

## 2.1

Other than a bloody nose, today has been surreal and wonderful.

The month began, for me, somewhere in the timezones over the Atlantic, and by the first dawn I was waiting for Oskar in the Barcelona airport. His taxi was broken, and his brother would come in an hour, and in the meanwhile, I had a kind of lox-on-bread and a latte and opened an email to find I'd been rejected from a grad school in Texas. I called my brother, and he didn't pick up, and Oskar's brother came and we drove at 90 miles an hour to Can Serrat.

From what I can tell, Can Serrat is this: a farmhouse not two minutes down a dirt road off the highway, in a grove that becomes instantly quiet, sun flecked, and old. The house reminds me of a Silk Road caravanserai, if the silk traders had been well-heeled horses on vacation, and with an affinity for wine. It sits as if in a crater, the front rim guarded by trees, the back pushing against a sandstone crust. It's like the stage of an amphitheater, with no audience, and no intention to send out invites.

Inside, wood and more wood, and brick arches and the smell of dried paint. There is a vast brick cave of open-plan studios, and an ancient printing machine shiny with black grease around the gears.

Today, a crew of workmen and women are trimming and cleaning and hauling branches. Outside there are cats, and Natasha, the only other artist I've seen in the big empty house.

Soon, she told me about the wild boars.

"No one believes me, but I've heard them. You think I'm hallucinating." I said I didn't, and that we could eat them if we needed. She is a vegetarian, she told me.

There, somewhere in the woods, she also had found what she thought was shrapnel from an exploded bomb.

"So, it's pretty good here." She laughed. She rolled a second cigarette. For some reason — and this doesn't happen always watching people smoke — I remembered the first cigarette I accepted deliberately. It was in jail in China, and I accepted because it was a rare peace offering I didn't dare spurn.

What I know about Natasha:

She hates Macedonia. But not really, she says. She sounds like she loves the place for what it could be, and hates it for what it is. Money laundering, a fascist ruler worse than Trump, she says. (She is from there. And wondered why on earth I knew about Skopje and its cement on cement on garish monuments on cement)

She is allergic to bees. We have already discussed what she would do if she were stung again. She has pills which could keep her moving for twenty minutes. Then she'd run to the highway.

She is applying to grad schools. She feels guilty for being the artist in residence and not doing art in residence. She thought I was responsible because I had a notepad out by my computer, already at work after my red-eye into town.

I had already lost a pen, a fancy pen that was a gift from a friend who would visit soon.

—

And later at night I met Emil and Albert, Danish and Norwegian, working on films. We talked about traveling and stereotypes, and the expensiveness of Norway — where they both lived now. They used to live in collectives when they were in art school, and dumpster diving was a way to make ends meet in a country with an endless meat supply.

“It’s crazy what people throw away,” Albert said. His old apartment was across from the fanciest Norwegian supermarket. One day, he found a nice, neat package of whale steaks.

We talked about how damn good it was. Sorry, whales. You’re still delicious.

“We used to be able to find enough meat in the dumpsters to have barbecues for a hundred people.”

Now they lived in Oslo, where all the dumpsters were locked.

## 2.2

I was frustrated by how frustrated I was that one of the many cats wouldn't leave me alone while I ate lunch. She — and I'm assuming that entirely — kept hopping onto the table, and seemed to learned nothing each time I prodded her with a long grass.

Natasha didn't get her applications in on time, she thinks. She says you are only allowed to apply once per lifetime, and she wasted hers on an application that didn't go through. I said that was a paradox; that either it went through and would be considered, or it didn't, and she'd be eligible to apply (again) for the first time. We talked about American grad schools, and she said it was helpful.

I ran as it got dark, up the hill behind the house chased by the resident dog who is obsessed with playing fetch with a deflated volleyball, and the mountain appeared. The air around the mountain was pink-orange, perhaps catching the light from the city miles away. Everything else got darker, and with the little floating specks in my eyes that have appeared since the months of near-unbearable stresses, I kept thinking I saw movement in the brush.

## 2.3

I know you might like this more, or appreciate it, but when you eat weed chocolate in the morning and then watch stand-up (a comedian you've been compared to, but never thought you would like because he was also the favorite comedian of a person you had no respect for) — that morning does not feel as amazing as you think it might.

Because I feel that I'm not doing *enough*. And if you were doing this, you might, or you are assuming you would, and you're probably right. I can't appreciate anything anymore, maybe.

—

All pot does is makes me less aware of myself. And more *involved* in the moment. (It also makes be less able to control how I appear — as I am not nearly on as high alert for my presentations to others.)

But still, my thoughts return to critique every so often — and that is enough to put the entire effect in tension.

—

I'm still distracting myself as hard as I can from the present by living in unsustainably good set-ups. I don't feel like I'm able to do this well, because it's what I've always done. I can imagine what a writer's retreat must be like for someone has a kids, a life, a job, a family, *commitments...* If I just wrote and had confidence, I could fill a thousand pages in a week. (Blank pages aren't my job these days, anyway.) But I critique so much, it's impossible to know whether the goodness comes from the gut or from *the fact that* I'm someone who critiques this much. (Basically: natural talent vs. nurtured ability).

I don't trust anyone's judgments as they present them to me; it feels almost like paranoia except that I'm not afraid or agoraphobic because of it. I think of that lack-of-trust from an academic distance, except for a kind of sadness it gives me: that I'll never be able to fully connect with anyone.

—

In the morning or afternoon when they are making coffee, the Scandinavians always ask me if I'd like some. The one time I did, they brought it to me.

I'd like my world to work like that — automatic with simple favors that cost a person little and offer a person much more (in convenience, if not also in connection) — but it doesn't.

I wondered if it was a cultural thing. Basically: that in Norway, this was consciously necessary or unconsciously the right thing to do. But in America: to offer someone coffee is to engage in a conversation, to imply a kind of connection. Perhaps that is too forward? And to bring it someone is to go even further with the favor. Why cross the line between individuals even

more? And does it imply that I am subservient in this relationship? How can I assume they'd reciprocate?)

—

A great example of the variables at play in translation:

“We wither away but they wane not...”  
from the Arabic: *balliini wa laa ta ballii*

In Arabic, The sounds create a real kind of internal rhyming, especially with the first and last words, that doesn't exist in English (except for the shared “W”).

The syntax in English also draws attention away from the verbs (they are neither premier or final).

Also: in Arabic the verb used for “wither” and “wane” is the same. This shows how we might think in ways that are larger than individual words. We are thinking in ideas that are more abstract. (I would argue this applies to both the English and Arabic — that withering and waning are not in contrast with each other in the ears of the reader.)

The English contains a very minor semantic contrast, and the Arabic has a much more symmetrical structure of sounds.

—

Why am I writing this at all? What an atrocious and shameful waste of time.

If you are reading it now, and you want to like it, you might find it astounding

**If a diary falls in the forest and no one is around to read it, was it all a waste? (What if the diary was only written to be read?)**

—

How can we ever know what is interesting? How can we commit to talking about it? — when, to talk about it is to imply that the other didn't know. (Does that only seem unwelcome because it might hurt their feelings? and/or hurt your connection?)

—

To sing a song with another is to have so many shared meaning coming at you all at once. Take the translation for above, for example — if I knew that you noticed all of that, too, already, I'd feel connected with you. Our minds must be kindred spirits. So: if I felt that about an entire song (even if I wasn't noticing quite so much per word) — I'd feel joined to my fellow singers.

Or: as we do so often in the modern world: we can look at that as a kind of cheap thrill. People chanting and singing together must be brainwashed in some way. Thank the God-who-doesn't-rationally-exist that we are too smart/informed/enlightened to think that way. Logically, though, it may be better than the alternative: connection and community as weighed against a science that depends on "material" evidence ("connection" is fluffy and irrelevant and childish if I can't see it).

