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**From:** Tom Denize [REDACTED]@nztalking.co.nz

**Subject:** Re: Is the divine dilemma?

**Date:** 23 March 2024 at 12:38 PM

**To:** Zane Edwards [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Zane,

everything i write is a love poem it all just screams  
i love you  
i love you

i love you  
even though all it says is,

pause/blur

silver grass,  
blades kissing in the wind.

I saw an apparition in that glade,

Im smiling in slow motion, hoping that the wind might change direction and my face will be stuck like this forever

In that long grass,  
blue jeans around my ankles  
blushing at the thought,  
blushing at the sight,  
of a boy who I don't know  
about to turn around and meet my gaze.

Tom x

## *Eventually, I'll Confess, I Walk Into a Loving Nowhere: (and that's where you'll find me) On The Longing Contradiction of Self Effacement*

Zane Edwards' images are trembling with longing. They're not quiet, though they seem to be at first glance. The quietness is one of many veils here, something that dissolves the longer you stand before them. Beneath it, you can feel the steady pulse of a search, a reaching that can't quite be contained. Like the strange longing compulsion that makes you press your thumb into a bruise.

Simone Weil once wrote, "*If I only knew how to disappear, there would be a perfect union of love between God and the earth I tread, the sea I hear. That I might disappear so that those things that I see may become perfectly beautiful from the fact that they are no longer things that I see... If only I could see a landscape as it is when I am not there. But when I am in any place I disturb the silence of heaven by the beating of my heart.*"<sup>1</sup> Weil here is speaking of a desire for self effacement (erasure), distilling that for God to truly be present we must quell our existence in the face of His immensity, dislocate our being or in her words, the self-dispossession of 'I'<sup>2</sup>. This is a paradoxical and precarious desire that she calls 'decreation' and something that feels central to Edwards' work. However in Edwards' work, this disturbance of heaven is not a problem to be solved but a truth to be embraced. The landscapes they create hold the evidence of their being—shadows, reflections, faint traces of presence that refuse to vanish entirely. The silence may be disrupted, but this disruption is tender, loving and alive.

I remember the first time I saw a work of Zane's in person before we knew each other. Their work *In All My Glory* was installed in the Octagon at VCA for a crit in early 2023; the work is a life size projection of Edwards staring down the lens and undressing slowly till they're naked. A glory hole cut into the MDF disrupts the centre of the projection as you stand in-front of it, parallel to the projected spectre of their body. It's an arresting work to experience alone, it pulsates with desire and filled me with a deep unease. I'm unsure if the unease was due to feeling like Edwards' longing was rippling through me or because I was forced to encounter an odd reflection of my own. This is a feeling that has persisted in encounters with their work in the time we've now known each other. Edwards speaks of longing as form, of connection as passage, and this seeps through it all. Light bends, dissolves, reveals, obscures. The frame never fully holds; it spills into the room, onto and unto you. This is not an invitation for resolution but to linger at that edge—to feel the longing itself as the connection.

To look at Edwards' work is to feel this longing made material. But what is centre of this longing? Is it to create connection or interaction through and beyond the image? I think about Roland Barthes concept of the *punctum*, the detail that pierces, that wounds. A punctum being something that disrupts and in turn transforms. It's what shifts *In All My Glory* from being read as potentially pornographic into something erotic - the key difference between these two being (as described by Barthes), the erotic is something pornographic that has been fissured or disturbed. The erotic carries a detail that rises from the surface of the image that distracts/attracts, a detail that penetrates the viewer so that

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<sup>1</sup> Weil, Simone. *Gravity and Grace*. Translated by Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, Routledge, 2002, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Cha, Yoon Sook. *Decreation and the Ethical Bind: Simone Weil and the Claim of the Other*. Fordham University Press, 2007, pp. 7–9.

when gazing upon the image, you're pulled past the frame and into a reciprocal state of contemplation or fantasy between yourself and what is laid before you, neither inside or outside of it<sup>3</sup>. It becomes the fragile moment between reaching and grasping. The horizon line becomes a breath held too long; the blur of a shadow becomes the aberration of someone you love/d. The punctum is the gravity of these images. Every image is a confession, an acknowledgment of the impossibility of true effacement.

Weil's idea of decreation lingers here. Not destruction, but undoing—the stripping away of ego to make room for intimacy, for faith, for something larger. And yet, even in the undoing, Edwards leaves a trace. The photographs bear their signature, not just in the literal sense but in the way they hum with their longing, their heart beating faintly through the silence. The self-effacement isn't a vanishing act but an offering: *Here I am, reaching for you. Are you reaching back?*

There's a line from Maggie Nelson that feels like it belongs here:

*"I want you to know, if you ever read this, there was a time when I would rather have had you by my side than any one of these words; I would rather have had you by my side than all the blue in the world.*

*But now you are talking as if love were a consolation. Simone Weil warned otherwise. 'Love is not consolation,' she wrote. 'It is light.'*

*All right then, let me try to rephrase. When I was alive, I aimed to be a student not of longing but of light."*<sup>4</sup>

Edwards' work bears the weight of this duality: the desire to exist in the world without disturbing it, alongside an equally urgent need to be seen, witnessed, and understood. Their images embody both surrender and assertion, a simultaneous retreat and advance. This dynamic feels instinctive to Edwards, raising the question: what does "undoing" mean, in the sense of Simone Weil's 'decreation,' for someone who may already be undone? Here, Judith Butler's writings in *Undoing Gender* and *Precarious Life* provide a useful lens. For individuals like Edwards—racialised and marginalised bodies living within the frameworks of a Western colonial state—the systems that govern our world not only define and construct our identities but also render certain lives precarious. At these intersections of marginalisation that Edwards inhabits, they are, in a way, already "undone" in the eyes of the state.

This state of being "already undone" can be understood as both a condition of vulnerability and a position of precarity, where the same systems that confer recognition and legitimacy can also deny them. Yet, it is precisely this vulnerability that forms the foundation of Edwards' work, allowing it to explore and create possibilities for connection and relation. As Butler writes in *Frames of War*, "As a way of being related to what is not me and not fully master-able, vulnerability is a kind of relationship that belongs to that ambiguous region in which receptivity and responsiveness are not clearly separable from one another, and not distinguished as separate moments in a sequence." This ambiguity—where vulnerability is both a form of subjection and a source of transformative potential—mirrors Edwards' artistic practice. Their images traverse this delicate space, turning the precariousness of being "undone" into a vast openness. Through this openness, Edwards forges connections, resists erasure, and asserts their presence in a world that so often seeks to deny it.

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<sup>3</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, Maggie. *Bluets*. Wave Books, 2009, p. 113.

The show's title, *Eventually, I'll Confess, I Walk Into a Loving Nowhere*, feels like a map to this tension. A confession is not only a letting go but also an act of intimacy—a way to be seen through the act of telling. The “loving nowhere” is the space Edwards inhabits and invites us into: a place where connection is not a fixed point but a process, always in motion, always unfolding. Standing before these photographs, you begin to feel the contradictions dissolve. The desire for self-effacement and the longing for witness, to be understood, are no longer opposites but twins, holding hands in the quiet. Edwards doesn't demand that we choose one or the other. Instead, they ask us to stay, to look closer, to let the images—like a second heart—beat in time with our own. Here, every form is a hymn. Every shadow is a prayer. And the beating of the artist's heart, far from disturbing the silence, becomes the silence's tenderest note.