideas: structures fundamental to the Exercises; a rationale for translating the Exercises to the art-making process; the natural coherence of volunteered, shared silence (as on a retreat, or in an

intentional community) and creative output directed to solidarity and social healing. Language moves from a good-faith effort to say what I think and practice in an orderly way, to tanglefoot delay in a struggle with vocabulary, ending with decomposition into manifesto and black-powder expiration into ranting, giddy and uncentred.

This knot mirrors the coils of

mercy, kindness, and gratitude...
readiness, justice, and activism.

Week One – A sinner saved by Christ translated as a Writer’s Weakness as the Permeability of the Membrane

The transfer of readiness is the artist-audience compact. This poise is a school of justice, balancing reality at an indifferent point, and promoting the authentic being of all things. Justice is the *practice* of letting all things become themselves; in restorative terms, justice promotes an environment in which all things become themselves and fulfill themselves cooperatively, sharing space.

Kindness aligns with

poise, paradox, instability, and art.

Art is the middle condition of an uninterrupted energetic stream that moves between contemplation, creation, and compassion;

art is the ha of this jo-ha-kyu: all breaking; free. Art puts contemplation into action, and proffers manifesto and means for sustaining paradox in programmatic decisions.

Art is, wherever articulated, the middle term: a hermeneutic virga, rising to return and sinking to fall while resolutely achieving neither, and unable to be *only* still: the reification and dramatization of contemplation’s restlessness.

Language’s free move through forgiveness to the end of language and the return of word to its source. Fidelity to freedom is praise: repetition, rehearsal.

Art rehearses the character of a soulful stillness that brings fire joint action.

Contemplation, Creativity, and Compassionate Social Change

Over the past thirteen years I have been struggling to formulate a pedagogy that deploys silence as a tool for the making of original works of art based in an ethic of reciprocity – mutual care. At the heart of this project are silent retreats, secular and interdisciplinary, based on the Exercises. This has led to the formation of [stillwright](#) – an intentional community dedicated to offering these retreats for free, in diverse locations and formats (e.g., west Texas, Green Gulch Zen Centre north of San Francisco, online; from a day, to ten, to thirty). It began for playwrights but has moved is now open to artists of all stripe. While venue, duration and format shift, in general, days include group sessions at the top of the day where

prompts are given and materials for reflection distributed (texts, but also – kites, paper-making deckles, acorns...). Artists spend the day working (all day at in-person retreats; as-can on remote retreats). At residential retreats, we gather together again in the evening for further prompts and reflection; these retreats are fully silent. Recent online experiments are “retreats in daily life” – with weekly check-ins, and self-directed periods of silence participants incorporate into their lives as they can. Participants across all retreats are encouraged to perform a version of what Ignatius calls an *examen* – a reflection on the movements of the spirit throughout the day.

People are brought in through invitation (a core of four of us manage this process through research, recommendation and hunch), or find their way to us by word of mouth. If new to the retreats, potential members of the cohort are asked to write a bit on why silence attracts them, what experience they may have had with what disciplines of silence, and rough intentions for the time.

Session by session and prompt by prompt, over the architecture of our time together we recall the secular, interdisciplinary, self-authorized, freedom of process. The *drama* of the Exercises informs the pattern of our art-making; theological lingers, if it does, as a light and very transparent ghost – a benign and indifferent witness.

Silence and art making share a pilgrimage from nothing to nothing – poles of the good nothing, the loving mess of it all and the crucial letting-go.

stillwright is a practice, and a research rubric. Experience with *stillwright*, in debt to Ignatius, guides my thinking here, and frankly, nearly everywhere.

— — —

St. Ignatius (b. Iñigo López de Oñaz y Loyola, Oct 23 1491–July 31 1556) was a Basque courtier, ambitious to attain grand social status through success in the hubbub of the privileged classes, and through accumulation of military honours. A dancer and a soldier, the course of his life changed when he persisted in the hopeless defence against the French at the Battle of Pamplona, where a cannonball shattered his leg. After a trying convalescence, dissatisfied with early results, he had his leg broken again and reset – leaving him with one leg shorter and a life-long limp. During his bed-ridden days, he thirsted for romantic fiction and heroic biographies. His relatives opted to supply him with pious texts exclusively – meditations on Christ, and the lives of the saints. His soul melted towards contemplation of the divine, and he began a rigorous move into prayer. He noted interior movements of consolation and desolation: he paid attention to that which lead to an increase of faith, hope, and charity, as against the spirits that promote despair. His keen observations of the inner map of his transformations (in the light of the Spirit), coupled with an appreciation of contemplative lineages in Catholic, cataphatic strains, yielded in time a spare, potent, and enduring manual designed to assist spiritual directors in guiding searchers through similar experience. *The Spiritual Exercises* emerged as a blueprint or recipe book (with erasures for discoveries and inflow of inspiration) that limns a careful sequence of visualizations, readings, reflections, and imaginative encounters.

Ignatius is founder of the Jesuits, a Roman Catholic order of priests. As the name suggests, they are Jesus-centric, and strongly committed to social justice, yielding all Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam (to the greater glory of God). Jesuit spirituality invites us to focus on the face of the other (free with and for each other), filled with longing and courage, spilled forth – to fulfil one's essential nature, which is to praise, love, and serve God.

The Exercises are divided into four “weeks” – or, in musical terms, movements. The weeks aren’t seven days – their coherence has more to do with rising qualities of availability. Roughly, week one centres on an awareness of oneself as a sinner, saved. This translates in *stillwright* to a notion of abandon to noticing – impossible tasks designed to generate material without judgement or control... while retaining hopefulness in making (over the sheer unmaking of mastery) and creativity’s hospitable invitation to ultimate community (our generosity as artists is reaffirmed as gratitude – establishing our location as the place free to receive). Week two of the Exercises follow Jesus on mission; we pray for the grace to see Jesus more plainly, love him more deeply, and to follow more closely. The artistic analogue: to begin to appreciate conversations, song-lines, traces, trails and families among the materials generated – a move from generation to selection. Material is heated and refined – subject to various disciplines (exercises in rhythm and other structures; rendered as maps that are traced for routes; gestures cohere to fractal draft dances). The Exercises’ third week considers the crucifixion, in a way that includes but expands out from horror and grief, into compassion and fidelity. Artistically, this is a growth from selection to committed plotting, choreography, the sense of the canvas as a whole; synthesis. Here is the terrible, terrible writing of the play, making of the piece... holding on to gratitude, listening, the good and trusted company of the creative spirit that has led one through life so far... What Hélène Cixous and Jesus might call the path of descent as the way up; Kafka’s ice-axe. Week four recalls that the sacrifice of the creative ideal – the beloved subject of our work, the precipitant of our adoration – wants the move of release to rebuild perception so as to find God in all things; we make art not to capture or explain, but to animate and inform our initial gesture of generous gratitude – giving way and going on our way in plural, permeated company. Art tasks here focus on levity and nuance – editing, unbuckling, reviewing work to make sure it is open, failed, available for use.