Whether this is come about through this kind of legal reasoning or through a feeling in the bonds that it's a better way to be — there's something to look at here. It is: to not assume that soccer chants and crooner ballads sung by the audience are somehow *less than*. The question, instead is: do any/some/all of these kinds of "ad hoc communities" do more harm than good?

—

The most important thing is knowing how to read, not what to read, or what the words mean. Tell me I'm reading Shakespeare, and the words of a kindergartener turn to gold. Tell me these are the words of a murderer, and I'll see malice behind them, even where it isn't.

—

For people-in-the-know, refer to things by the acronyms only people-in-the-know would use. If you don't, and there really is one (e.g. The American Journal of Sociology, is only ever "AJS"), you'll be outed as an outsider. If you do, and you're wrong (do your research), it's possible even the man in-the-know will question himself.

—

Nirvikar told me today to focus on the idea first, and methods later. The young academic gets so tangled in trying to make his ideas fit the methods that a) could work and b) are respected, that he is willing to pervert his initial curiosity — sometimes even past the point where it becomes no longer worth it. If you will no longer be curious about the answer to your question (or understand how this answer might then be used to answer a bigger question you are curious about), then you will never have the right kind of energy to keep asking it.

—

Remember, if I ever give you a piece of advice, it is only advice as to how to be more like me — or less. Those are my two directions. How could I know any other?

—

Maybe the only difference between having had a good day and having had a bad one is saying you had a good one. (Or: is saying you've done enough.)

Am I repeating myself?

—

What is the difference between:

Author/TV Host/Sociologist  
and  
Sociologist/Author/TV Host  
and  
Sociologist/TV Host/Author  
and  
Author/Sociologist/TV Host  
and  
TV Host/Author/Sociologist  
and  
TV/Host Sociologist/Author

I think, each influences the interpretation of what comes after, and becomes a function (derivative) of everything that comes before.

—

Amazing: outside they have been playing the absolute greatest classic rock and roll hits.

“Live Forever” is wailing outside.

I realize I’ve been tuning it out for hours, except that all the emotional “fuck yeah!” that comes with it has been seeping unconsciously into my bones.

And together, me and the Scandinavians acknowledge how awesome and silly and distracting and silly it is. We’re laughing.

*I send an S.O.S. to the World, I send an S.O.S. to the world...*

—

We say: do not change yourself.

Because changing something superficial — the shape of a nose, a tooth, skin, wrinkles... — is an implicit agreement with the fact that those things “matter”.

But not always can the refrain from engaging with a system weaken that system. It may be that voiceless protest will be devoured by the machine that sees silence as something even easier to trample. And what of the apathetic or the naive? Silence will not get through to them either.

And so: sometimes if you want to discuss something that does matter, you might have to address — to yourself — something that doesn't. If the perception of my tooth makes it so that others are not listening to what I'm really saying ("that's not what I'm talking about!" "let me finish!" "if only you'd let me finish, I'd...") — then it might be worth dealing with the former to save the fight in the latter.

There is a difference between fighting to save the world and fighting to save a world worth saving. There is a difference between living a life and living a life worth living.

—

The origin of the word "viz." (i.e., "i.e.") seems to say a lot first about Eastern European languages, and by implication, about communality masked by difference:

*ORIGIN: abbreviation of **videlicet**, z being a medieval Latin symbol for -et.*

To me: that might mean other Latin-influenced languages might have more Zs than we do. And if they did, and we tried replacing them with "et" — we might see where the written has separated from the spoken, and then re-codified itself as the spoken again, to mask the change — to make it seem as if no change had ever happened and difference had been there all along.

—



## 2.4

And tonight we went from bar to bar (there are two bars/restaurants in El Bruc) and talked about life and the complacency of society. I wish I had time to write it all down, but it was all so true — and so sad — and so true, that all I could do is ruin it. And I hardly remember it anyway.

—

If everyone smiles at you, you believe the world is smiling.

—

We said jiveli and skol and prost and cheers.

2.5

Whores and fake cocaine and a gray sunrise.

2.6.

In the course of the day, I hung out with a hedge fund friend who spent a few hundred dollars in our casual night out and an artist friend who made every Euro count for him, and who bought tiny bags of mushrooms and LSD and opium, to eat.

I don't mean to say they are vastly different — they're not, not in the way that friendships work, but they could have been. I don't know what I mean to say.

2.7.

I discover the house bit by bit, because they never gave me a tour.

Above the second living room, in the southern wing closer to the hills, there is a row of three tiny bedrooms with floors that look as if they might give way. What kinds of Crusaders would have stayed here? Would it have been a treat?

2.8.

It's as if we had a conversation about all the things I care about, wrapped into one, braided perfectly, like a challah with 14 strands, and each of those made of 3 others. It was beautiful and well arced, and when it ended I felt satisfied.

But I forget now what it looked like, and but I have only this 4 hours recording of the second half of our post-dinner conversation, and all of that is drowned out by the Spanish radio playing, at least for the first half, classic American rock and roll and eighties pop that the Norwegians and Danes and Macedonians knew better than I did.

—

Such a big problem that I never what a “normal amount” to get done is, and so I don't know how to measure myself — and so I think I'm never doing enough. If I'm sure it's normal to work 8 hours a day, then I know 15 is a lot. And if I know writing 10 pages a day is a lot, then I know 20 is a a ton. But if those pages come easily... is that not as hard as it is supposed to be?

If today I have only read 30 pages of my own work, editing in a very tiny way, is that enough or a lot? Do my justifications come from laziness or...

You can learn everything from anything  
But only a fool thinks he ever has

---

We like entertainment because when we don't know what to talk about, we can talk about work, and the world understands. *I was making this show for this place. Oh, you know it?* (Of course you do. That's why I've been doing it.) And when you realize that you do understand, and you relate, and you rarely relate to people who work in worlds so different than yours, you might think that I'm above you — that I have a freedom you don't have — that I've come from a different world. We call this glamorous sometimes — and *glamour* was once used by the Scots to mean “magic”, and before that in Latin to mean “learning”. Instead, we have used our TV magic to avoid learning much — so you'd think we had.

---

Am I just worried about living in a new climate because I'm not sure what I would wear?

(Or, do I need the strong seasons because I need to change who I am, constantly, always, over and over; and I can walk the curves perfectly, but I cannot walk in a straight line.)

2.10

“Is that going to be the thing that sinks you?” Sam said. “Living somewhere new?”

2.14

I talked to an older woman I had talked to about television. We had been exchanging a few emails back and forth, on Gmail. She hadn't responded in a while, and I sent her something a couple days back.

Then, Facebook suggested a friend.

It wasn't her — we were already friends.

It was a person she had taken me to meet once about two years ago in Los Angeles. We had one mutual friend. Had I not spoken to her recently, I might not have even remembered her name.



2.16

I think in circles, but I write in lines.

(When I unravel them, will you be able to make sense of it all?)

2.17

People, I am losing the capacity to see things from your perspective.  
(I'd rather die than live this loss.)

---

The irony is too much — see how funny this is:

What was I working for all these years? If I had to say what I wanted, it would have been to live somewhere where I could do as many things as I wanted to do as often as I wanted to do them with the people I liked most and a person I could love infinitely and to live in a nice place that let me do what i need to do that I could have people over at and they'd be impressed but not distanced from me and it would reflect my personality fairly (if a bit aspirationally) and my work would be both cool and satisfying, internally and externally because both can affect the other, and I would be working directly with people and I would see that I was helping them and I would know I was connecting but the work would support my life and not my life supporting my work and i would love and be loved.

