Spiders of the Mennonite Tribe

Introduction: *Whitman was no Mennonite.* We know we’re not spiders, all alone, flinging our threads into the void, unless something has gone very wrong. We know everything is connected, unless one of the many forms of violence breaks the threads. Still, we learned many things.

I learned again that my quiet Ohio town is not the center of the world.

I was reminded that my country is not the only place where reflecting/acting on peace is urgent.

It seems it’s important to keep explaining who we are.

Just to be with each other, to talk and laugh and eat together, is enough.

That encourages us to make of these conferences of peace not a rare/isolated event, but a regular practice.

I looked at the stones, then chose a small, smooth one.

Nonresistance, peacebaking, restorative waters, conflict conflagration—layers and levels of theory and suffering, loss and privilege, victories and defeats.

We keep struggling to find “positive tensions” and/or bridges between our reasoning on peace and the different realities we are part of.

We love those in far corners of the earth better than we love our inconvenient children.

It seems still easier to talk about difficult topics of peacemaking, negotiation and conflict resolution with governments, political parties, even soldiers than it is to talk within our own traditions about our past, demanding topics and what we label “moral issues”.

Would you rather be a button, a hook, or an eye?

When the children ask *What are the stones?* what will we tell them?
The man who survived the isolation camp watches Hogan’s Heroes with his granddaughter, both of them laughing.

Recordamos que somos por nuestras historias. El poder hablar de nuestras experiencias personales de dolor y construcción de paz nos habla tanto de que logramos crear espacios seguros como de que debemos recordar cuales son nuestras motivaciones en la construcción de la paz.

Slow violence. Sacrifice zones. Distant powers extracting wealth from the prehistoric layers of the planet.

Laugh, cry, sing. Go back to work.

Is it violent to desire that your loved one desire to live?

The eye sees too much to comprehend. We need instead to listen.

¿Cuáles son los lenguajes que empleamos para construir la paz? ¿Es el inglés el lenguaje de la paz? ¿Sigue siendo nuestra diversidad –en término de lenguas- una razón o excusa para no escucharnos, para no hablar o para reducir el tiempo que podemos hablar?

What are the languages that we use to build peace? Is English the language of peace? Is still our diversity –in terms of languages- an argument or excuse to not listen to each other, not to dialogue or to reduce the time we can talk?

We are made in a wonderful way.
We cannot ignore our wounds.
May we practice justice, love kindness, walk gently with our God.

Hemos entrado en la exploración de nuestros propios miedos, heridas y traumas –cosas que hemos escondido, tapado o pasado por alto por el “bien común”.

We have entered in the exploration of our own fears, wounds and traumas –things we have hid, covered, or neglected for the “greater good”

“I will only ask God to forgive them,” said Miriam.

The theory of redemptive suffering rarely comforts those who suffer.
We have the challenge of preserving the tension between walking in lament or silence (with those that are suffering or have experienced traumas) and creating conditions for restoration, healing, reconciliation…
Shall we lie down among the dead? Shall we rise?

Who will be the conscientious objectors in the war against women?

We have learned that there are different dimensions or levels when we need still to address and explore in terms of what peace means. Open military and armed violence has been for long time our main focus, but we need to explore other “territories” just as much.

My living room has dandelions growing in it.

We are small, we know little, and we are connected to everything else.

We have remembered how important it has been to walk in peacemaking with other people, other faiths and religions, how they have helped us make broader our sense of peace and how we have helped make the topic of peace a central one in the ecumenical movement.

The erotics of violence will destroy us.

Can we learn the erotics of peace, the desire and the practice of justice?

La erótica de la violencia nos va a destruir.

¿Será que podemos aprender de la erótica de la paz, del deseo y práctica de la justicia?