The four weeks of the Exercises: I am a sinner saved by Christ; in search of renewal; on mission to see, love and follow (on that search, navigating shard and ruin); compassionate (accepting of paradox – accepting and even adoring the union of the everything that makes us with the something we are); finding God in all things.

The four movements of a *stillwright* retreat: generation (working beyond one’s will, beyond decisiveness); selection (taking up decision-making informed by a sense of freedom, practicing radical hospitality, hosting and caring for the images that have come one’s way); sequence (the making of metaphor, withstanding the impossible fire of synthesis); levity and nuance (releasing grip, inviting co-participation in the made thing through an atmosphere of lightness, delight, wonder).

By now several hundred artists have taken part over the thirteen or so years we have been running retreats (two to six a year). Participants are encouraged to come with nothing and leave with something – to start something new and to complete it, or at least establish a whole gesture (draft). Response has been favourable enough to keep going; our overhead is minimal, and we have no plans to institutionalize in formal ways (we operate through a fiscal sponsor). Most participants are unaware of the Exercises as a template.

**Week Two: To See, Love, and Follow, or –
from Abandonment to the First Few Steps in Pursuit**

Practical prayer touches balance, honesty, awe, reason, intuition, and fecund waiting. They are soteriological in aim, and (with their emphasis on discernment, and actions of consequent reform and responsibility) aesthetic and ethical in implication. Contemplation is a witness that leads through a drama of change to action (Jesuits are sometimes called “contemplatives in action”).

Contemplation is the fertility of our personal fundament. It persists after the devastation of the socially structured alienation of the self, of engineered cultural division and the flashing alerts that spark from and inspire our hyper-extended busy-ness: the spectacular allure of ginned up appetites. Detached from outcome and category, a sustained limen, contemplative practice serves as in interdisciplinary space for innovation.

Innovation rooted in contemplation’s freedoms aligns with senses of ecological co-existence (a wholesome anarchy is lit by interdependence). We are free with and for each other, our silence and our creativity are dependent on the collaboration of co-workers. Contemplative fragility and creative vulnerability find strength in a sodality of compassion.

Contemplation and Mercy as the Ground of Creation

The Exercises gave me a new heart, new mind; converted me, turned and turned-with me. I adore the Exercises – and that’s a problem. They are not a formula, or a means to an end. They are a means to a means – a way to rehearse spiritual rehearsal – a persevering revolution into an endless discovery. They are a pilgrim way, where the aim and consequence is the wayfaring itself. Martial rigor is mitigated by persistent grace-dependence: a grounding in spiritual poverty, humility, trust, thirst, and so much thanks, thanks as confession of a rupture of the self at the point of responsibility to God-in-creation. Better than adoration: purgation – a washing out by means of pity and terror (otherwise understandable as charity and faith).

From the first, and now increasingly, I view writing in the same way: not as the manufacture of objects in a material economy, but as the generous and grateful imperatives iterated in a gift economy.

Spiritual practice involves waiting in hope; creative writing wants still silence. Hopeful waiting and dynamic silence are chiastic. Funded differently, prayer and writing support one another in building commitment to noticing and activism... impoverishment of status, freedom to be changed and to cause

change by choosing scandalous channels down which to flow (the scandal of going against the grain of oppressive internal and social customs).

But frankly on a timeline the Exercises came at me first as an interruption. They were expedient.

I am a playwright and I had been writing on the subject of genocide for a few years. My language has always been tanglefoot, a debility that slows me in every transaction, and is acute in the art I try. My ability to direct intelligibility is fickle.

Yet like an ugly duckling that grows up to be – an ugly duck, I feel I am myself when I write; not always, but in health I find that under my hands is a draft, or around me is a rehearsal, or facing out and giving me face is performance. With broken language my original tongue I am drawn to places where stumbling syntax and cracked meanings allow a way forward through damage (See Blanchot 1995). A fractured, distressed language can accompany and bear witness to disaster. Disasters of violence can be so overwhelming to behold, much less undergo, that they risk totalizing the subject. Disastrous violence can turn a person to a thing, for both the perpetrator and the victim.¹ By “broken language” I mean a language that eludes reduction to a secure, firm (ultimately misleading) clarity by sustaining a central changeability through parable, metaphor, and the tossed wooden shoe of interruptive imagery. Inelegance, properly deployed, has an analytic utility, or I hope so.

By sending broken language in against disaster, and sending it in by all means, in an interdisciplinary way, we identify the field, the shape, the habits, the ethos of cruelty and selfishness in a way that moves as it moves, mutates as it mutates, so it can never outrun us, candied in moralisms.²

When the Tutsi genocide was perpetrated in Rwanda, even my lost-ness was at a loss. The scale was so great and the carnage so hallucinatory, I felt I had no access, even the access of helplessness, keening, babble. Then in the late ‘90’s, a trial in Belgium came to light – two nuns charged with genocide. Sister Maria Kizito and her superior, Gertrude Mukangango were accused of helping to organize the slaughter of 7,000 refugees who had sought refuge at their convent. The killing was protracted and took place over a month. Maria and Gertrude permitted this... and more. They helped draw lists and form lines; they called the militia back week after week to finish the job. They pulled sisters’ relatives out from the ceiling where they were hiding. They drew children out from the bushes and handed them over to militia who killed them there and then. Gertrude and Maria were and remain Benedictine nuns, who pray the Office of the Hours. They prayed throughout the perpetration. As one who prays, I felt I could contact them through their frames for God – the diction of petition, confession, and holy insight. I went to their trial in Belgium, and from there developed a years-long practice of travel to Rwanda.

On my first trip in 2001, I needed structure. I am not an intrepid traveller; I’m not brave like a journalist. I looked for a neat way of ordering my time and initiating contacts. Having gone to a Jesuit high school, where was curried a life-long, always-evolving bond with Ignatius, I did some research and found Centre Christus. The Jesuits in residence there offer the Exercises; they were willing to facilitate an eight-day edition. This would give me about enough time to get my bearings, and I assumed in a general and optimistic way that it would be spiritually edifying or at least something I could cooperate with, before

diving into research on the Important Play I was planning to write. It would be a postponement of the main event, a promising delay.

