

**Death**

The reconciliation of mind to the conditions of life is fundamental to all creation stories… and all acts of creation.

[**the dead**](#thedead)

[**poems**](#poems)

[**music**](#music)

**02/28/2022**

Greg from Minnesota. Friendly guy. Lady’s man. Friendly. Sensual. Libertine.

Should write Gayle to send my sympathies.

10/20/2021

He was living lower now. Humbler. Closer to the soil.

**10/19/2021**

The most important even in our lives and we attempt to think about it as little as possible-- we attempt to abstract it away. Rationalize it as something good and glorious-- but it is shitty and disastrous-- a catastrophe to close your eyes through, huddle up with your legs up to your chest, freight train wind a ‘screaming through.

Death came along and spoke to me and told me I was doing a pretty good job being aliove, but just, you know, don’t take it for granted, he said. And I truly have tried not to. But it isn’t easy. I think it certainly takes a bit of effort to not just take the basic fake that you are alive for granted. We run all sorts of other interference in the middle-- motivating factors that we interpret to inform our most natural and correct course of action. We are cave people attempting to paper over our animal natures with ever thickening plies of papier mache.

**08/25/2021**

Death—anonymous, ambiguous, sudden, perspective renewing, recentering, the work and people’s interpretation and reinterpretation of the work.

**07/12/2021**

**Thoughts collected while listening to *Carrie & Lowell*, composed perhaps to send to Dave C. or Laurel.**

How can we come upon directly or indirectly all those things you’ve ceased to see? Neglected or blocked out. Unnoticed or actively avoided. Unapproachable for whatever reason, rational or otherwise. We know you’re there, but just can’t see you. All of those inexplicable existences. Flitting phantoms. Sweet lingering specters, impressions, loping returns. Rollicking shadows whose dappled casts we stumble among upon this very modern stage.

A curtain opens and the incessant, practiced plucking of a bright guitar is game and winning and braced. Composed. Strong. Present at the funeral, even if slightly disembodied, buffered, distant, prepared to socially receive and engage in the collective grief of the community, of those who have loved how you have loved. Communing in shared love and lose. Feeling somber, weakened, though not without that surprisingly strength that sometimes arrives to support even as we begin to run our naked toes through our brackish gathering grief. Finality, like the infinite, like the forever, is necessarily incomprehensible. Transcendent of understanding. What then to project into that void of our one day becoming- peace or merely pacing?

And then stronger, even superficially sure. We have performed this ritual before. This canned progression. We have expressed pathos. General and personal and all woven in with pleasure and fear and relief and vocation and empathy and performance. Its then though that the untamed past begins to creep in, boil, bubble up. The unresolvedness of it all is inexplicable, impossible to outrun. We approach a darkened silver sea, crystalline light diffuses through the gloaming mists embroidered through and through with hues and deep undertones of the expansive spirit world enclosing in upon us. Again once more into the autumn of our soul. When the skin ceases to keep the weather’s chill from off our aging organs, when the spindly appendages of the stripped bare trees make lattice signs against the marooning blue of the darkening dusk, where we exist within this continental divide, this dimensional fissure, this isolated, far-off place, where we work, where we languish, where we look down and acknowledge and address our very real wounds.

Despite its darkness there is truly something sweet on offer here. Inchoate longing infused with honey and boiled down tree-blood, a sun-ray naivete, slacked-jawed kid candidness. Conceived and achieved harmony. Harmony unimagined, but found. Matched rhythms in footsteps and speech. Turns taken unself-consciously. With kindness. Communion entered in. Understanding. Acceptance. Calm.

But that is certainly not all. We have nauseatingly anticipated the sugar hangover of this saccharine succor. This nostalgic delight. Can’t all be sweetness and light, now can it? We are pulled through to some other way of being, some other acknowledgment of need, separation. The pluckiness has been replaced by an energetic slouching. We are invited, seductively encouraged to lean back and against the incessant strumming, its hypnotic, we follow floating out above the darkening silver plain. We commit to the journey and lose ourselves in the surf of the waves, the unsettled red dust of the singular road, the sudden gusting clouds of fire-ash and falling snow. We alight the scattered debris of where the cyclone barreled through, passing over and above the low-road’s soul-darkening anonymity, its forgotten broken legs and weakly-framed and crumbling shoulder. We have entered wholly now. We travel slow ahead, belabored footfalls to advance us. The full visceral weight has at last roosted on our chest, at last fully approached and pressed, a crush unexpected strength and overwhelming completeness.

