

Thoughts:

Prayer, holding in the embrace of healing process of a wound.

Gentleness as vulnerability

And as strength maps less self-compassion

Sometimes, that once would have seemed self-explanation

Making oneself gentle then, is and to the world and faith in humanity

Post-conflict, post-violence, post-trauma, this is a challenge

In our world, this is a challenge, and a risk, smile with you, even in

that come as a step back, and a risk, smile with you, even in

The risk of gentleness

I light other candles? Here, with you behind me, I, with palms and

fingertips touching, give thanks, proffer love, and am often

Can gentleness protect?

Such prayer, but an enchantment where the world has become 'detached from

but an enchantment where the world has become 'detached from

the sanity of a cause' an enamoured shattering where in truly

standing, Nordic Summer University

Circle 4: An/Othernot-I/(m)Other in Feminist Philosophy

and everyone, daring leap into the unknown?

There love, unfamiliar? A prayer, so near you who I tried to write to

But, Shared reading of:

Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living

by Anne Dufourmantelle (pages 1-3)

looking parts, the number, continues to heighten, our hips, and others

thinking without thinking, continues to heighten, our hips, and others

different ways we, Responses by participants.

through the words we speak, through the words we speak, through the words we speak

This work, here, in this encounter of care and risk,

viewer, rather, the truth of being, a response to a decision.

that a pre-movement, a welcome and giving, so

can be gently awakened in the body of a watcher

the audience can fall along with the dancer.

What is the fall, the abandonment?

weights of torso and limbs navigate, Though I would add: maybe begins to live

articulate them. This risky process, in plural that day. And so, I was wondering

ably slows movements, a doing and a could gentleness be associated with or

the sensibility of a watcher to be touched, felt as a collective experience?

Listening is going on.

"The ancient Masters were profound and subtle.
Their wisdom was unfathomable.
There is no way to describe it;
all we can describe is their appearance.

They were careful
As someone crossing an iced-over stream.
Alert as a warrior in enemy territory...

Do you have the patience to wait
Till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
Till the right action arises by itself?

The Master does not seek fulfilment.
Not seeking, not expecting,
She is present, and can welcome all things."

Lao-Tzu
Tao Te Ching (from Chapter 15)

Gentleness as vulnerability
And as strength
Making oneself gentle then, is an act of trust, and faith in
humanity
Post-conflict, post-violence, post-trauma, this is a
challenge
In our world, this is a challenge, and a risk
The risk of gentleness

Can gentleness protect?

The force, the fight of life, the push
But is there a chance to surrender to gentleness?
A chink of light, of peace, a moment in the eye of the
storm...
Where gentleness and ferocity, fairness and grace co-
exist?

Prayer, holding in the embrace of one's body the unintended healing process of a wound.

Sometimes, perhaps less self-consciously than before, I pray, something that once would have seemed impossible, but now, as when walking toward the mantelpiece to light candles and incense before an icon, or standing before a photograph of you, gathering memorial thoughts, which we forget can be celebratory, where I enter a reckoning with your smile, plus those moments in your life that come as I face you while bending with a lit match, touch the candle, take a step back, and most often, smile with you, even in my guilt and sorrow, for there you are. And that mantelpiece where I light other candles? Here, with you behind me, I, with palms and fingertips touching, give thanks, proffer love, and am often surprised by a smile from an icon that has none painted on its face. Such prayer is not habitual, nor the massing of prescribed thoughts but an enchantment where the world has become 'detached from the sanity of a cause' (1), an enamoured shattering where in truly standing, persisting in wonder, I am reconfigured here with you, and everyone and everything else. Is such a meeting, one between lovers, a hesitating, daring leap from the familiar into the unfamiliar? A prayer become a song to that unknowable whose name we have only heard and is said to be the scent of the real? But what of you, lying here, so near, you who I tried to write to of our holding hands as we fall asleep, a composition in thirty-three parts, the number of years your son was alive. An attempt that, without thinking, continues to heighten my awareness of the different ways we touch – with our hands, our lips, our hips, and through the words we speak or write, all of which may harm, but here, in this encounter of care and risk, become a dialogue putting 'the truth of be-ing to a decision' (2).

1 - Samuel Beckett, Samuel Beckett, Proust, and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthurt

2 - Martin Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)

IN GENTLENESS

Tala Bevk

Let me escape into the silence of your core
Gentleness.

As an electrified noise is accompanying me,
I no longer want to be its friend.

There is violence
in constant self-explanation
in my head
and to the world.

Or maybe just to the father
and his demanding control
saying
Where have you been?
What are you doing with your life?
How is your money situation?