The encounter was life changing. Not only did the retreat provide me with a much-needed listening posture at the outset, it clarified vocation, changed prayer, clarified worship, and renewed craft. After came the research, and the play, but more profoundly, I drew closer to God through silence. This has transformed my writer's rationale, and my teaching. Silence is, in this sense (and per a title of one of Merton's books) a "vow of conversation."

I raided the Exercises for practical and conceptual values applicable to the generation of new artistic work. I brought Exercise-infused prompts into playwriting workshops. I went on more Ignatian retreats (four, eight, and thirty day, now an eight and a half month "retreat in daily life") and studied spiritual direction – eventually modelling writing and interdisciplinary art retreats (one, four, and eight day) on what was learned there.

Urgent questions are squaring up. Why translate? Why make this move? How does the trouble art makes and gets us into touch with the Exercises do? Is communication of purposes possible between Ignatian and artistic retreats, without cant or distortion? Are retreats of this kind in family, or only similes?

Week Three: Passionate, or Running Out of Horn

The word 'scream' is interesting. Coltrane got to the point in some concerts where he would take the horn from his mouth and just start yelling. Rashied Ali... talks about an occasion on which that happened. Ali was rather taken aback, and asked Trane about it later. Trane said, "I ran out of horn." I've heard people who do in poetry something that emulates what Coltrane does. They'll actually scream, do things of that sort. Certainly relative to that I'm very Apollonian. My screaming is going on in a different way. It's the fraying of meanings; it's the colliding of sounds that create certain consternations of meaning that might be the counterpoint of the scream, analogous to the scream. (Mackey in Harley 2010, 84-85)

Contemplation, creativity, and compassion model faith, hope, and charity.

Contemplation's silent breath screams through the reed to frayed, artistic expression, pushes open space to time – time that wants to collapse to simultaneity, emptying time of time and finding silence again.

Contemplation supports creative production by advancing a switch from receptivity (the inhale) to alert inter-involvement (from wakefulness to gratitude and generosity – exhale).

A contagion of readiness is the artist-audience pathology. The change that justice wants is to a state in which creative change is always possible.³

Faith is the creative use of nothing: a seed that breaks out of itself and grows to a bush that is mostly space. Faith converts breaking into emptiness to opportunity for hospitality. Breaking forth, for you, in hope of you. Faith is a kitchen.

Hope is the capital of never, the wealth of expectation itself. The withered hand heals to reach, in a case where taking is for sharing (the Eucharistic formula: take, bless, break, share). Hope is lived faith. Cooking.⁴

Love is none, no one. It is possible to win a battle against force with more force – to beat down anger with rage, to constrain oppression, to starve want into submission, to supersede one totality with another. It is also credible (we can have faith in, to hope for) good from good.

The outcome of a revolutionary action may be victory without conquest, where the graceful way eschews control of state, property, or prisoner in favour of freedom.

Freedom: space made meaningful through the hospitable invitation, invitation ethically sustained through the exercise of intention in the nurturing of community, and communities made loving through inclusion in all directions.

In absolute want, at the crux of nothing-never-none, we ask. We ask for: everything, from a store of endless abundance, for the sake of everyone. We ask in such complete faith and hope that – we ask for nothing, that we may be as free as *nothing* is. The meal: the instance of communion whose materials vanish.

Joy is the poise, the location where the negative transits to the positive, instantly: the flash of the asking, the perpetual creative lightning of love. At the poise – the balance point, the essential justice of all creation – there is zero... plus one. There is a stillness that moves, an emptiness made for reception, having that inclines to giving, impartiality that spills to ambient adoration.

That the Exercises as Ignatius intends them are outward looking, susceptible to the world, to different audiences, and open to change, is plain. Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, the thirtieth Superior General of the Jesuits (2008-16), notes in his address at Loyola Marymount, 2009:

While Jesuits bring their own distinctively Catholic, Christian identity to whatever work they join, they know that others' projects are not always conceived explicitly in Christian or even religious terms. They join such projects, with the identities that are their own, because they see deep consonance between the non-religious mission and their own criteria for mission. Similarly, they ask members of other – religious traditions or simply men and women of good will to join in their own sponsored works without, in any way, asking of them that they deny or negate their own identities in the common work... We need to move from mere talk to a common walk... (Nicolás 2009, 4-5)

While affirming and glorying in a Christo-centric mission, the Jesuits, according to the universal dimensions of conversion and salvation, reach in all directions. Nicolás points to the core importance of a diverse solidarity.⁵ The honour in this solidarity includes sympathy and affability, and also a shared rigor: the requirements of refinement born of a reliance on the perspectival vanishing point of commonality, elegance, unchained expressivity, or other terms questing after the infinite absolute, the restless *more*, the magis.⁶ Theatre, the seeing place, follows light from the eye out to touch the world and returns, in the way that God instils the word so that it may return. Sight's loop is apocalyptic.

The apocalypse (a time when we all, one, *see*), is the twig softening at extreme to release the bud. It is the moment when we consent to be the means through which creation gives itself to creation, and we make our unfolding sacramental with further folding/unfolding.⁷ The apocalypse is the day we all become artists, and there is no audience, no aim, nothing outside of creative activism; no means by which to describe, critique, or otherwise possess the passing temporal artifacts; no *interest*, only falling-forth, at last in flow with the creative act that swept us into being. We do not bounce the originating light... we are at the speed of light.

The energy the market offers is commonly chemical dread: a motive for action based in fear of scarcity, exclusion, and invasion. Dread is a needle slipped into the muscle of the word – heavily-marketed, thick, glum confusion, the clammy, mobbed density bullied out as the public sphere. Contemplation's light outpaces dread, sobers the word, and encourages a life lived not in the said, but the saying.⁸

Art is therefore about a complex assemblage – ... a never-ending *production*. Art [is no longer] considered a set of determined objects but rather... is defined in terms of a constant material unfolding. (Golanska 2016, 9)⁹

As one approaches the speed of light, how dark everything must appear; that which is not so free melts into obscurity. Living freely, our eyes accept more true and deep and perfect darkness; we detect less, and are not even so much on our way as we are a way, away, wayfaring. There is no light at the speed of light. At infinite pace, energy can only *be*, a situation beyond motion, a return to source.