And then the quietest song yet, more light, but intense strumming. This time accompanied by rhythmic digital beeping, a drone from an ignored alarm, a street sound filtering subconsciously into our cocoon. And then the crystalline chorus. The silence and darkness contained. We are leaning into the pain and the suffering and the loss. We are reaching out to it, touching it and it is glowing back at us. We have discovered it here, it in this quieting. We have entered into the dream of memory-- the ghost kingdom where our faery tales and folk songs find their footing. The dappled stream and grassy bank of golden filtered light where we emerge once we have passed through that evil Bedlam ward. Where closeness and distance are obscured. Where timelines intertwine and wind about one other like sensual sun-loved vines. Your memories become my memories in this fertile place. And I lay down my thoughts in insubstantial hues, wash by wash until the paper retains its stain.

We stand and face the sun as one. In the sun we are as one. Growing out and up despite our untutored instincts for growth and flourishing and love. We face the sun and the river and smell the grasses and the flowers, seeking out a taste of that life affirming fact that is ever just over there in the rose bush, in the hopeful soil, adrift above protean clouds herding on towards the horizon.

But behind us remains the platinum sea. It swirls with the unanswerable questions. The essence that refuses to be light, plucky, of the sun. The stories that haunt. The knee-jerk traumas that swirl, possessed by their self-directed intensity, the trueness of their acuity in part our deepest proof of life. And among the many, death still yet deeper than any other form. Death becoming life. Life becoming death. Oh, the intricacy of this most essential exchange. Staple meal of the artful and deranged. The phases of the moon fan out before us, educating outside of words—we watch, beholden, the fleeting forms and celestial seasons of our ever sweeping ascension around and through the renewing spheres of being.

And then a resolution. Something of a statement of intent. A wish. A hope. A broken existential oath. Let bygones be gorgons. Slay and discard athat which cannot be brought along. Let go. Try letting go. Feel. Feel the darkness close around. *Water stained writing on the wall*. *Signs and wonders*. *Blood of the moon*. A spiritual impulse, a longing for ancient wisdom. A faith in humanity*--* that it is all worth it always and ever more or will be in the end at last, or could be perhaps if we could just hold on a little longer. A faith in humanity that despite our limitations, our selfishness, there is meaning to this existence. There is goodness and light that overcomes the badness and dark, or at least balances it out sufficiently for life to flourish. That beyond all of these imbalanced weather systems there is a calm, a peace, a silence—a life affirming and sustaining catharsis that is possible, a process and mode of being that can be entered into. A place and a way to approach our wild, untamed, unsettled, unsettling emotions, our inchoate impulses, insecurities, longings, blindnesses.

In the vulnerability of this airy dark, in this pregnant peace, we can compose. We can pluck with energy again. Dial up the enthusiastic sequencer. Recall those tender, long ago remembrances with fondness and warmth. There is a tone with which to approach this compacted mashed up past. There are chords that can be combined to lay down the motely patterns of our broken hearts. There is a wordlessness where that can allow the unconnected to connect, where we can pray beyond our rationale, our well-meant and intentioned and unintended frames. There is a rightness and a wisdom and a freedom and a peace that only exists within this silence. A transcendent state where the one reconciles itself with the many and the many with the one.

And in this humble state of prayer we can finally approach the dead. We quiet and release and enter into a suspended state. We ritually die with the dead. We hold for a moment. Or at least we try. We listen to the language of the decease, the language of the immortal. *I love you more than the world can contain in its ramshackle head*. In acceptance we die. In acceptance we release. In acceptance we are born once again and again.

