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Points in Time – Writing as a Surrogate Immortality

Writing's main function may not be cathartic. But undoubtedly it performs this function. Writing consoles us by showing that we are not alone with our experience. In these few points, I examine what catharsis in writing means to me.

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There is something deeply consoling in the idea that a sentence I write, here and now, in this temporal moment, will survive this moment. That it, in fact, steps outside of the moment. That it surpasses the moment to something that might at least *resemble* a kind of immortality.

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Isn't one of the pleasures of reading and writing this surpassing of the temporality?

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Tomorrow I may not be the same person writing this sentence. Tomorrow I may not be. But this sentence will, and it will remain unchanged.

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Isn't one of the pleasures of reading and writing this flirting with a kind of eternity?

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Let me make this clear: this has nothing to do with the quality of the writing. Both good writing and bad writing will easily outlive the author.

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Let me make this clear: the immortality of writing is a fiction. But it's a good one. There are pieces of writing that have lived for centuries.

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"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."¹ But his elegant formulation of temporality has survived millennia of fleeting time.

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I may be dying, but my sentences may outlive me. Shouldn't it give me a certain kind of consolation?

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Most of the writers dearest to me are long since dead. Yet I have the privilege of enjoying their company at will. Shouldn't this give me certain kind of consolation?

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Let me make this clear: I might not have liked them in person. Some of them were well known as quite difficult human beings.

¹ Eccles. 1:2 (King James Version)

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Isn't one of the pleasures of reading and writing this surpassing of our personal life? Surpassing the limits of our egos, so to speak?

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Let me make this clear: I am talking here as a poet, not as person you might meet after this talk.

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Isn't one of the pleasures of reading and writing in this artificialness? In this surpassing of the mundane? In this thing we might call art?

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And yet, here, now, in this sentence, I'm leaving a mark of myself, of my mind, of my being here. I'm leaving it in a place that is, in essence, outside of time. Shouldn't this give me certain kind of consolation?

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Let me make this clear: I'm not forming ontological arguments.

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I write in order to give my life a form it would not have without writing. I write in order to see my time passing away from me.

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It is quite possible to see writing as a form of religion.

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It is quite possible to see writing itself as a form of catharsis.

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It is quite possible to see the consolation of writing as a perfect illusion. But it's a good one. There are true moments of happiness in writing.

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It is said, that man is the only creature aware of his own temporality. That we are the only species capable of mourning our own deaths. We are all in the same ship, and it is sinking.

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Writing invites us into this shared awareness. Shouldn't it bring us at least some kind of consolation?