And then, I quit my job-apartment-relationship-location because I was going to risk that loss to be more likely to eventually get the things I wanted. I forgot for one moment what I wanted. In that moment, I made a bad trade because I forgot whose hand I was trading with. And right then, I gave up my chance to live somewhere where I could do as many things as I wanted to do as often as I wanted to do them with the people I liked most and a person I could love infinitely and to live in a nice place that let me do what i need to do that I could have people over at and they'd be impressed but not distanced from me and it would reflect my personality fairly (if a bit aspirationally) and my work would be both cool and satisfying, internally and externally because both can affect the other, and I would be working directly with people and I would see that I was helping them and I would know I was connecting but the work would support my life and not my life supporting my work and i would love and be loved.

---

She moved from across the table to the head, to sit next to him and not facing him. "Less confrontation!" she said. So different to speak openly.

2.19

I'll admit that I romanticize drinking, if only because I'd rather die drunk than die sober.

2.21

If there is no ladder, and you are never knocked down a peg, you will never know if there is a rung above.

And what if the only thing that keeps you moving is the thought of something higher?

—

I only ever knew where I stood when I felt rejection. And because when I felt the limit, the rejections came not as a single peg, but all the way down to the bottom.

2.24

It's funny. They say curiosity killed the cat, but curiosity is what has kept me alive. If I was curious enough to wait to find out how something turned out, then maybe I could keep going. As soon as I actually can't care at all what might happen, that'll be it.

—

I don't think I will ever shake these absolutes.

Soon, I will have to choose a side — because I am far too tired of the fight. It is clear to see who is winning now, and I can see no precedent for a come-from-behind in something like this.

### 3.10

You call me a natural, but it is the opposite.

I've had to learn so many things other people knew naturally.

I had to learn not to throw tantrums, because it would have consequences a, b, and c, and might potentially lead to d, and runs the risk of triggering chain reactions towards, e, f, g, h, and i. We all have to learn not to throw tantrums, but how much convincing did it take you? How many *reasons*?

I had to learn that you should look people in the eye when talking — not away because you wanted not to be distracted by their face when you listened to their words. Or you didn't want them to feel you were judging.

But.

Because I've gone through the process of learning, I can see many gears moving in fine detail where another might see only a smooth machine. I have taken apart the watch, and so I feel as if I know more about how it works, how one piece affects another, and what might be the effects of and solutions to a problem deep down in the cogs.

If I am a natural it is because after all this, I have learned how to learn. The process is now, for me, on a different level of abstraction (the *idea* of learning) — and then applied to a particular case (*something* to learn). It is easier to carry out a habit than it is to learn a new game.

But this doesn't mean anything about a person's value. It is neither compliment nor critique. There is nothing *better* or *worse* about the *person* with knowledge earned, and the person with knowledge absorbed. (There should be no distinction in the values of nature and nurture.) We are unequal in our opportunities but equal in our potential as humans.

3/25

I say, ‘I like to think that...,’ because I know I’m wrong to hold onto that thought; and I am still clinging to it, and I have not yet learned to let it go.

4.5

When I look back everything is sweeter than it will ever be; even though I have felt the pain



4.28

Way too late, it's all fuzzy now. But it was fuzzy then, too, so unfurrow those brows so you can refurrow them ...

Rita —> ppp.

Ex meetings x2

Rita

Random

- alla, random islamic-sounding name. sacrilege in that language, but still

### 5.3

I think the worst is to know what you don't have, and you'll never have. The worst is to know a kind of bliss that you *chose* to forgo, for the safer route, the surer one.

And that's where I think we're different — or, I should say, where we have been different. And as we get older, I think I grow to be more like you were, and you become more like me. For me, a certain kind of pragmatism takes hold — it's either that or the noose — and for you, you start to see, perhaps, the draw of the glimmering ideal, because now you have gotten everything that caution has to give, and still you want.

## 5.9

The end of all these dreams is now — when my place in the scheme of things is determined by the gatekeepers who say, bluntly: you are not famous enough.

The trouble is, this dream was born at a time when celebrity functioned differently, when those in positions of power made some decisions on faith and not on data — and I plotted my course to hit the marks I thought might be worth something. Along the way, those were devalued, others came into existence, and now the road I've been trudging along is finished.

6.19

Funny: even their cat is antisocial.

6.28

In a world where the greatest value is “how much attention is getting paid to me,” the question of *what to do* is secondary. When you will be noticed if do something, and you will not be noticed for not to do something: there is no choice.

I recognize what a blessing it would have been just to be able to write all day, and read what I wanted, and then hang out with who I wanted. Now it’s like, if I got home, all I’d want to do is be mindless. But to have the energy *and* the time — what an absolute blessing to be able to just do it! All day!

— And I see why people want to be around that so much, even if they don’t want to be subject to all that solitude or pressure. Because its such an unfiltered way of being; it’s like being around a stallion, or some pure force, something special.

All I wanted was people’s attention. I actually behaved and desired what they say is much more common today: needing attention. And that is not new to this age, but it happens for more people maybe, or for longer — than just for the movie stars and politicians and fame-seekers of the past. And yet I didn’t do the things people do today to sate that desire. So I’m both ahead-of-my-time and behind-the-curve. And that feels so goddamn brutal.

### 8.3

Weird that the girl I'm imagining fucking in my dreams is someone I knew so tangentially in school. Can't remember how I knew her at all.

But she has a body and a skin tone that goes right in between the two girls I think about most now. And, more importantly, or irrelevantly, the balance between severity and caring, confidence and uncertainty — those are split down the middle too.

I love this girl in my dreams

I would check Facebook, but I am almost certain she's married. And she's beautiful and the pictures could only do me harm.

Or... by forbidding myself from them, I have given them power — like all taboos. Goddamnit.

To resist a taboo is to strengthen it further; that's what makes them so powerful.

Maybe I'll look. Is it better to resist or to look and try not to obsess?

Am I obsessing already?

Of course. Shit, of course I am.

Is everything lost because I've already had this argument?

-

It is raining hard, and this studio apartment is always dark, and my arm is cut and bruised from a bike crash (because why not attach a bicycle to a motorbike by a towline and careen through the rain), and my jaw is cracking in all directions, and I can't see any reason to go on.

-

If I had been 5 years younger, 3 perhaps; I would have embraced social media like an outlet for my loneliness. And the world might have responded because I really did have things to show. — But that resistance: I forced the resistance. The sin of self-promotion and false modesty or blatant self-praise... I wanted to resist it. And that made me want it more, and it made the world know me less, and the mental effort taken to peacekeep those horrific borderlands....

8.8.

I don't know if that fact that I'm crying or about to means that I shouldn't pull the trigger. I don't have a trigger to pull exactly, but I mean — does that mean I shouldn't jump?

I think the tears are tears of nostalgia — like a laugh of recognition. I know that those moments could have felt great (I know, though, that I was so insecure in not knowing what they might yield that I didn't enjoy them — that is, I was too stressed to notice what the happiness was because I was too worried they would only end up as pleasant memories, they would only end up as a benchmark to compare to — and a benchmark so positive that all else would seem like shit in its shadow). I am nostalgic for the time when those were the only things I worried about; but I also know that they are not coming back. So: I cry a laugh of recognition; and must carry on.

---

Narcissistic sure — but because I see me as the thing that needs to be saved; and so I become the object of my own attention.

I will kill myself. I am the murderer and the murderer; or the salvation and the saved. How can I say that in less grandiose terms?

---

so easy  
to imagine terrorism  
misguided — ut once you are suicidal and see no hope  
or even if you aren't there yet, it can pull you there offering more hope than before  
— the only thing that has changed is that you are willing to hurt other people.  
but a) you dont believe that they matter (and how many of us have ever dehumanized another person) or b) you think that it still is the greatest good for the greatest number; and it is a necessary attack. after all, wars always kill people; and at the end of the day, why do soldiers deserve to die more than civilians? they signed up, perhaps' but the rest of us citizens have continued to subscribe to the system where they fight for us. we are all together.

i am repulsed by terrorism slightly more than i am by war; but terrorism is fueled by the emotions of individuals. and the mistakes of individuals are far more understandable than the mistakes of an administration with time to think and time to consider.