Calling out to Jesus. Searching for the castle we have lost. *Like my mother, give wings to a stone*. There is beauty in our wretchedness. Our brokenness. Our incompleteness. Our capacity for faith and its necessity. Beauty can be discovered in this broken state, this trampled state, this shattered baseline of being. And this is so important, because we will be broken by this world. We will be broken by our grief. We will be broken by our ambition. We will be broken by the intensity of our desire to feel okay, to feel flow, momentum, to create. We will broken. We will be broken. We, of course, will be broken in time.

And then the blue bucket. Life. Imperfect communication. Loneliness. A divide. Returning to the living. The dead right behind us, rising up, surrounding. Their broken ambitions and loves and hates and hopes and disappointments infuse our own conception of the ever-unfolding mise-en-scene of being. Ragged human wings flap us towards the sun. Sobbing, though somehow still elated, suspended in this soul-strung flight. Stretching out. Rising. Muttering oaths. Intentions. Desires. Needs. Opening that hollow place of necessity, longing, inadequacy, inviting others in. Someone to see my *blue bucket,* someone to understand and accept my *gold*. The silence ever spreading up and through and out without a word. The past if truly listened to does not preach comprehensibly whatsoever. Instead it deftly intones the disparate as the one, the lone as the whole, a low all-harmonizing exhortation—a fog-horn obliterating all conceptions, a bold tolling copper to shew you on ahead and away into the silver mists. *A freight-train wind is coming­, huddle in the paneled hall, while the pines genuflect against the walls.*

**06/26/2021**

Jan and Ryan. Jan’s kindness and grace as his body failed. True terror played out serently over lunch out on the deck with Marcus the home health care professional popping in and out to assist with Jan. His body is completely shutting down. He was strong and smart. An engineering executive. Took the family to China. Living the dream. Middle aged but motivated, working out, had had to overcome a lot of adversity. Had to keep fighting to live. They’d lost they only son in a boating accident. He’d jumped in the water and his friends sped off in the boat as a joke, to leave him, scare him or whatever, they had been drining, Ryan panicked. They came back for him, couldn’t find him, he was gone, gone done below the surface of the lake drown.

Looking back I believe ryan was on the spectrum. When I had visited the family Ryan had been kind to me. I had gone to a football game with one of the daughters. Had worn my UPS hat. Some of her friends had thought I was cute. I had decided not to go with her to hang out with her friends. I had instead hung out with Ryan. He had driven me somewhere. Did we go get food? This must have been close to the time that he dorwn. Why were we at their house? Ws this durnign a Grove City trip?

But years earlier when we had stayed in that house in Marquette and I had slept on the third floor and there had been that lamp that reflected the light and the reflection of the light had made me think of wolf eyes and it had really creeped out. And then one of the daughter’s had moved the lamp for me so that it wouldn’t make me nervous which was kind, but kind of made me feel like a kid and I was embarrassed to have vocalized my irrational fear.

Then they had driven me to Newberry, to the Summersett’s cabin which was one of my favorite places, what with the lake and the green lawn and the town up the road with all the 4th of July festivities—turtle races, a parade with candy, floats, etc, cook outs snacks, Pepsi, games with cousins, wake boarding, campfires, board games.

Ryan could sense my excitement and kept asking me if I was excited. He was really fixating on this and in a way that I felt like he was making fun of me. Looking back Ryan was probably just being friendly in his own slightly aggressive and interrogative way. And then years later he would drown on a lack and his strong, smart father would develop a devastating degenerative condition and the family would be left shattered with no men and only a mother and two daughters. And both of these deaths, this shattering was arbitrary and sensless. Fates imagined in the creative consciousness of a good and loving God? Incomprehensible. The possibility of good creates the possibility for not good. The possibly for bad creates the possibility for non bad.