The return of word to source is praise. Praise is in the vacancy created as language slips meaning. Praise is a spring of art. Octavio Paz:

Each time we are served by words, we mutilate them. But the poet is not served by words. He is their servant. In serving them, he returns them to the plenitude of their nature, makes them recover their being. Thanks to poetry, language reconquers its original state. First, its plastic and sonorous values, generally disdained by thought; next, the affective values; and finally, the expressive ones. To purify language, the poet's task, means to give it back its original nature... The word, in itself, is a plurality of meanings. (Octavio Paz quoted in Harley 2010, 85)

Art's great reversal: birth and death are swapped. The making of an artwork is the end of something – a report on an encounter with the ineffable – a reduction to articulation. The work is infused with enough

variety, brokenness, and interrogation to provoke audiences to get busy, to go forward, to move from brokenness (the theatre, say) to action. This is the action of praise, which is helplessness in the face of hope.

Pessimism is cowardice. The man who cannot frankly acknowledge the “Jim-Crow” car as a fact and yet live and hope is simply afraid either of himself or of the world. There is not in the world a more disgraceful denial of human brotherhood than the “Jim-Crow” car of the southern United States; but, too, just as true, there is nothing more beautiful in the universe than sunset and moonlight on Montego Bay in far Jamaica. And both things are true and both belong to this our world, and neither can be denied... There is something in the nature of Beauty that demands an end. Ugliness may be indefinite. It may trail off into gray endlessness. But Beauty must be complete—whether it be a field of poppies or a great life,—it must end, and the End is part and triumph of the Beauty, and... its end is Death—the sweet silence of perfection, the calm and balance of utter music. Therein is the triumph of Beauty. (Dubois 1920, 230)

Here I take Death as the kiln that enriches our clay – a radiance breaking in from the more, the greater-than-life, and certainly greater than totalizing politics (genocide).

Nosotros
 tenemos la alegría de nuestras alegrías
 Y también tenemos
 la alegría de nuestros dolores
 Porque no nos interesa la vida indolora
 que la civilización del consumo
 vende en los supermercados
 Y estamos orgullosos
 del precio de tanto dolor
 que por tanto amor pagamos.

Nosotros
 tenemos la alegría de nuestros errores,
 tropezones que muestran la pasión
 de andar y el amor al camino,
 Tenemos la alegría de nuestras derrotas
 porque la lucha
 por la justicia y la belleza
 valen la pena también cuando se pierde.

Y sobre todo tenemos
 la alegría de nuestras esperanzas
 en plena moda del desencanto,

cuando el desencanto se ha convertido
en artículo de consumo masivo y universal.

Nosotros
seguimos creyendo
en los asombrosos poderes
del abrazo humano.

We
have the joy of our joys
And we also have
the joy of our pains
Because we are not interested in the painless life
that the consumer civilization
sells in supermarkets
And we are proud
of the price of so much pain
that with such love we pay.

We
have the joy of our mistakes,
stumbles that show the passion
of walking and the love of the road,
We have the joy of our defeats
because the fight
for justice and beauty
are also worthwhile even when we lose.

And above all we have
the joy of our hopes
in the face of disenchantment,
when disenchantment has become an
article of mass and universal consumption.

We
continue to believe
in the amazing powers
of the human embrace. (Galeano adapted from Lederach 2020, 5)

The writings of peacebuilder and poet John Paul Lederach on the moral imagination (not to mention on haiku, Van Morrison and more) are bedrock to this essay's articulations.

Summing: an arts practice in ethical dialogue with the Exercises: is forthrightly *not* the Exercises – acknowledges debt and accepts swerve; understands indifference (freedom) and clarifies discernment; centres personal identity on praise (generosity premised in gratitude's uncurled and upturned hands); promotes conversion – turning to with-ness, folding the inside out (our silence is a social-silence – something we make with and for each other; finds art in all things (taking from silence the fortifying of readiness and availability).

Social Change – from Readiness to Change

Walking my wife, we see “I can’t breathe” spray-painted onto a wall. Energies are building, massing as a cloud. Living at the edge of a desert (we’re in Albuquerque), a cloud’s capacity for transformative labour is vivid. The painted words want to liquify the wall, to extrapolate a surface through evaporation, to sort changes of state, to stack the atomic to new-gathered efficacy. A storm can overwhelm, and days or months of de-centred grey boil wear the senses and the spirit down. But this massive, collective, and spiritually potent shift of capacities is welcome against the banalities of the sun’s aggressions. A spirit of activism coheres from ruin; the actions work with ruin; space is changed; static space is changed to changeable space and static itself is battered to lightning. This rain will fall all over the place, using darkness and gravity to fructify. Then the downward flow of violence converts in the soil’s humility and the seed’s consent to the terrifying cracking moment, reaching in trust for the light that will come back.

Who, on hearing someone expend rare and valuable breath at the crisis of strangulation on the words “I can’t breathe” would not rush to remove all obstacles to space, air, and hope?

This would be someone who is home in blank dominion – who attests to a border, a page that admits no verse, no turning, that holds immobility as capital and monetises time, that focuses all attention on the blank, on the immovable, on the ultimate-empty that values possession itself above the nourishment of breath or the pulse of rhythm – white space that consumes and forces out the art.

“Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.” (Trump 2020)

Oranyan ogun ma de o
[O Oranyan, we are being attacked!]¹⁰

The summons to the Proud Boys is not murderous. It is worse. Apex war criminals and genocidaires do not typically declare their intentions: plans involving the imposition of control for the sake of permanent privilege. This map or monument to control is anti-life, not for hatred of life directly, but preference for a fixed system. Fixed systems which fight organicity. Our president wasn’t (just) trying to kill people. He doesn’t know or care (as president) what life is. He wants to dominate.

Living dominion is oxymoronic; life is *subject to* dominion – to the rule of its own birth and return.

The articulation is so poor, and the program so wildly opportunistic, that it is merely personal, meaning: inhuman. The human is the held-in-common, above the personal. Wickedness here springs from the absolute character of his “mine, mine always.”

I hear “stand by” and recognise a particular person as my available killer, and the killer of my friends, made egregiously dangerous by the combination of his numbness to suffering and a position that gives him cyclonic capacity. Deeper than killing – he is enduring desolation: the blotting of faith, hope and love.

My God, on the other hand, is metaphor. Not *a* metaphor, but metaphor itself: the truth that the impossible simultaneity of two or more realities is after all possible.

