

STILLP • INT

A MAGAZINE IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

NEPENTHE

ANNE MARIE WIRTH CAUCHON

On the one hand, it's ridiculous to write anything about silence—to try and convey silence through its opposite. On the other hand, you and I have little else.

I'm writing this upon my return to the sky, Flight NK570 Fort Myers to Minneapolis. Flight was my reaction to a barrage of words—months of words, years of words that (like Jacques Lacan knew well) never reach their destination. Words that forever miss the mark, that convey too little and too much. Words that serve only misunderstanding and division, though you and I have kept on believing they will let us share, know, unite. Or maybe, in truth, we've just kept on believing they will let us prove, judge, conquer, or possess.



WTFRU? (parts 1 & 2) ~ Amanda Suckow

So what of silence? Silence as a weapon of repression or control. Silencing: the suppression or removal of an other's expression, voice, or even life. In that case words can act as tools for change: the chant, the viral one-liner, the legal motion, the court ruling.

But there is also silence as an elusive gift and discipline or luxury. The silence of solitude, or the silence shared with an other, just as I am seated in this window seat beside a stranger. Together we're quietly watching the sky. Without speaking we're watching the horizon curl off at a distance—the shape of this perfect sphere that contains us with a gentle atmosphere. At least for now, since each airline flight—like this one—makes a temporary balance all the more precarious. Still, for the moment the sky holds, and us in it.

So, how does one convey the stunning, wild privilege of witnessing, with an other, a sight like the sky from within? How does one convey the fleeting, delicate, excruciating solitude and connection of existence, even with our best tool—language? It can't be done. The same holds true for heartbreak, or the pain of death. Throwing words at one's suffering proves a weak salve or solace.

So perhaps what remains as nepenthe in these direst of times is only silence. Silence, that which does not explain, or prove, or justify, or defend, or condemn, or dismiss, as language often does. Only silence, that simple gift and restful practice, or release.

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WTFRU? (parts 1 & 2) is shown here as a still from the full accompanying video available at stillpointmag.org.

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