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### Just *Don't* Do It

I don't mean to argue with the title of this panel. But. I would like to speak about process rather than progress. The word "progress," to me, seems a way of saying that there is something that we have to accomplish in the end, a result. Also, it implies that this result should be a positive one, an assertive one. Talking about progress, for me, would be a teleological way of speaking about writing—and writing, I think we would all agree, is nothing like that. So: works in *process*, then.

What I like the most about process is the fact that, unlike progress, it is invisible—or at least, it seems invisible. One of our jobs when we write is to shed some light on process, to think about the singular way in which every text that we write gets written. As readers, process is not something evident in a text: it is not there (well, sometimes it is—you know, that *meta-fiction* trend). But even in this case, we only have access to the words someone is able to say about process, or to the ones that look good on paper, really. (You guessed it: I love process but dislike meta-fiction, although one could say that meta-fiction is the exact literary form to address process. But, I don't know, to me fiction on fiction, or writing on writing, is just like having French fries with a side of mashed potatoes while the chef lectures me all about deep frying and boiling.) Real process happens beyond the paper itself, and that is why for me it is crucial to try to understand something, only something, about the When, the How, the Where, and the Why of writing.

Process, then, is not only invisible for us as readers, but also for us as writers while we write. Process is not about sitting down, getting in front of the computer and starting to move our fingers. We can't control process. Process—and this is another thing I love about it—doesn't have a certain place it happens, or a certain precise action. For me, for example, the shower is a crucial place for process. Maybe it's something in the water, I don't know. Or maybe it's the fact of being in a place where it is absolutely impossible to actually perform the act of writing. Things happen when I'm taking a shower. Or when I'm working out. Forms, structures, sentences, characters, or plot (when there is one): these things fall into place. For me, this is a very important thing to know: we write even when we are not writing. We only have to discover what works for us, because what is true about writing is also true about process: there is no universal formula. We just have to wait and see.

Wait. Let it lay there, resting. Take a step back. In my process, distance is key. I know it is not very hip of me to quote Theodor Adorno. He hated jazz, only liked Schoenberg, always criticized Walter Benjamin for not being methodic enough. Not a fun guy to have beers with, I imagine. But Adorno had a point. As we all know, he argued that matter should transform into form. Or, in other words, he argued that form is matter after sedimentation, and that any type of art should turn to form when working to communicate something. I'm bringing up Adorno because I think this may be an effective way to think about process, too, see: process as something that has to be translated into form, into rhythm, into syntaxes, into words.

But, how can we do it? Well, maybe we don't have to. As persons who live in this society, we are used to trying, to working, to being told *just do it* in every aspect of life. We are used to thinking that we have to act in tangible ways in order to get things done. For me, that is not the case when writing.

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ICPL and the International Writing Program Panel Series, September 21, 2018

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In fact, it is the opposite. In a way, writing is about finding other ways to do things, beyond the obvious, beyond the visible. Texts don't always need to be finished. Sometimes, texts need to be finished badly, so that we can learn something from the worst version of the thing.

How do we transform a specific, personal, writing process into form? How do we sediment it? For me, the key lies in tangential, indirect movements, actions that don't act: waiting, taking the wrong way, putting distance between myself and the text. And, of course, taking a shower.

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