Self and other are both impossible to know or hold – the space between is actually the only arena for meaning. My God is the god of the space between, of the metaphor, and is the reader, and the writer.

The work of poetry is the discipline of the imagination working in an ultimately unknowable body. It is expressed on the literally-metaphorically exhaled breath, with the multiply voiced rhetorics of rhyme – the precisions of half-rhyme, assonance, alliteration – and of rhythm, the heartbeat andante or accelerando or standing-on-its-head. It knows how the airiness of vowels makes consonants sing. It reacts with the white space/silence around it, it drops meaning into the held breath of the line-break and the stopped breath of the stanza-break. (Phipps and Saunders 2009, 369)

We can, in avarice, convert the pith of myth to the convenience of habit. We don’t interrogate the page’s nostalgia for blankness; we turn the world to things, own the things, then simplify domination by getting rid of the things, sitting with our regulated having, purifying the wipe. We have nothing, and the delirium of this cyanosis we affirm as power.

We wrest control, vacate responsibility, and swap certainty for being. These are three steps away from poetry: control, irresponsibility, and certainty (anger, fantasy, greed). But *being* (life as a term for adoration, actuality as time’s dance to trance, and generosity as the chemistry and physics that inevitably solves certainty) is prior to, and belies, and follows after ownership.

In sin there is no mourning. There is blame and avoidance of blame. This ambers its immobility.

Mourning gives rise to praise, praise to joy, joy to compassion, compassion to mourning.

Keep going.

Mourning is collective and progressive.

Don’t stop.

Peace doesn’t abide – it falls. It falls forward. It falls to boldness/transgression. Peace queers us to the commons.

As long as we are in common, we are free.

Freedom means to be in common.

We act. The prime action is conversion to common property – recognizing the actual fact that all we have is held in common – and that we are held in common.

When good will is gassed, exhausted, poetry starts with exhaustion and rhymes “I can’t breathe” with “I can’t breathe”; refines the silenced space to silence-prime, tears silence up and uses it to mark rhythm, fractures the page’s rule, sifts and makes fine suffering and finds passion, finds a poetry that operates as the activism of suffering, muscles forward from denial to affirmation, affirms the creative space. To protest is to affirm – launch forward (pro) testimony (testis – witness, the third space; the air of dreams). Protest is the “yes” ruah touches to arena.

Poetry, in its humility, knows it makes with and is ultimately made of silence. Poetry is the dream space where language and silence adore each other (and us, the readers/writers), dance, and give.

Any work towards a non-violent way of pursuing an ethnography and education which is founded on carefully, collectively considered principles of justice, can only begin when the weapons are still and language is allowed to sing again. This makes a poetic project in such a context a political act with words; working to rebel phonemically; to change the air. This is not just knee-jerk ‘protest poetry’, but a struggle to speak of the hidden, unjust things felt in the depths, bodying forth, despite itself, all kinds of emotion, shapes and patterns which are fundamentally disrespectful of what is given, of boundaries. (Phipps and Saunders 2009, 359)

There are times when witness is richest in cloudiness, in building towards the rain. In the breakdown of discourse, the inaptness of convention, and the violence of the economy (and the industries set up to protect it), art, in its “meanwhile”, is personal and free, changing (in humility), trading inscrutable gifts, stirring toward a world that is personal and free (a world that will recognise its beginner nature with mercy). Leaning, reaching, applauding the invisible...

It *has* to rain. Are we ready to receive it in a way that promotes growth, where fear trips to avid anticipation, and anger releases as planning and promise? Changing, are we able to bear forward inherited wisdom on changes, in living stories, alive in the commons, with something so revolutionary as gladness and simplicity of heart? “Civil Rebellion is always rebellion against phonemic authority” (Phipps and Saunders 2009, 357).

Week Four: Finding God in All Things or Shipwreck Shows Gold; Found Gold is Well-spent with Scandalous Freedom

From “Of Being Numerous” by George Oppen:

7

Obsessed, bewildered
By the shipwreck
Of the singular

We have chosen the meaning
Of being numerous.

12
They were patient
With the world.

22
Clarity
In the sense of transparency,
I don't mean that much can be explained
Clarity in the sense of silence.

As artists we study seeing, hearing
We learn by making
What we make, teaches

What do we make? We make audiences, theatres
What do we see/hear? Each other
What do we teach? One can only ever teach a method of learning: suffering, compassion, and gratitude

How do we learn anything new? By following
We follow out into the new (the botany of others) by leaving our property, breathing into every empty cell of the human; humility

Our way is water (to go, to flow)
Our state is fire (change)
Our honesty, our exposure – is desert, where we know heat and thirst best
Arts' honesty (its permeable membrane, unable to secrets, its quest for audience; its journey to spill)
discloses our contingency
The recognition of contingency invites begging, service, and mutual action

To expose our will and not impose it, in compact with the earth, with and for others, none of us with anything to clutch but cane and neighbour to lean on, unclear direction... is to live out the mission of art for social change: a society alive in a state of change, ready for change. "Less an activity of knowing, than an acceptance of being known" (England 2013, 89).

I used to think I wrote because there was something I wanted to say. Then I thought, "I will continue to write because I have not yet said what I wanted to say"; but I know now I continue to write because I have not yet heard what I have been listening to. (Ruefle 2012, 77)

We're born, we have a small space in which to say "yes," and transform (ourselves, and – as we are made, so we do). We script the promise of beauty until in a final transformation, and the complete disclosure of self to other, we become in Death perfectly beautiful. In imitation of birth (and a return to the giving-place) we live in potlatch, we give it all away, giving away even the act of giving – a repetition (rehearsal) of becoming a human being.

Art for social change is an art exposed and social. Susceptibility, exposure, and pluralism *is* its aesthetic. There is no personal responsibility outside of mutual responsibility. There is no discipline higher than care for each other.

Since the world is well governed, a whip punishing criminals decayed and transformed itself into fireflies and flew away. (*Yamamba*, attrib. Zeami, Noh Plays Database 11)

From the 1990's on, art lost currency as a public good, because the idea of the public and the collective construct of the good lost blood (see the Brooklyn Commune Project). Business models (along the lines of private enterprise) failed the arts because the arts are in fact a public good (not measured by efficiency, but by their nature as an organic food source).

