

# Que Van a Dar a la Muerte - That Run Empty Into Death (2020)

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Kenneth L. Field



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## Credits:

Kenneth L. Field: Music, recording, conceptualization and reading selections from Cardenal's *Epigrams*.

Rafaela Acevedo-Field: Reading in Spanish selections from Cardenal's *Coplas a la Muerte de Merton*.

Nathaniel Freeman: Sound and space design, reading selections from Cardenal's *Gethsemani, KY*.

Emily Freeman: Reading selections from Barbara Kingsolver's *Another America: Otra America*.

*Que Van a Dar a la Muerte - That Run Empty Into Death (2020)* is a concept piece completed in 2020 by Kenneth L. Field. The poetry of Ernesto Cardenal (1925-2020) in the original Spanish, English translations by Thomas Merton (1915-1968) of some additional works by Cardenal, and poetry by Barbara Kingsolver (1955) are set against a soundscape of emulated prepared piano - invented by John Cage (1912-1992) - and original recordings of *found objects*.

Ernesto Cardenal – a Nicaraguan priest and poet whose voice figured prominently in the revolution of the 60s and 70s – studied as a novice under Thomas Merton (a highly regarded monk and Christian apologist writer) at the monastery in Gethsemani, Kentucky from 1957-1959. Merton subsequently translated two sets of poetry that Cardenal penned in Spanish (*Gethsemani, KY* and *Epigrams*) into English. Selections from these works have been chosen for this current project. When Thomas Merton met an untimely death in Thailand by electrocution in 1968, Ernesto Cardenal penned *Coplas a la muerte de Merton (Couplets on the Death of Merton)*. Portions of this work are read here in the original Spanish by Rafaela Acevedo-Field. Cardinal begins his *Coplas* with: *Nuestras vidas son los rios que van a dar a la muerte que es la vida* – “Our lives are rivers - that go to (run) empty into death – that is life.” (Pluriverse: Ernesto Cardenal. 2009).

In *Coplas*, Cardenal writes that Merton would have laughed at his “General-Electric-brand death” and that his body was returned to the States in a US Army plane. Other writings of Cardenal included here are selections from *Gethsemani, KY* (1960), in which he muses on his time at the monastery; and *Epigrams (Collected 1961)* which cover a much darker period during the dictator Somoza’s regime in Nicaragua.

Barbara Kingsolver published a book of poetry that pays homage to Latin Americans and Latin America in 1992. In one poem, *The Monster’s Belly*, dedicated to Ernesto Cardenal, she ponders that she could have walked to Gethsemani in her “blunt shoes” and met Cardenal in person. Her other poetry included here paints both light and dark portraits of “the other America.”

## Texts used:

Selections from *Coplas a la muerte de Merton*, In *Poesía completa, Tomo II*, (2008), Ernesto Cardenal.

Selections from *Gethsemani, KY* and *Epigrams* (translated into English by Thomas Merton) in *Ernesto Cardenal: New and Selected Poems (2009)*, Edited by Jonathan Cohen.

Selections from *Another America: Otra America (1992, 1998)*, by Barbara Kingsolver.