**03/31/2021**

I still grieve your son, Mrs. Bjork, as I am certain you still do. There is a word for a child who has lost its parents and for a person who has lost their spouse, but there is not word for a parent who has lost a child. There are quite literally just no words for it, nor for a friend who has lost a friend. I have grieved your son—frequently, fragemented, at odd moments, tenderly, angrily, mixed up in the abundant love that I have for my own children, my spouse, my parents, this universal abstract sense of lose, this concrete, pin-pointed specific instance, the truth of the smallness of it, the truth of its infinite magnitude. The mind and soul crushing task of sustaining a balanced perspective and understanding of the two. The ultimate impossibility of it. The release of faith the release of trust and honest effort, the release of capitulation and adjustment of expectation and an understanding of emotions as symptoms of substance, though not mistaking them as substance in themselves.

**04/04/2021**

I really do try to think and reach conclusions that have not been premeditated. The old man at a desk. Peter cruxified upside down, Mama Cass choking on a chicken bone, Kobe Bryant crashing in Helicopter, Rush Limbaugh Dying of lung cancer, RBG, Laurel’s pastor being killed in a car accident, her crying out the glass that had been lodged under her eyelid.

Death—anoynomous, ambiguous, sudden, perspective renewing, recentering—the work and people’s interpretation and reinterptation of the work.

**03/30/2021**

Settle your earthly affairs and keep your knots tied.

Focus on the future one day at a time.

Love your future self.

Love the future selves of the ones you love

In a balanced life affirming way.

Effecting coping with life and maintaining satisfying relationships.

Your family’s future, the future of your neighbors, your community, the country, the continent, the hemisphere, the world, the galaxy the universe and so on and on.

Am I the healthiest I have ever been, or the sickest?

The 5 good addictions:

* Rest
* Play
* Food
* Water
* Air

**02/24/2021**

Pray to the all—send messages to the all, forming intentions, quiet heart.

Theologically what happens when you pray? Is it about feeling better? Or are you really doing something concretely helpful and supportive for someone and if so how does this dynamic operate? I think the way I understand it, the sentiment is lovely but I’m not sure if I am understanding it right—take someone’s pain to your heart and empathize with it.

We stood and prayed because we were Christians and then went to a diner with my mother and a few odd cousins to eat French Fries and drink Root beer while my mother had a coffee and my father was off grieving with his sibling. Our good grandmother gone. Sweet loving grandmother of effusive praise.

By the time I could have really gotten to know you, I was lost away entangling my days in unacknowledged change.

Hoping upon hope that words would be unnecessary to attach to actions that just sort of happened, developments that merely just developed. Organic. Synergy seeking. Life had unfolded. Knowing had replaced unknowing. New questions replaced old.

By then I had already traded in my mother bed Zoroastrian apocalypse for my own equally manufactured existential conception of our inevitable cessation: *not with a bang, but a whimper*—not with an explosion, by implosion, not to the evermore, but to the never was.

I am not exactly sure why, but just ceasing to exist doesn’t really bother me all that much. I am not ready to cease to exist. I think there are still more things that I would like to write and certainly things that I would like to read and experiences I would like to have and I want to live for my girls and be a good father for them, but just simply boiled down to the physical dynamics of being here and then not and after not, just not existing, that doesn’t freak me out. I go to bed each night with little concern for walking up the next morning, though up until now, I have always been fortunate enough to do so.

**02/21/2021**

**Heart held, standing.**

**Still not quite fully formed.**

**By this point, mostly honest,**

**two and two at last entwined.**

**Each generation each**

**leading the last**

**softly into the silence.**

**You have to give people the permission to die. You have to let them go. You have to find a new interface with them beyond the grave. Much like I am separated from my friend, but I am still communing with them in my thoughts and my sentiments and my memories and I am compilling over time something of the essence of that friendship, that connection and I am sending that back to them, a mirror, a collage, a new line in the conversation. Because we are not dead. Because we can communicate and continue to create. And continue to overcome that which is difficult and that which would grind us down and fragment us and distract us from life. All that which distracts us from life is death. Life affirms life. Death degrads it and invalidates it and obscures it. Makes one think, you know life is not so good, life is very hard and complicated and contingent and unkind and fraught and boring and expensive and painful and incomprehensible. Death—nothingness, stillness, silence, oblivion is beginning to sound appealing. I have heard old people say that they don’t know how much more time they erally want to stick around. They have lost their lust for life. They have lost their interest in life. Their passion. Their sex drive is diminished, they no longer work in the way that they used to, ma perhaps feel that they are not productive, not useful, not interesting, cannot hear well, see well, move well, digest things well, and everything is changing faster and faster and faster. It is all very unsettling.**

02/07/2021

***Underpinning all you are is a vast ground of silence.***

**POEMS**

***Beating back the hands of time***

Beating back the hands of time.