Art can have no existential significance for a civilization that draws a line between life and art, and collects artifacts like ancestral bones for reverence. Art must inform the living; we envisage a situation in which life is continually renewed by art, a situation imaginatively and passionately constructed to inspire each individual to respond creatively, to bring to whatever act a creative comportment. We envisage it. But it is we, now, who must create it. For it does not exist. (Troppi 1963, online)

Patience – To admit the world is real and we are in it, then to let it in, all the way through – to move out and meet it, to go all the way through, falling apart as a mapping of routes (a potlatch where wounds and touches are equal gifts).

The word *patience* shoots roots from *suffering*. *Suffering* is to bear. We bear what we bear, together.

Love of neighbour *is* oneself
 We *are*, in each other, and in our gathered patience
 The opposite of courage is self-control
 Ecology is the earth's practice of holiness
 A heart is holy when it is shared – out of control
 Into what world do we release our hearts?

Disease, fear, and boredom can drive a body to habits of the approximate, the virtual – can limit us to what is merely possible... and what seems possible (incarcerated in the market) is simulacrum, *re*-presentation. Sun comes up and shocks me with reminders of how impossibly charged with respect, responsibility, and play the real is. The digital is a kind of money, a symbol, facilitating exchange.

Sometimes I miss the way my body works against the pretence of effectiveness.

We are made to be actual – to say yes to the real, as often as it is destroyed. Friend Ana sends this haiku by Kobayashi Issa:

This world of dew
is a world of dew
and yet, and yet... (Issa trans. by Iyer 2009, online)

If the purpose of language is to raise and praise, if the value of any manageable resource is to give honour, and if the ethical essence is the imperative to serve, then it seems that: Praise is well-expressed through silence and listening, where room is made for the Good that's coming. One way to honour a host is to be ready; a guest's prerequisite: hearing the invitation. An absolute form of service is to be instrumental to the will of the one whom we would serve: at a total loss, we accept growth/creation (a broken tree surprised by a shoot).

Kindness – Living out the Finding

No more dying there... (Hymn by Crouch 1976)

Reality is a secret – just between us.
A just reality is the space-between.
First You speak. Then: I listen. Then I give my life to You.
Reality is Holy.
Holy is “wholly other”.
The “us” between us is wholly other, neither myself nor the othered, but our selves shared at kinship.
Reality is responsibility.
My heart is the project of your breathing.
Full-life (life fully lived) is the pivot between perfect giving and perfect reception – we are a moment of ignition, a spark between a silence that has given everything and a silence so absolute it can receive all sound and still remain instantaneous, uninterrupted, wholly, holy quiet.
I am not more holy than the person I stone or the stones, more holy than anyone, more holy than You, more holy than the instruments of my sin.

Reality is the one in whom there is no dying, only birth. Reality is a “whom” (not “that thing in which”) because knowing reality as the dignified, holy other yet fully blooded body brings us into closest intimacy, into risky hospitality. Reality takes us personally. I fall from my memory into personhood, guest and host.

We are going to see the kin[g]... (Crouch 1976, brackets added)

Kin are those to whom promises are made, and who make and keep promises. A promise is a charged betweenness, the space of literature, Death, just and beautiful (see Blanchot 1982, 85-107). Early in the process of writing *Maria Kizito* – gathering and holding with testimony for example – it became clear that working would be a process of promising (forming it, feeling it) and living it out. To write the play I felt I

had to change my life, giving myself over to an ongoing love of Rwanda and a life as a student of its complex healing.

At the moment we see something beautiful, we undergo a radical decentring. Beauty, according to Weil, requires us “to give up our imaginary position as the centre.... A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions.” ... When we come upon beautiful things... they act like small tears in the surface of the world that pull us through to some vaster space... or they lift us,... letting the ground rotate beneath us several inches, so that when we land, we find we are standing in a different relation to the world than we were a moment before. It is not that we cease to stand at the centre of the world, for we never stood there. It is that we cease to stand even at the centre of our own world. We willingly cede our ground to the thing that stands before us. (Scarry quoting Weil 2001, 77)

Things in general want to associate, to be in relationship (think of the assortments that tangle together in eddies and in windblown corners). This anyway is the idea Jane Bennett puts forward in her essay “The Force of Things”, where she treats physics as the psychology of matter in talking about “thing-power”:

The relevant point for thinking about thing-power is this: a material body always resides within some assemblage or other, and its thing-power is *a function of that grouping*. A thing has by virtue of its operating *in conjunction* with other things. (Bennett 2004, 353-54)

... To be bunraku'd by the spirit. Cat's-craddled by the spirit.

We inevitably find each other, because we humans, as much as any assortment of things, want to associate, want to be together. Leaning/learning into finding, we will stir from shocked estrangement to our difficult and perennial association.

Conclusions – Rupture of Calendar

I mean, it's – you can't, you can't ram philosophies down anybody's throat – and the music is enough! You know, and that's philosophy. But I think the best thing I can do at this time is to try to get myself in shape, and know myself. If I can do that, then I'll just play, you see, and leave it at that. (Coltrane 2012, 310-11)

Coltrane, transverberated by the note lancing in, then the art of breathing-out. The art of social change is a charitable breathing out (sometimes as a scream), made musical.

Working with the *stillwright* team – from the logistics, to the syllabi, to the preparation of gifts (poems, props, the food, proper paper...) has slid into the very centre of my life. The slide has not been through persuasion, or crisp light. It has been a musical discernment: marrow-process. Aspects of my religious

practice are thought-through. A kind of math allows for the transfer of abstractions from one system of organization in my life to another.

The elemental relationship between my religious and my art practices involves neither transfer nor abstraction. It comes down to faith – the loyal practice of commerce in the invisible, impossible, and alien. The shared capacity they lend is in the recklessness of a life lived leaping.

The guiding of these retreats has become the work – is who I am, and how I am a citizen. *stillwright*: not my religion but how I give what religion gives me.

Virtue, strength, grows through exercise. *stillwright*'s repetitions make kindness credible, then inevitable, then that which I most relish.

Art is unsatisfying. It is activist. We are dis-satisfied by the inability of art to complete itself, and are stirred to take action (to create, to be artists) in a kind of revenge against the incompleteness of art.¹¹

We don't know who we are or why we're here. We come from a place unknowable to us. A name for a place I want to know, that only presents itself as a place of sheer giving, giving freedom freely, might as well be love. It partners the place I'm going to – equally unknowable, and it receives me, all of me, without reserve. To give foregoing and to receive forgiving makes the two chambered heart of love; I am from love, for love. Meanwhile, the only logic is to be with love, aspiring to imitate its actions. This sorts to praise, reverence, and service.¹²

From love, with love, for love. Turning-to (wanting music), turning/stillness (record spindle, playing music), abandon (living out the song).

