

A Kibble Scribblers online session with Larry Butler and Valerie Gillies

April 2020

The Scribblers had been given this theme in advance: one participant heard it as ‘Shared Silence’, which was just as appropriate, considering the lockdown background to our writing!

We began by listening to music: of course, it had to be ‘The Sound of Silence’. We followed this with a Round of introductions.

~ Who and where are you?

~ Have you written anything during the week?

We read aloud the poem [In the Peace of Wild Things](#) by Wendell Berry.

This poem may remind you of where peace is to be found. You may already know such a place of peace: in a garden or allotment, or on your daily walk, or seen through your window on the world. Perhaps it is in your heart. Write something about this peace, how it touches you, or where you find it, perhaps in a place you hope to visit again when lockdown is over.

In four groups, people write, beginning with ‘What brings me peace is...’

Then they share within the group.

Harvesting, returning to the whole group. Would anyone like to share?

After this, we had a comfort break where people could move away from the screens.

Our ‘Wander / Wonder’ writing prompt was spurred by a few lines from Mary Oliver.

‘... I happened to be standing
just outside my door, with my notebook open,
which is the way I begin every morning.
Then a wren in the privet began to sing.

...

So I just listened, my pen in the air.’

(You can listen to Mary Oliver reading the whole poem [here](#).)

Prompt

Go outside, into a garden, onto your balcony or on your front step, or just open your window, and listen, with your pen in the air. Write about what you can hear, or what you can’t hear.

Harvesting, share in the small group again. Then come back into the whole group: does anybody have anything they’d like to share?

Silence is real, it touches us. We can pay attention to it, and to the new ways of seeing and the new ideas which come along with it.

Valerie read a selection of her poems from the cycle [Bird for Bird](#), which evokes the songs and calls of Scottish birds and their American cousins.

In the next two weeks, go outside, with your pen in the air, listen to what you can hear, and write.

Note from Valerie. The Scribblers were obviously delighted with the chance to meet up with one another by Zoom. It's such a different experience from the face to face group workshop, though.

Yes, it does seem to be enlivening and invigorating for the group. But are people beginning to feel they have too many screens in their lives now? Zoom is probably a good sticking plaster for the hurt of not being able to meet up, and it's all we can have right now.