How easily would I take that pill if I could take it as part of a team! To die, and not alone! To kill myself and to have so many others working to absolve me of that guilt!

It's all wrapped up in nice metaphors in my name, too. Adam — the namer of things. And a double last name, so decided because it alleviated my parent's stress in choosing a last name, too. And no hyphen, so the world would not know how to take me either. The lack of decision passed on to the child whose role is to decide (as all of ours are). But for what the metaphor is worth (probably not so much), it was far too much for me to take.

---

I have wasted my every moment of luxury because I knew they would end.

---

I'll kill myself tomorrow if I can finish this video.

---

I die because I have no curiosity that I can hope to sate.

hope + curiosity —> life

8.13.

Yes, I'll kill myself tomorrow because I don't think I have time today.

I told them I'd come do one more comedy show. And even as the last one in my life I still won't do what I want. I don't really know what I want, so I'll do something that feels still more constrained.

I never looked that constrained because people saw me explode so much of the time.

8.17

Goddamnit I didn't do it.

---

Every time someone calls me, it's to run around in circles about what I should do or shouldn't do. Circles and circles — they make me chase them. They just want to be the one who pushed me into a line, and yet, all they do is go in circles.

And sure, I'm already drifting in a slow circle now... or just stumbling drunken through the mud. But it feels worse to be pushed in drunken, muddy circles. Everyone calls to push. And if they think I moved, they are proud, even if the movement was falling onto my face. And if they think I didn't, it is because I am stubborn.

I will go outside and look at the drop from my friend's balcony.

---

8.22

If we cling to each other hard enough perhaps we can move forward and keep our youth.

— I have interesting thoughts — is this one? — but if they are ever to be put into any kind of practice, I cannot stand behind them. I need them to be approved; some other voice. Some other voice saying, this is good enough. Some voice that I trust, either as the editor or the audience of the thing I am making.



I applied a label to myself and then decided whether I felt comfortable under it. I never just lived and asked the label to be whatever fit. So much reflexivity; criticalness for nothing but its own sake. And at the expense of freedom (to be the free self).

The part of me that said, go on, make things harder for yourself; you can take it — you still have enough happiness in you to experiment with some of it, put it on the chopping block, dissect it and prod it until it dies and you feel you have understood just how much it might withstand.

But oh! Too much; it's gone now, actually. You spent more than you could — and in the dissection, you have released something that infects and kills so much of your reserves of happiness.

You, I mean: me. I did this.

---

An old mentor has a softness to him, and feels easier to connect with. But he has no power anymore; and he will be gone soon and his comfort with him.

---

How important to know when to stop talking. The diminishing returns.

Clarifying meaning: my semantics — have I done the job? I have gotten close, but allow me in further (and follow me! with your attention)

---

Academics. Tiny cohort, and there is nothing to make it through. Once we all make it through, we will be dispersed; set apart and ruined. The ones who survive most will be those who compete best. And this competition is so low volume that a hand held out to another is a hand denied our own damned selves.

---

I can watch the mood swings. I have ridden them like a roller coaster (and I hate real roller coasters, maybe because they are doing my job for me, and they deny me the control I've never fully sacrificed). But now I am sick. The ride is mostly underwater. It is viscous. And it moves far less excitingly.

---

Who are your allegiances to?

I'll break any secret if it seems like I'm not beholden to the person whose secret it is; and it might bring me closer to someone.

Is that rue? I think that might be true, and it's terrible. But of course, I'd never break confidence..

---

Distract my brain until it feels okay. Someone asks me to think about something; if I say yes, and actually do: distraction.

If I am sitting with myself, and my mind suggests its own topics of inquiry: horror.

Only distraction is manageable, but not even now — because I can't manage to think about what they've asked. There are always horrors in action.

---

In the right context; with the right wording, I have often managed to express: *I understand what you are thinking — I understand and I'm so okay with it, and everything is fine.* It's unbelievable comfort to the uncomfortable. And I've been loved for it, sometimes fast, in a flash. And so often when I understand that they understand that I've understood, I love them for that. I just want to be understood (insecure); and yet: I want to be understood for being *understanding* (arrogant).

---

We're learning: we don't want to learn.

We just want our ideas to be housekept and reinforced.

— “Culture can be produced.” There is no great knowledge in this. No discovery. Nothing even to argue with. *Of course.* And yet, this is where the class feels relief — bring us back from the world of overlapping ideas to clear thought.

— “Culture is the distinguishing characteristic of humans.” Easy. Simple. And its truth makes you feel good. Yes, I am happier being me now that I know this. Good. Reinforce reinforce.

What do I do when my life has been ruined by being hypercritical? And yet I have precluded myself from the professions which make use of that ability/tendency/trait... or, I have pushed myself further into training to cultivate it?

---

I've gotten by by having the thoughts of someone who might have been educated more by having come, unread, to many of the same (more poorly worded) conclusions.

---

I felt so much better buying used books.  
I have no reason to trust my own reading more than anyone else's. I am uncertain.

I see someone else's underlining, and I am already involved in conversation, which seems exponentially more useful than time alone. They always speak first.

New Haven is only a bastion of people desperately trying to culture themselves and prove that they are cultured. New York is a place where people are living it. And in that way, that living culture is authentic, and here it is only attempted and strained and fabricated.

---

All I have ever wanted is to be someone who needs no introduction in the worlds that I am in. Trouble more so because I have wanted to be in so many worlds.

[An introduction has so many terrible areas for méconnaissance.]

---

9.1.

Consolidated identities.

This is the thing that will never change.

We are a human, and so we have developed a split between our conscious and our unconscious; our automatic and our manually chosen actions. (We may not be unique in that.) And in that awareness, there is performance — a choice between what we show and don't, and how.

The internet exploded the possibilities for our fractured identities, that is to say, the different characters we performed in different moments. We can be infinite things.

But there has to be one thing, at the end, that does the directing. There is a single physical thing cognizant of the different venues and different places to perform, and sending the actors out accordingly. No matter what, that thing will want to feel sure of itself.

That is, I want to feel that my many faces are facing the right way, and are doing the right thing.

I want to be able to reconcile what I am doing with what I am not. That "I" is the single thing.

—

I think that is why a man lashes out at a guy with a turban.

His whole life, he has reconciled his haircut with his absence of a what he sees as a silly hat. Part of his reason for doing something has been the consequences from not doing it. But if someone can wear it and there are no consequences: that system collapses. His identity is threatened so viciously.

What to do?

—

As this sociologist, I am going back to writing

—

I do nothing well enough to do it with people who do it anymore.

I do not play soccer with soccer players. I can't play squash with squash players. I can't play trumpet with an orchestra, or even a jazz band but the casual kind. I can't surf except alone. I could ski, but it's solitary anyway.

And I am nothing in any professional way that makes people reach out.

Only my friends, the last dying breeders of an attitude that flailed for attention to their creativity.

—

I am sitting in the courtyard of the Yale School of Management.

What does it mean for something to be unmanageable?

That we are unable to accomplish what is necessary for survival?

(And there are many levels of survival, if we follow Maslow.)

When I was younger I had certain tasks — and the met-ness of my survival was basically even, and constant. Same food, water, shelter. Same sleep. Relatively constant, intellectual fulfillment if it was school or school or more school in whatever direction. Social worlds evolving, and the strain to keep them together — but I was restricted to a great degree.

I got good at handling the necessary needs quickly. I moved up the ladder, higher and higher until all of my skills at managing were taken up...

But then: the ladder dropped. I need to do the basic tasks now.