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Philippians 4:11-12 (NKJV)

I am saying this because I am emboldened by passion and compassion to reproach excess that defends itself by enforcing real scarcity. I have learned to be discontent whatever the circumstances, to hold no secrets, to confess to all privilege and to erupt from want, to move always to the moment of justice, to move with all movement until all movement is possible, until love burns everything.

Contemplation-in-stillness finds at one's centre a light; the path of that light as it shines outward moves through the frequencies of art; the irresistible outward reach of light discovered in contemplation and vibrating in creative practice wants society – wants to illuminate society honestly and accurately, with healing power.

The discovery of one's self-position in contemplation moves to operation as self for others through the recognition and rehearsal of kinship/kindness in metaphor, or art – the sphere in which the impossible and paradoxical cataclysm of shared experience is treated as-if real, as-if self and other were in union.

God, in humility and generosity You give freedom and being to the not-You. The not-You: time, direction, ownership – You give, knowing that all things return. To live in time as if it were eternal is hell, to live in direction (certainty, tasks) is monotony. Ownership results in rot. Alternately, we wait, wait actively in hopeful readiness for return (open, following – journeying-with). We contemplate *forward*, in imitation of the generosity that tripped creation.

Mercy is care without judgment; mercy: to begin in poverty, discovering grace in sheer mutuality, homeless; at home in witness to each other. Mercy is patient. Patience (a circle) has fantastic velocity and is as various as it is constant. Pi never repeats. Patience survives because it is curious ("curiosity" is built from "cure"). What will we be, and how will we be *us* through time's games? Mercy is fear translated to mirroring awe.

Gratitude is going. Gratitude is humility, in forward motion. Gratitude is activity into uncertainty, bearing the giving and receiving of mercy into experiments. Prior to the tips tendering leaves is the gratitude of the bare branch. Gratitude, like happiness, is savoured instability and the brio that introduces positive derangement.

Kindness is both. Kindness is the justice or balance point between fear and happiness. Kindness is perfect weakness, useful to the formation of reformist waves from the ground up.

Things look bad for great Causes today, in a "postmodern" era when, although the ideological scene is fragmented into a panoply of positions which struggle for hegemony, there is an underlying consensus: the era of big explanations is over, we need "weak thought," opposed to all foundationalism, a thought attentive to the rhizomatic texture of reality; in politics too, we should no longer aim at all-explaining systems and global emancipatory projects; the violent imposition of grand solutions should leave room for forms of specific resistance and intervention... (Žižek *In Defense of Lost Causes*, quoted in Ball 2011, 6-7)

I don't know.

Love is the mistake I enjoy making, a life of falling, a beginning into rivering.

To move with the river, lose something (everything).

To lose, err (fall out of the self and the fallacy of independence).

To err and live, embrace paradox (specifically, be consumed by love without being destroyed: a heart on fire).

To practice paradox, write poetry.

To write poetry, do nothing.

To practice nothing, love.

Noah released two birds. The first was a crow, and it never came back. The dove is sweet but reminds me of Meribah. The crow was enough – the not-coming back was the right sign – a sign that out there is a place-to-be – not necessarily a place of rest, but a place into which we can move. Noah's crow forward into that cool night is guide: gone as ongoing going – no report, the crow doesn't obtain or describe. The crow says follow. The crow is activist, the crow is kind. The dove brings blessings from the land of the crow. Kindness is the Thule, a condition of awareness and fidelity in poverty.¹³

May I know the truth.

May I be of use.

Your love is the cause and aim of life.

Your love is attention, care and purpose.

Your love is other-for-other.

Your love is the healing of mine to ours.

Holiness is otherness.

Your love is holy.

Holy love creates.

Creation is repetition with variation; creation is music.

Created, I repeat You, repeat the sounding joy.

Created I create, changing.

The art of changing asks for persistence, patience, and communism.

The only change is social change.

I repeat until I am silent, in imitation of the silent heart, hearing and being heard, will and space for will:
the will to love and love's will.

A silence-driven pedagogy and art practice deliver us to communion in the welling and overflow of kinship-based kindness. This is the walk *stillwright* is taking.

Notes

1. "To define force – it is that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him." Simone Weil, "The Iliad or the Poem of Force," *Chicago Review* 18 [2 1965]: 1, biblio3.url.edu.gt/SinParedes/08/Weil-Poem-LM.pdf.
2. "Adorno uses the word 'impossible'... in a way similar to that of Levinas: as conceptual, ontological impossibility, not as ethical impossibility. To assign to art the function of representing the horror of human existence, the function of presenting its barbarism, is to assign it, after the Shoah, the task of representing the unrepresentable, a task both impossible and necessary." Henry McDonald, "Aesthetics as First Ethics: Levinas and The Alterity of Literary Discourse." *Diacritics* 38 [4 2008]: 25.
3. Fascism: a state in which one has been convinced no change is possible. "Every totalitarian regime is frightened of the artist. It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one." Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 45.
4. Consider how food is at the heart of Laurie Carlos's unpublished manuscript *Marion's Terrible Time of Joy* (2003). The live preparation of a meal in this performance piece is liturgical: a group of women effect mutual healing while cooking and simultaneously boiling together their stories, rendering trauma to the savour of wisdom.
5. "I have chosen the two terms, co-workers and companions, in preference to partnership, to stress clearly the two-way dialogue of companions in mission. Partnership can be, sometimes, a paternalistic term or imply an adjective, 'junior,' to the partnership. Both terms I have chosen resonate deeply in the Jesuit tradition and language. From the beginning, long before they were Jesuits, Ignatius and his, then, still mainly lay, first companions saw themselves mirroring the first 72 disciples sent out on mission by Jesus." Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., "Companions in Mission: Pluralism in Action. Mission Day Keynote Address, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California," (February 2, 2009), 2.
6. "Certain elements of the Jesuit mission remain non-negotiable. These include a commitment to excellence, flowing from the magis; a clear articulation and enactment of the faith that does justice; interreligious dialogue; a profound sense of an underlying spiritual dynamism; and a careful process of discernment." Nicolás, "Companions in Mission," 9. For more on the magis and the importance of creativity to the history and nature of the Jesuits, see Clement J. McNaspy, SJ, "Art in Jesuit Life," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: The Place of Art in Jesuit Life* 5 [3, April 1973]: 101, ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/jesuit/article/download/3673/3258.
7. See for example the opening stage direction of W.B. Yeats, "The Only Jealousy of Emer," in *Poetry* 13 [4, January 1919]: 175.
8. The language of saying and said is from Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, (Springer, 2010), 37.
9. And see: a way to put folding/unfolding into the body via a labyrinth experience: Kathryn Barush, "Labyrinth: A Pilgrimage in Place," accessed November 14, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXS1dSW4g6c>.
10. "Deola, the ancestral matriarch in White Chocolate, chants to her children "Oranyan ogun ma de o. Oranyan ogun ma de o." In antiquity, this Yoruba plea for help was a special signal between Òrànmíyàn (aka Òrányàn), the son of the Yoruba progenitor Odùduwà, and his people. The people were only to shout this phrase when they were under attack, which would prompt Òrànmíyàn to save them." Omi Jones on the Laurie Carlos play *White Chocolate.*, Theatrical Jazz, (Ohio State University Press, 2015), 57.