Beating them back.

Centuries recede in sleep,

only to bubble back up again

when the day breaks

to pop the Sol pinata.

Scattering our just collected stones

All about

at random

in the rough.

Job stress. Kid stress. Down. Stressed. Messed up.

Getting down. Getting up. Broken. Clown faced.

Standard. Below average. In the thorns.

Wild. Caged. Enraged. Age after age.

Night falls again on the blue, green canyon.

The waters have returned and brought with them life.

Life began here and would begin here again,

though long gone were the days

when we were young

and oh, so gallantly unprepared.

Memories return like dreams:

sartorial suit, heavy frames,

affected city-speak, bangs,

a cigarette holder from J.S. Dupont,

a scarf for a tie by Yves Saint Laurent.

And so yes, please, now, yes, please—

*let my people go*.

Rust or luster,

what will linger

when I’m busted?

Art deco lounge sounds surround—

lifting up,

oppressing to the sky.

A rich pitch shifts,

then abruptly cinches—

pebble to a pond

but not a ripple,

just the sky.

***Once upon a time***

Once upon a time

there was a little baby.

With golden hair,

who danced out in the sun.

Once upon a time

there was a little baby.

Oh, how we loved

to watch that baby run.

She ran to the right, she ran to the left.

Every turn, every gesture, agile and deft.

She ran to left, she ran to the right.

Then away, off away after silver starlight.

As the moon rose above the brackish green hills

The child’s morning locks bled white

Wavering strands of her pearly fair thread

Shimmered in the platinum night.

Home again, home again.

Home again, home.

ascend into silvery light.

Home again, home again.

Home again, home.

At home in the silvery night.

While down in the dale, a farmerman

and his cow and his horse and Frau Ann,

Pray to the Lord with their good neighbor kin.

Please bring back our baby again.

Please bring back our baby,

our baby again

Bring her back into our flailing arms.

But away, away, away she has flown

Off into the silvery beyond.

Up into the spheres

Where the road goes and goes

Where the way’s just a river tears.

In the sky, in the sky

Where by and by

the silver-shrill wills you some year.

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Where by and by

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**Border Crossings (transcribe from recording… somehow lost originall!!)**

Now take all my money,

my broken blue jeans.

My sense of the field,

my strategic defeats.

My order of needs,

my trusty steed.

All of the road weary wisdom

I’ve cribbed.

Oh, bring back my baby.

She’s left me forsooth.

She fled south,

I’m stuck in Duluth.

All the money is gone

and the geese have all flown

over borders into

the unknown.

**Pen and paper**

This all began as a supposedly

controlled stain on a blank yellow plain,

smartly ruled by whip-straight

horizontal stripes of blue,

and a printed-on pair of crimson rays

demarking the start margin

top to bottom, perpendicularly precise.

Where to the left I begin,

in my right silence,

mending fences in myself,

confronting labyrinths,

violence. Following ways

that wind to move me

in my blindness,

my indecisions,

my flagging good taste.

.

**What to say to loss**

Look out to see

the horizon-line

observe you back

from impossibly far

away.

**Cold**

People pelting other people’s cars

with iron-ore pellets

from slingshots

from parsonage windows to parking lots—

April and cold—

Long cold—

Cold long after the bay breaks up—

Slow, cold start to track—

Shuffle in-line indoors,

suck dry air up and down stairs—

Or out—

cold spring in lungs, very cold,

cough from cold so cold,

cough but run,

coughing, but still running in the cold.

**Some color to remind one of spring**

Some color to remind one of spring, full spring—

Not cruel, early, unblossomed spring.