And now: nothing is guaranteed. So the number of tasks to be managed have increased exponentially. But I don't have what it takes.

I am going to crash the "club fair" at the school of management. I will see if I can manage to fake my way into making friends.

—

I have never had to make due. I have only ever had to put up.

That is my privilege.

—

Music: it can pull you into its speed, or it can support the speed you're at.

You go to to a concert, you're all in the tempo together; and you get to feel that rush, right? Or the somberness, a heaviness — you can be pulled into that reflective atmosphere...

Or you are feeling like a boss, jamming to the soundtrack you're already hearing in your head.

I've never let music pull me — I've never let anything pull me. I've only ever gone to it to support what I already thought.

I'm like that with ideas I think.

My thoughts find their twins and breed... the incest has destroyed my brain.

---

I can see far ahead, pretty far at least, and I make decisions based largely with that in mind. But while I can delay gratification brutally for minutes and hours and a day, and sometimes weeks, and occasionally months — I do something wrong: I make the best decision I possibly can for the “long run,” *but* it needs to match up with the best decision I can make for a period generally not longer than a semester.

---

I worked so fast. I had it.

A girl I was happy to coming home to every night and wanted to see every day. More than that. A place I wanted to live. Friends around. A packed social calendar (is too packed a reason to destroy it?). And I counted the years, measuring them against my parents. If I was still in my mid-20s, I had couple more minutes to *push harder*, to test to see if I could make “more” happen. Because I didn't let myself accept that I was in an acceptable place, I had to see what I had as uncertain. And now, instead of being fast and precocious and wise beyond my years — I am all of the opposite things. With all of the bitterness of a person who can say “I could have told me so.”

---

How much misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*) are we going to have when we are all talking about things as if they are known and common, and they are largely unknown

---

9.20

Having a thought high:

Having an intellectual thought [a way of seeing something?] triggers the kind of response that would normally accompany some physical one. Chemicals released: words trigger more dopamine than they would. And the monitoring system, that watches what the body has just done and classifies it, says: I must really like thinking.

These pathways are linked for different people in different ways. What kinds of thoughts? Who else's thoughts have the habit of matching up with the ones of yours that do this? Can you expand the range of triggering thoughts? (Weed does.)

It sits there like a multiplier.

Don't deny that we are overstimulated now for the things that we are. Far more things to do than there are decisions to make to do them. Far more things to buy than could ever be bought, and in their wake — bought or ignored: remorse.

But anyway: too many thoughts.

And with them, the need to express.

(If that's not there, then, for some, there may be a wonderful equilibrium. But that is harder and harder to sustain now with the effort by the largest powers that be — the richest companies in the world — to encourage us to *share, share, share*. [And what we don't share is known anyway, in clicks and mouse-movements and clicks.] If we're not convinced, we'll be financially incentivized. First our jobs depend on the sharing, maybe, in our public-facing jobs that now drip with Real Estate Agent Desperation, and none of its chutzpah.)

But Jesus, *anyway*: too many thoughts, and the need to express them.

But if we're honest, it's damn difficult to clearly express something complicated and contradictory. There is too much meaning in our heads for our words to express. And not only is the meaning-making turning more and more fast and frantic; our words are getting less astute, less well-dressed for the occasions because we use them less. More pictures, more sounds, more direct sensory input that speaks so much louder than our words-on-paper ever could. And the media change, too — the content is always packaged by a different form [forgive my bulky wordage — but you know what I mean, yes?]: a long letter is no longer a long letter; different words for a text and an email and a DM and an FB message.

And so we say less in order to stay within the bounds of our comfort, or our honesty.

Except what becomes poetic. What is allowed to purport to have more meaning than meets the ear at first ring. Poetry that reverberates and in its echoes becomes not fuzzier and mushy, but clearer and deep.

But anything that appears as poetry carries so, so much meaning in itself, all at once. It means far more than what it says.

So: the expressers [me] try to find forms of expression that seem to manage complexity, by coating them with ambiguity.

New forms of expression — ones that no one is fluent enough in to feel strongly. There is only the sense of communication, and then sense of many meanings shared...

(I don't know if I agree with the last two paragraphs.)



So I look for old examples of communication that have meaning in their forms themselves; and the new over-thoughts, which are really versions of thoughts that had been thought before, can be packaged in complexity and in truth...

MLK:

The trouble is that we cannot communicate with one another... because we have lost the ability to communicate with our former selves.

Folk guitar:

Can't stomach yer kin...

—

I write nonfiction because it lets be in control of being out of control. (Or so I thought.)

Anything can happen, and still I hold the pen.

And I can be lazy too! The thing that lets me live wildly also *makes my living*, and the wildness makes the living better. I mean to say, it is an easier job to write if I am wild because: I don't have to rely on my own ideas; I can follow curiosity up to the cliff ledge and off of it to see what will happen, to document what does, and to put that forth as the true story of a boy who has never really lived but inside those pages.

,

My skill was in enjoying things I knew nothing about. (maybe especially if I knew nothing.)

But that is so much harder to share, or to develop consciously, or to explain.

On goes the music, the atmosphere I'm happy to be in, and to be in with other people. But if they ask, what is this? why? Then I am made smaller — I don't know the answer to the question that seems so gentle...

—

Clung to my depression because people have romanticized those who have clung to it and fought and won (made something).

—

Jittering with the energy to connect.

Like a man at sea, no shore, no boat; perhaps a tiny stick to cling to or a little raft.

— At first there was a boat on the horizon, but it was far too far, and he knew not to yell.

— Then there was an island that emerged under a cloud after a violent storm, but he could see that he was drifting away far faster than he could swim to it. He tried to save his energy.

— And now nothing has come, and there has been no spot of hope for survival, for connection to anything. A small wave splashes and he flails furiously with it as if that is the extra push he needs. Or if only for the moment of teamwork with a common energy.

— And now a meteor trails through the sky and he screams at it, just in case there's someone riding its tail.

9.8.

How can I keep trying to plan or get anything in shape for tomorrow when I want to kill myself today?

9.9

The peers in this despair, they either came from much more money, or much less. That's what I think I've seen.

If much more, the old patterns of survival just aren't working, and they see that they're losing access to the the things they took for granted. If less, they have seen that they will never be able to access the things they hoped for, or mocked, and now realize they won't be content/stable without. And so I've lost my connection to the world, and I feel alone — and I know I am and I don't respect myself for it...

... there are reasons why I managed to make the rich man and the poor man's mistakes...

and I can't even stand on similar ground with the only people who are flailing like me. Or, we stand in the same place but I can't speak their language.

... and I know I am not special. This is not unique. I do feel this, and yet I know I can't be unique, and yet I believe what people have been saying to me...

—

All I want to do is kill myself, and I can't figure out how to do it, and that just makes me so much more embarrassed (am I just too afraid to do it one of the more painful ways? (and I tell myself that's not really the reason because I just want something that is guaranteed to work)) that I want even more to die, and that I feel even more embarrassed for not doing it.

—

People think I have Tourette's now. I say fuck, shit, seemingly apropos of nothing. Really though, I am like a faucet bursting under pressure, and the fucks and shits are the little drops that have come out. Sometimes I can't hold it in at all. Sometimes I let myself let it out because I think they are feeling that pressure too, and I am only trying to acknowledge some kind of shared strain so that we can feel less of the strain of hiding it from one another. But they were never really feeling it. Not like that. Not to the point where their head was screaming for escape.

9.9.

I am in unbearable mourning after my own death less than two years ago. He was the one I knew best in the world, and whose company I kept in all times and all weathers and all moods and all dizziness.

He was sicker and sicker, and I could not depend on him in the most recent years. But then: a flash of hope! It all seemed better and stronger, and I wasn't calling him for help anymore, he was calling *me* to bring me on adventures...