O, mother
where was your gentleness?
So intrigued were you
by the safety nets
of the system.
Wearing the mask
of a gentle mother –
where love for the material things was greater
than the love for your daughters.

Let me speak like my grandmother did.
From the silence of gentleness
where there is endless
understanding and compassion
for wanting to be free.

And for our future daughters.
May you learn our new language -
that lays in the silence
of gentleness,
to be free.
To be free at last.

In peace.
In peace.
In peace.

Listening to the different reactions, in prose and in poetry, and in the rare experience of being expressed in different languages, made me think again the poem of Emily Dickinson *A word is dead*. I quote:

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.

I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

Though I would add: *maybe* begins to live *in plural* that day. And so, I was wondering could gentleness be associated with or felt as a collective experience?

Thank you for the readings. It was very special to listen to words without understanding and run with the feelings and images instead. These readings, alongside the text, made me drop down into a space without words that felt fuller, deeper, less good, less bad.

I'd like to offer some initial responses to the text on 'gentleness' that made me think of my growing relationship with stone from the valley I'm from in Sth Wales. The gentleness of Stone feels elusive. As both subject and object, it has to be patiently allowed to surface and be seen. It is an active quality that Stone will sometimes share with me when I am patient, gentle and able to listen. I think then, that in order to be gentle and to experience gentleness, I need to practice listening.

I'd like to share a short piece from Alyson Hallett, 'Stone Talks', Chapter 5 'Entering the Vastness'.

'I lie on a rock and stare at the beach. I stare at the pebbles. They are continually in place, of place and making place...

I lie on a rock on the beach, stare at the pebbles and nothing happens. The rock carries on being rock and after a while a feeling creeps into me; it spreads throughout my body. Infects me. The beach pours in through my ears, my eyes, my skin. These pebbles are hundreds of millions of years old. They are my past, my future, my present.

I am on the beach, of the beach and making the beach. All things at once.

The Old Bards used to lie down with a stone on their bellies before they wrote. Poet and stone; stone and poet. Who was talking to who and who was listening. Intimacy dissolves boundaries, but it's hard to discuss equality with things in a language that's predicated upon subject, verb and object. The physicist David Bohm suggests instead of saying 'I am looking at a stone', I can more appropriately say, observation is going on.'

Listening is going on.

There is something in the silence that unnerves me. At a fundamental level I'm not able to not-know, to allow the moment to sustain itself, without me being in it. Hearing all these words, all these sentences constructed in languages I don't or hardly speak, that break away the space that is between me and myself. For that Other in me, which is also the faces of the others looking at me through the screens, listening or perhaps tuning out, or perhaps thinking, or perhaps knitting their own matrices of reality. Hearing words in different accents, different strangenesses unnerves me, makes me edgy. I want to ask, to interrupt, to exclaim. I want to respond even though there is nothing, there is a silence in the words that are shared. And the words repeat themselves, mawkishness, mawkishness, a voice keeps saying it and I still don't know what it means although I think I know what is meant. This sale of gentleness, we have hugged it to death and have made it valueless. As if there is such a thing, as if human behaviour is capable of such a thing, but if it is not everything would be in vain, so we must be response-able, to have this response-possibility in ourselves.

What does it mean when words resonate? Is it a song we are trying to reconstruct, the song of life, the song that has brought us into life? I think this is what we are all searching for, this meaning, this reality, this real. And it slips away, and this shared space we create is just a reminder of the serial inability to hold on, we share this pain and this search for beauty if nothing else.

There are too many words in the world, and yet it helps me to hear yours.

Douceur

Russell Dumas's dance poetics has the gentleness of a martial art. For the performer, abandonment precedes and accompanies the precision required by the movements (<https://www.russelldumasdance.com/media/>).

The 'small dance', a shift of weight called falling, however subtle, initiates and sustains movements. These movements would be somewhat ordinary if it weren't for their virtuosic gentleness.

This work doesn't demand a response from the viewer. Rather, it is 'welcoming and giving' so that a pre-movement in the body of a watcher can be gently awakened. Sitting in their chairs, the audience can fall along with the dancer.

What is the fall, the abandonment? The real weights of torso and limbs navigate the rounded surfaces of the joints that connect and articulate them. This risky process of releasing and shifting weights – a doing and a receiving - subtly slows movements down: allowing time for the sensibility of a watcher to be touched.

Performing the same movement again and again the performer goes back each time taking the risk to find what it will be now, in the present. This is the only way it can work. Usually there is a need to undergo a long period of corporo-analysis – to discover instability, in its astonishing, transformative power.