Not moody, doom-gray, still as yet, unbudded spring.

And certainly not sudden snowstorm spring,

not with her frozen, strangled maidens—

composed, supine, dead and yellow in the snow.

**Rosehill above the bay**

Phoned home to a dead dial tone.

Sought solace under golden maples up on Rosehill,

behind the concrete ramparts where the rich dead have their stone homes:

compact, efficient like the ice shacks in winter on the Bay of the Bear—

small orange flags fanned out in the snow, marking catches as they come.

And three boys in the twilight far out on the white desert in the cold—

Three boys trudging and sliding and pushing and joking and cussing in the cold.

Where we have known better and we have not known better.

And the history of the world is in the water below the ice—

Where fish do not die in their cold bloodedness—

And above— we three, release our beings

breath by breath into the darkening dusk.

On a Rabbit moon, in a Rat year,

with a train horn lowing from across the bay.

At home grieving, writing poems.

Balm to heal a wound? Carry one?

Bring it water. Bring it air.

Overcoming grief is a creative act, no?

*Everything is as distant as the stars and I am here and you are where you are.*

*No order. No middle road. Nothing can be predicted. Nothing can be planned.*

*We are fire flies pulsating in the dark.*

Earth causeways through marshlands

Patricide hanged in a crossroads hamlet.

New sawn lumber.

Haggard boy—

*All history present in that viage—*

*The child is the father of the man.*

**THE DEAD**

Justin Bjork

Heidi Doyle

Jan Schmidt

Ryan Schmidt

Grace Buckman

Patricia Dyer (nee Steger)

Richard Dyer

Gardner Whitmer

Debbie Whitmer

Madine Baker (nee English)

Cecil Baker

Craig Douglas Baker

The Chaignot Twins

Braden the optimistic linguist

Dolores Augusten

Mrs. Rabatoie(sp?)

Mr. Young

Mr. Coyne

Mr. Mauer

Chuck Frasier

Mr. Houle

Mr. Prins

Mr. Merlot

Mr. Nicholas

Mr. Gendron

Mrs. Gendron

Mr. Lindahl

Mr. Goodman

Mr. Lahtenan(sp?)

I really do try to think and reach conclusions that have not been premeditated. The old man at a desk. Peter crucified upside down, Mama Cass choking on a chicken bone, Kobe Bryant crashing in Helicopter, Rush Limbaugh Dying of lung cancer, RBG, Laurel’s pastor being killed in a car accident, her crying out the glass that had been lodged under her eyelid.

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**MUSIC**

* *Ghosteen*, Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds
* *Carrie & Lowell,* Sufjan Stevens

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and a pair of red vertical rays

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about my blindness,

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**Cold**

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**Color for a Colorless Season**

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**Golden Maples / White desert at dusk**

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***While the Pines Genuflect against the Walls***

Dusk swimming off the dock,

blue day becomes blue night—

fire crackles on the fourth of July.

Sirens rent the deep wood’s peace—

freezing mother’s blood in her waterbed.

A freight-train wind is coming—

huddle in the hall.

Wait it out, my children—

while the pines genuflect against the walls.

02/12/2022

Named the stretch of Damen between Irving Park and Lawerance -- that mile we travel back and forth on all the time to get esme to school, its one of my consistent jogging routes. Northin along Ravenswood and then over to Damen at Lawerance for a two mile loop or up another half mile to foster for a three mile out and back loop.

02/25/2021

Or Justin’s laconic, “Whatcha doin’, dummy?” The hilarity of this curmudgeonly response—this Lettermen like charismatic cantankerousness and iracibility that couldn’t completely obscure the underlying goodwill and twinkling hilarity. Justin made you laugh. You wanted to make Justin laugh. Locus of plans. Seeing what developed. Meeting up. Doing what? What? God knows what? Who cares! Let’s just do something. Play cards. Ride bikes. Throw the frisbee. Eat something. Listen to music. Drive somewhere.