11. See Augusto Boal, “Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy”, Chapter One of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, translated by Charles A. McBride, (NYC: TCG Press, 1993), 1-50.

12. See again “Principle and Foundation” in Fleming, 1978.

13. For more on Gen. 8:2-11, and links with Buddhism, see Henry Heras. “‘The Crow’ of Noe”. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10 [2, April 1948]: 131-139.

Works cited

Ball, Jason. 2011. *I Mix What I Like!: A Mixtape Manifesto*. California: AK Press.

Barush, Kathryn. 2020. “Labyrinth: A Pilgrimage in Place.” YouTube, 14 November, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXS1dSW4g6c>.

Bennett, Jane. 2004. “The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter.” *Political Theory* 32 (3): 347-372.
<http://www.jstor.com/stable/4148158>.

Blanchot, Maurice. 1982. *The Space of Literature*, translated with an Introduction by Ann Smock, 85-107. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

—. *The Writing of the Disaster*. 1995. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Boal, Augusto. 1993. *Theatre of the Oppressed*, translated by Charles A. McBride. New York City: TCG Press.

Brueggemann, Walter. 2018. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Crouch, Andraé. 1976. “Soon and Very Soon.” Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music/ASCAP,
https://hymnary.org/text/soon_and_very_soon_we_are_going.

DeVito, Chris. 2012. *Coltrane on Coltrane*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Dubois, W.E.B. 1920. *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. New York City: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe.

England, F. 2013. “An Architectonics of Desire: The Person on the Path to Nada in John of the Cross.” *Acta Theologica* 33 (1): 79-95. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v33i1.4>.

Fleming, David, S.J. 1978. *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading*. Massachusetts: Institute of Jesuit Sources. (For the First Principle and Foundation as an excerpt, see: Boston College,
<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/ministry/pdf/First%20Principle%20and%20Foundation%20-March%202015%20%282%29.pdf>.)

Galeano, Eduardo. 2020. "Nosotros." Adapted from John Paul Lederach's translation. *Ethics Central* 23 (1, Winter/Spring): 6. <https://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/pdfs/newsletters/winterspring2020.pdf>

Golańska, Dorota. 2016. "Terrifying Pleasures: In Quest of an Affirmative Approach to 'Dark' Installation Art." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 12 (5): 1-17. <http://liminalities.net/12-5/terrifying.pdf>.

Harley, Luke. 2017. "An Apollonian Scream: Nathaniel Mackey's Rewriting of the Coltrane Poem in 'Ohnedaruth's Day Begun.'" *Sydney Studies in English* 43: 77-106. <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSE/index>.

Heras, Henry. 1948 "The Crow' of Noe". *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10 (2): 131-139. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40150023>.

Iyer, Pico. 2009. "About a Poem: Pico Iyer on a haiku by Kobayashi Issa." *Lion's Roar*, September 1, 2009. <https://www.lionsroar.com/about-a-poem/>.

Jones, Omi. 2015. *Theatrical Jazz*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1972. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. New York: Springer.

McDonald, Henry. 2008. "Aesthetics as First Ethics: Levinas and The Alterity of Literary Discourse." *Diacritics* 38 (4): 15-41. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40930568.pdf>.

McNaspy, Clement J., S.J.. 1973. "Art in Jesuit Life," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: The Place of Art in Jesuit Life* 5(3): 93-109. ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/jesuit/article/download/3673/3258.

Motokio, Zeami. Yamamba. *Noh Plays Database*. file:///Users/erik/Downloads/046.pdf.

Nicolás, Adolfo, S.J. 2009. "Companions in Mission: Pluralism in Action." *Mission Day Keynote Address*, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, February 2, 2009. udmercy.edu/about/mission-vision/mission-identity/files/Nicolas_LMU.pdf.

Oppen, George. 2020. "Of Being Numerous." *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed November 14, 2020. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53223/of-being-numerous-sections-1-22>.

Phipps, Alison, Lesley Saunders. 2009. "The sound of violets: the ethnographic potency of poetry?" *Ethnography and Education* 4 (3): 357-387. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820903170168>.

Ruefle, Mary. 2012. *Madness, Rack, and Honey*. Seattle: Wave Books.

Scarry, Elaine. 2001. *On Beauty and Being Just*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Trocchi, Alexander. 1963. "A Revolutionary Proposal: Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds." Published as "Technique du coupe du monde." *Internationale Situationniste* 8 (January 1963). Not Bored. notbored.org/invisible.html.

Trump, Donald J. 2020. "Donald Trump & Joe Biden 1st Presidential Debate Transcript 2020." Rev, 29 September. <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-joe-biden-1st-presidential-debate-transcript-2020>

Weil, Simone. 1965. "The Iliad or the Poem of Force." *Chicago Review* 18 (2): 1.
biblio3.url.edu.gt/SinParedes/08/Weil-Poem-LM.pdf.

Yeats, W.B. 1919. "The Only Jealousy of Emer." *Poetry* 13 (4): 175-193.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?volume=13&issue=4&page=19>.

ERIK EHN is a playwright, and director, currently a visiting assistant professor at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. His work centres on language that springs from and pushes past meaning into direct, compassionate, collective experience, particularly through witness to genocide, and solidarity with people who are poor. His current project is a set of 21 plays built from the life and writings of St. Paul, scheduled for production at LaMama ETC in Spring, 2022.

© 2021 Erik Ehn



Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).