... together we felt strong. And in that moment of support, I leaned in fully, like a hummingbird on a firm sprig.

And he died. It was the flailing energy of the nearly dead that I mistook for life; the fast spark of a burned out bulb; a supernova that, by the time it has reached your eyes, has been dead for thousands of years.

And I can't stand it. I feel bad for feeling bad for myself. Everyone loses someone. And to mourn the loss of the self... isn't it selfish?

---

Time is like this:

like that sand dripping.

but it isn't in an hour glass, ready to be tipped upright and restarted.

it escapes as if from a sack of flour, falling exactly where you stand.

this is why we run around: to find something for the sand to fall into.

some people stand in the same place; and when they are finished, there is a big pile. it may not have much shape, but it is proof of a continued existence.

some people run around frantically; and the sand is so scattered it blends with everything else that is, and disappears.

some people develop systems and build clear, organized piles. many of them, in geometric shapes.

some are frantic but do wonderful things, whirling and whirling...

some use the obstacles of the world and build things with them; they spend time finding particular places to be, they make innovative shapes, they do not worry when the bag will run out (or perhaps they do) and they move methodically...

and some find others and make immense piles... maybe they are ugly; maybe they are pointless, but the teams don't care because they have made the piles together.

Completely lost all short term memory.

Long term memory is drowning; it is there, and it is violently present, but I am accessing it not on purpose, having its files thrown at me as from vaults cracked open by a hurricane-flooded basement.

I can't remember what I was thinking three or four words ago unless I am writing it. And if that is seen as a helpful crutch, remember what it entails: one thought continuing forward (—>) and another looping back to touch its own tail, over and over and over. Herding cats, carrying pools of water with bare hands... all of these are metaphors, sure. All of this: impossible to ever walk a straight line, or go anywhere on purpose, or even land anywhere by accident. The circles get dizzier and dizzier. I can't stand it, and I can't stand.

And until I cracked like this, until my memory in the moment was so shot I could not remember the beginning of the short sentence I was speaking even as I was still inside it — see, wait, I've done it now... the beginning and the end can't be held in the same head anymore.

Until this point, I forced myself to remember. I was ashamed for not remembering something; for forgetting it when I *could have* remembered. It was something that was either shameful or imperfect of its own right; or it was something that made it harder to connect with someone else with whom I would have had a bond on that shared knowledge, that remembered thing.

Again and again, around and around I go trying to clarify the words already said; to get closer so I can find you, and not be lost — but...

—

There's no value — it can't be valued — it's totally invaluable. Oh shit: it's invaluable. In the search for meanings of any value: meaninglessness becomes infinite meaning.

—

I have been pulling actions from my unconscious to my conscious for so long it is like I have forced myself to lose fluency in normal human action. What is fluency if not the ability to speak without thinking? And now: all these actions that come coupled with thoughts. And even if the thoughts are clear and concise and ask no questions — which they almost never do, for where there is thought there is space for doubt — even then there is a delay, and an energy that would not have been wasted in an unconscious action; a handshake offered out of habit and not because *quick, it's the appropriate thing to do.*

I have no habits. I have no fields. I have no consistency in any of this — and in my obsession with knowing different languages of social action, I have lost fluency in any one at all. Except, perhaps, in the one that is concerned with the dissection of my own thoughts.

916

Chasing the irreducible.

(I am, and have always been — 10.29.)

People need you in roles. What kinds of roles are you in?

I was always happy to reject them on as large a level as possible.

If I could be a “Classical music guy” and an ‘EDM guy’ — amazing. You wouldn’t think those would have gone together, would you? Or maybe you would... but what about the guy who writes poetry and the guy who looks for ways to hang out with pirates? or the poet and the one who punches through windows?

— but that comfort with flexibility/dissonance/uncategorizability on a certain level has plummeted.

Those massive roles above — bigger than professions themselves, indicative of personalities as a whole — I can’t play with them anymore. Because I am scared not to be able to say what my job is. And even if I could say — that I was a student... I couldn’t be clear on what kind. And on what kind of sociologist. On what camp.

Before I had to say: yes I am this and this, and not this and not this. I wanted to. (I thought I could reconcile different ones — to hold my own in both.) Now I just want the questions to stop, for there to be no need for recalibration, for people to know me and be okay with my answers — because I am not okay, and I don’t know me and I need the movement to stop, and I can’t hold my own in either.

—

Fractal nature of knowledge.

If we know that all understanding can be thought of as concentric circles; expanding from the most detailed things we can possibly know; and extending to the most general and universal in irriducible...

... then we can learn from any detail and any articulated relationship of things on one level, and apply it in upwards symmetry over and over and over (induction, right? molecular orbits are like planetary orbits...)... or downwards (deduction, yes?)... until we have found ourselves, or we have found ourselves in a universe as large as we know how to imagine.

9.22

I never needed to be “better than you”. Not in any circumstance.

Because always: there was another circumstance to run to.

I did not need you to know what I could also be, because sooner or later, I thought, I’d go right over and be it.

And now: I cannot bear you as my only peer. Our self-hatred rubs off on each other because we are both ashamed to be here. The only small escape is that we admit our common shame, so we greet each other like mutual failures, yes, but not as madmen.

—



9.25

I don't know why it took me this long to realize: but comedy is taken so much differently.

1. WHite comics: why would we like you unless you are funny? And: why would we like you if you're famous? If you're getting famous for saying what you think — I want to know that what I think is equally valid... that you don't mean anything...

But with black comedy: comedians were celebrated. They were made more famous by being more famous — more respected for being more respected. There was so much less hatred towards the comic himself — and he didn't need to apologize for his success.

Female comics: it can be the same. This was a performer who *made it out* — to represent the group in a larger one in which it so rarely had a voice. And maybe the representation isn't great — but it seems like there's so much there... and why cut down your own representative. (Unless: you wanted to *be that representative*. The most important thing is not the message but the role you get in conveying it.

---

In order to spend this much time looking for similarities — I had to assume I was that different...

That is —

In order to spend this much time investigating the far away — I had to spend that little time at home....

---

The players will get sillier. The league will try to penalize. The teams won't because the teams get more play — that means more money — which means the whole system gets more money. Which means the whole thing becomes a performance until we recognize that it is no longer in "the spirit" of the original. At which point: we cry authenticity and tear everything back to simplicity:

lutherans and protestants and jesus christ himself and hagen dazs 5 ingredients icecream – looking to

I have been a sponge — but a sponge is so useless as a sturdy thing.

Like: while so many other people developed their harder casings and so, in circumstances where they couldn't connect, they were able to just let everything else bounce off — oil to water. (And then in their world, they were helpful.) And here, not at all.

But me: I sponged. And so when I heard the lawyers talking, their words did seep in, and they bubbled up or mixed in at the bottom of the bag with the art words in the muesum; and I pulled out the art words when I was trying to see if I could understand poetry, but did I? or was I just remembering something from some other time when I should have kept the top of my skull closed to keep at least some of the rain out.

---

every sensory input reminds me of a moment: the last moment when it was good in itself, maybe — and if I were blank and free now, all that remembered energy would be a bonus. But instead: it's just a visceral reminder of everything that's not there.

## 10.1

If I write while someone is reading it is like speaking: it is like thinking before I speak, and the words that come come with censor's stamps, and they come slower and perhaps better dressed, but I will have never known them alone, and I will have never known what they looked like without me and before me.

And so if I am sure there is no one here — and I am not now — I will let them all out. And once they are out in front of me, I will look at them.

And of course, they are me, you see — the words are the me I've wanted to be but haven't been because someone has been reading and listening and watching and I have dressed for them — and if I ever let them out before I clip their wings, then perhaps I will see myself for once or for ever.

But, is it sad that all this hammering is just to make a mirror?