12/23/2020

Not presuming to enter into your grief, but what a good dude. What a funny, lively, wild, goofy, engaged, fun, loving dude. Cancer took him to some deep depths—I believe he was embittered—did he live life? He suffered more than any of us. We were stupid and unwise. And Delveaux and Jenny losing a boy to brain cancer and his brother going to prison for molesting a child and then Jenny’s brother dying in that car accident and her other bother dying at 25 after being mostly incapacitated his whole life and in the care of his mother.

The cacaphonic symphonies of circumstances and situations. Matixes of afections, emotions loyalties, fears, uncertainties, certainties, irrational certainties, irrational uncertainties .

Apollo vs. Dionysous  
Intellect vs. emotion

Cyclical/analytic/ repeatable—emotional/superlative/ unique/ unrepeatable

A meditation in the mind of GOD.

We are forever children just trying to get into our parents head so that they will do what we want them to do.

Our intellects are robust—which is necessary for untangling our received irrational certainties and uncertainties which seek to dominate our logic machine.

11/24/2020

On my walk today I thought about Justin’s funeral and I wrote some notes about his funeral. In the process of getting close to that day I had to descend a bit, but I got some notes down, so I am hopeful that I will be able to return to the project easier when I come across the notes again.

Crazy shit like I copied his shoes when we were 12. Now I’m 41. He died of cancer a few years back, but I still think about him and blame myself for buying the shoes he had wanted and then feeling all the joy and enthusiasm go out of the purchase when I realized what I had done and how I had made him feel. He was so mad. Getting mad was kind of his thing though wasn’t it. He was very good at being indignant. He had had a lot to be indignate about. How do you reconcile a childhood cancer diagnosis. Brain tumor. What should you be serious about? What should get your attention? Huh? I was fucking losing my mind. I had a nervous breakdown at the funeral, or a panic attack or whatever. I saw his Ex and then my Ex. Sneaking out to smoke a cigarette, getting back in the line after they weren’t letting people through, being one of the last people to great the family. Confronting that this is about Justin, but that it is also really about me— there are ways to research sometimes to get out of your fixed perspective, but some kind of personal essay about Justin’s funeral could potentially be wonderful, cathartic, helpful.

Tater, the athlete. Wrestler, football player. Aggressive, rangy bully strong, what girls was he hooking up with in high school. College he apparrantly goes full student athlete and sucks the golden liqueur center of it all and images foggy headed and stagging, taking a position as an athletic coordinator in a farflung rural county where his unreflective bumbling bravado still passes as athleticism and is therefore somehow sort of academic.

He has a distant look in his eye. Does he recognize me? I’ve heard he is a little fried— is he fried— I talk to his dad, a cop, he’s always been such a dick, I talk to him for two seconds and he still seems like a dick, I see my teacher after I walk around outside smoking like a psyche ward patient— I play up some good memories of Justin, memorializing him as the catalyst and unifying glue of our friend group. I suddenly feel like I am talking too loud. Her husband is there though he won’t be there much longer, maybe a year or two, but none of us know this now, it is not his funeral after all, and I am thinking now about how I should have written to her after his death, I didn’t write, I feel I am lost to many people. Too lost to too many people, that I had not thought I would lose. But I lost them in my many moves and maturing energy depleting and my becoming a parent and working an ill-fitting job that has demanded a lot from me and that for many years I have worked the fragmented existence of not having consecutive days off and not having fixed days off and not having holiday weekends, though I am not harping on this to hammer out some pathetic sob story, but as part of my honest assessment at 41 of where I am exactly right now. And where have I been. I think this is an objectively important question.

Where am I?

How did I get here?

What have I learned about the way to move forward?

10/12/2020

I think about Justin a lot. But not deeply… not much beyond— shit! He’s gone, he had a short life, he fucking got ripped off, Thinking off he and Casey aall stoned on pain pills out in the woods around the fire as the girls slept in the trailer. And he was dead by Christmas. And was that in the summer, or it was not. Casey at home in Kipling in a family house with his four kids and his brother has four kids and they are making a life for themselves. Thse are incredibly complicated and fraught things. There are ocean going liners converging.