— — —

If you use the words to me that make it sound like we are no longer close, I will mock you as hard as I possibly can.

For the sake of our naturalness, and the beauty of face-to-face friendships with the thinnest possible masks, I will fart in the atmosphere in which you have put on airs.

I understand that crassness may be harder to manage... or we don't know where the other stands.

— Hope you've been well and that you are well going forward  
No. I reject it.

I will rib you because I know how important it is to get jabbed in the ribs. As the story goes, Adam had his ribs wiggled, and all of humanity followed.

—

If crying wolf will make the wolf run away, would you do it?

The things I read were written so long ago they make me part of no conversation.  
The information it gives me is just *more thoughts* no one would find interesting.  
The

10.2.

She said to me, my friend did: “You are a miracle.”

She meant — my black eye and bloody iris and torn open forehead has healed miraculously in a week. (And that I wasn’t injured more permanently/fatally to begin with.)

And I said: I might pay for this speedy recovery with incredibly slow ones where it matters even more. My skin heals fast, and my heart heals slow.

There is a roaring fire in the engine of a coal train, racing. It is racing against the new model, which burns less and yields more. It is powerful and fast and almost out of control as it takes the curves under the mountain tunnels.

I can get over a cold if my heart is really in the fight.

I can get over a parking ticket (because I ignore them), because it’s concrete and indisputable. But I can’t get over regrets of missed opportunities and lost friendships and ended relationships and the fear of missing what I haven’t even put myself in a place to see.

I am that train — and I have been burning that coal fast as if my life depended on it. But these were the easy choices: not to be sick, not to be bloody.

Imagine: say I do have some magical powers. I have actually been able to heal myself this entire time, at least to the degree a human has it within any kind of conscious or unconscious power. If I focused energy — that is, real kilojoules and calories of energy that could have gone to godknowswhatelse — I could speed up processes over which a person would normally be thought to be entirely superfluous.

[Even metabolism. Super fast — as maybe it is with all boys, but I feel like I’ve been lucky. All this in line with racing thoughts — as if the thoughts “oh man I hope this doesn’t make me fat” are connected. As if the anxiety is burning weight. Is the anxiety part cause, or merely a record of the action?]

So: all this power that was there, but I never made a choice to use it on anything meaningful, anything un-selfish. I never made a choice. (Steinbeck: I was never human.) In not choosing, I used this superpower like a party trick and kept myself healthy, all while my mind flailed to find a proper usage for it. I was burning that coal and ripping around the mountainside, horrified that I was racing just to race.)

The mind and body are *that* connected, that’s all. That’s all I mean: of course creative energy unspent will turn into anxiety and despair and weight. But the fact that that

energy can be channeled into physical things as easily as euros can be made dollars — that seems evidence on one side of one of the ancient discussions.

—

If there is any part of me that is miraculous, I have wasted it — both on myself, and on a part of myself that asked for the simplest kind of fixing.

And I still haven't gotten over anyone I've ever loved and lost — which means, now, anyone I've ever loved. And I can't reconcile where I wake up in the morning. And, if there is any miracle in being alive, there is only the irony: that I dream of dying every night, and fixate even more when I am awake. That I imagine jumping from the window of every friend's apartment higher than the sixth floor, and fantasize shooting myself in the mouth or the back of the head with hand guns I haven't been able to get. Or in the temple — and this *is* funny in that most peculiar way — where just last week I almost cracked my head open by deliberately-set-up accident (that is, an accident in a moment that I took no deliberate steps to ever avoid, and pictured happening, and did nothing).

There are people who care about me, I know that. And they were terrified to see me bleeding, and surprised when I had no broken neck — no broken bones — and a few cuts on the face that would heal in time. "Everyone has a story about you," my friend said, about the night of the accident. It surprised me that this had that much of an impression on them. Maybe it's because we're not in New York anymore, and there isn't very much happening to add to the dramatic structure of our lives. Maybe it's because it really did look that bad. To me, it was just a small detail, another accident in a short lifetime of near death experiences and near death imaginations, this one coming closer — at least in blood — than most others.

The real pains are still there and will always be; nothing can make any of this go away now, and I can't ever make the joke that :

If there is any part of me that is a miracle of life: it wants death.

The simple incongruity that sits at the root of great humor — the unifying dualities of comedy and tragedy: kill me.

— — — — —

Every memory builds up like a weight. They gather in brainfolds, folds that are harder to lift even than they ever were, like an old quilt. The longer I live the harder it is to turn an idea over in my mind: clawing to it are thousands upon thousands of incomplete thoughts and feelings.

Everything is connected to everything. Everything is a lens, a spotlight, a trigger. All these old ideas tacked on to new ones — they are pungent like old things, pickled and powerful. This new “moment” doesn’t stand a chance against all that smell. I am overwhelmed, like Funes: “muscular sensations, thermal sensations” accompany every remembered image or sound like a burning caption.

— — —

“To think is to forget differences, generalize, make abstractions.”  
— Funes el Memorioso

But there is a kind of thought that generalizes *and* remembers the differences. This is the kind of double consciousness at the heart of any comedy. The unique and the common are fully understood. An individual living his life can never forget that he is alone in this experience, and yet: to be funny it becomes representative of something large.

Double consciousness: entirely generalized as a member of a particular class, aware of abstraction in a massive social sense (the tectonic plates of Black and White ramming against one another). But at the same time entirely different: aware of all that is not the same, and that is subjective.

This is a pained kind of thinking, but it is one in which the world is seen both up close and at a distance; like a globe with sharply etched coastline.

This is how the comic sees the world.

10.3.

Inability to be happy.

I doubted everything in the world — there was absolutely nothing I wouldn't be willing to question. Some of them provided existential wobbles — “does life have any meaning?” — some were social in the moment — “does this person think I'm being weird?” — some were

Little facts I could believe: is Paris the capital of France? Sure is, *but does it matter?* The only things I was certain existed I wasn't sure I was holding. the only things I was certain I was holding, I wasn't sure they mattered.

The most important question, it seemed — that is, the one whose answer would affect my life the most, short term and long and both together — was: will I be happy?

And I doubted this.

It was the question I had the greatest stake in answering in a particular way: I wanted to hear “yes” more than I wanted to hear it anywhere else. And: I believed no one who told me “yes” — and I believed no one who told me there was an Omnipotent “yes” that existed for me or for everyone. All I believed were little moments of evidence that seemed to say “you will be happy” because, for a split second or more, they said “you are happy right now.”

They lasted — insofar as they lasted as evidence — so long as I didn't doubt them. As soon as I breathed “will I *continue to be?*” the effects wore off. (I breathed that question almost instantly always.)

—

[The protestant ethic: If I'm not happy, I must not deserve to be happy. Or, less morally, if I'm not happy, I will not be happy, for I am not not a Happy Person. Read it as: should, or deserves to, or is destined to...]

There was nothing to prove it, and so I tested.

And when the world gave me great answers — here is a love of your life (and a narrative to match, you meta-cognitive glutton for overthought) and a place to live to love her — my abstract fears were pulled down into the concrete:

If before I had only ever thought, *will I ever have it?* now I asked: *will I lose this thing I can now see and want so much?*



There is a special kind of fear in the man who drives to the station, clutching his winning lottery ticket.

And that doubt: *will I lose it? will the window open? will I crash before I can cash this...? was I wrong that I won?*

— that doubt pegged me to the earth, melted my wings and kept me from flying.

To answer those fears-in-the-moment that stopped me:

*I could never be wrong that I won.*

Happiness is proof of happiness. Happiness in the moment is proof of its possibility in the next one (yes: a hot bath gets cold, but do the means for heating remain? For me, until now, they always did).

Will I crash before I cash this?

I never needed to.

But imagine screaming with doubt and worry — the terrifying fear that you will lose the only thing worth living for, and feeling the possibility grow (the more I believed it possible, the more it made me unsteady; the more unsteady I became, the more I saw myself as the the unsteady Type who tends towards that brand of my worst fears of failure; the more I saw myself as that, the more I became it; the more I became it, the more the possibility really did grow — and I saw it grow — and the feedback grew louder: I really am losing it. The inkling-turned-probability-turned-knowledge that I would crash was all it took to crash me.

That's unfair — that passive voice. I crashed myself.

— — — —

(Used to be happy and be afraid of being sad. Terrified. But when I couldn't take the terror, I just stopped, and relaxed into whatever I could.)

(And basically I just let however much stress I could tolerate into the day to day. As if there were just a dial I could twist - and there sort of was -- but now: it's like, ok shit no too much way too much way way too much, and the dial is broken/not in my hands anymore.)

Like: before it was fake. And so I just “snapped out of it.” Now it's not. It's really not — I really can't function.

The only reason I'm down, is because I dreamed of super stardom. As in, a place among the stars where my gaze was parked so often, looking down. And that way, only pulling my body up up up would bring me some kind of peace, some kind of calm in knowing that my thinking heart and my beating heart would have less to bridge.

—

Let's start giving myself would you rather's —  
or keeping it simple: Would you?

Would you jump off a waterfall into a lake if you figured it had a 10% chance of killing you (and if it didn't, you'd be fine)? What if one other person (you liked) did it with you/first?

10.5.

[JUMP1]

I'm not going to jump today.

I don't think I'd ever "jump" — that is, bend my knees and spring up, two feet off the ground above the ledge from which I'd fall to my death. The idea of *jumping*, the way I would off a diving board as a kid, seems incongruous to the point of silliness — and, as much as I appreciate silliness in all things (especially where it seems never to belong), I'm not sure I could get myself to be silly at that particular moment.

Because if I were silly — that is, if I made a joke to myself — I'd want to share the silliness. And I'd know damn well that nowhere on those fast twenty-one flights down would I be able to share it. And I sure as hell don't want my act of dying to be flavored with disappointment.

Of course: I'm a perfectionist. And so, in knowing that "suicide" and "joking" are incongruous to the point of legendary Odd Couple Status, there is a window for great potential. (That's stupid: a window *is* potential. Right.) And if I have been willing to risk my life for so much before — and I am ending it largely because I have won not nearly enough from that gambling — then I feel a real need (existentially? morally? comedically?) to make something from my death that can only be made from my death.

As little as I want to live today, and to wake up tomorrow, I am not ready to jump — rather, to fall — because I don't know how to do it.

*Do it right, you mean.*

Of course that's what I mean.

— — —

This is going to sound crazy: but for all my experimenting with different kinds of creative output, I have hardly ever fucked with fiction. I have competing voices in my head and I consistently stress about how to reconcile many different ways of expressing them in a uniform art form... in any single work. What medium? What style? To communicate *anything* — and I do want to communicate — I need to cue any audience in to the kind of thing I'm communicating.

Why not novels? Fiction? Why not something where there can be different voices for the different voices? It sounds crazy — but I never really thought of that before... that that would be an option.

10.6.

[writing below getting worse / brain not firing as it used to / reflection is less possible, and everything else just tumbles out on reflex, unedited but by glancing scorn]  
She wrote “try to do something you love”.

But, now that there is no *one* I love (in the deepest sense, and let me come back to this), there is nothing I love to do. I only love being productive, in that way that used to make me feel like I was digging my way towards some sustainable future, where the moment to moment was not designed to serve a future moment. The hope that I would someday get there was what fueled me — and it fought onslaughts of doubt constantly. And the hope that I was correct in thinking I was doing it (if I did think that)... that was necessary to keep going, too.

I know I am doing nothing.

And I know that even if I did, it would not be the thing that would dig me out.

I can't even trick myself by moving my feet.

Love is a threshold — it is not (necessarily) the absolute of all absolutes. That is to say: there are degrees of love. I have many friends I love absolutely, but I don't want to spend all day and night with them. I have friends I love who I don't want to talk about everything with. When I say love, I think I mean someone I can feel like I am being myself around; someone around whom I don't need to act.

(This may be a big problem for me: having spent too much time around too many people I love or who treat me lovingly. I was allowed to be my true, deformed self until I knew how to do nothing else.)

—

I love her, and I am depressed. And I wonder: is it downright wrong of me to ask for her back?

I had never really agreed to date anyone formally because I could always see the end with them — I never wanted to start something that didn't seem ultimately promising (of perfection, maybe, and that is a problematic framing in its own right). But she changed all of that, and I committed to her, in my heart and my head in I'm-not-sure what order.

(And because I am a perfectionist: I try to harmonize every possible desire. One desire for stability and love and everything for myself; one desire for compatibility with society, and my role in it as it is perceived (by the people whose perceptions I care about). I didn't marry her instantly then, because that would not have kept me in line with the social norms I didn't intend to break. I was young, and this was a normal step, and I could take it.

I lost her because I was fundamentally afraid of where I was and what I was doing. I knew I couldn't continue being what I was, and so I always thought: I have to be willing to sacrifice anything, because where I am now is unlivable. That meant nothing was tacked down. All of this happened in the abstract — as if I imagined someone saying: "We will give you the life you have always wanted but have not articulated; but you must give her up, and where you live." And because of that, where I lived, and what she was to me... everything was strained.

The impulses to escape had always been there; the suicidal ideation since I was very young, and the actions on it. When I have acted on suicidal urges, there has been a part of me that has deflected them from full, direct impact. That is: I ran into the wintery atlantic at night, but I was sure my family had seen me. They would come and pull me out. I would get to jump off the cliff and live. My id got everything it wanted, for the moment. My ego got to be active, and that is so much better than passivity for the frantic. And my superego surmised that the act of going through all this might be worthwhile — that in its extremity, it might be a real effective treatment. And at very least, there was what there always was: the recovery from extreme strain, which masquerades as pleasure.

I have had suicidal impulses forever. She has been one of the only things that ever made me say: I want this, only for this, only for this. To be with her was something I wanted for itself. (There are arguments to this, but they operate at a different level.) She was a thing that made me want to live, yes, more than anything perhaps — but even more so: she let me feel that I could live, and that if I did, I might like it.

The question is: is it wrong to involve anyone else in the life of a person so willing to die? I want to want to live, but I don't. And as good as I am arguing with myself, the evidence has built up far too much, to the point where I can't argue against the Want to Die side. They make so much more sense, and their solution is an end to suffering that promises no end at all now.

There is the thought: it would only be right to ask for her back if I were ok without her back. But the truth is here: I want to die.

If I were with her, I would want to live. I do not know if the time I've been through (and it has been a time) is enough to keep those thoughts away forever. I think probably not.

But assuming I will die without her, and I might live with her (and if there is living – it will be good living); then is it wrong of me to ask for the help she provides with her mere connection to me?

Is it wrong to bring her into this?

— —

and the thoughts are always in words, and in feelings, and then in words about the feelings... does that make any sense?

10.09

It was always just to find outlets for thoughts; and because my thoughts roared like 10,000 bees, the things that felt solid felt like massive honeycombs that sucked all the tiny fragments in and gave them a place to stick.

It's why I understand why people would actually feel kept at peace by having all endless reams of numbers to crunch. (But my head still pulls out of that and says: yes, but what is this worth? I can't convince myself to just keep my head down and lean into distracting the bees.)

I understand why the law would have a draw — doing this nitpicking with words, and trying to have an answer for that question. “What is it worth?” “I’m doing good, I’m learning how the world works, I’m serving...”

—

I learned the autistic term “stimming” — self-stimulation, I’m guess, to keep your brain at least focused enough in one direction.

A vent for the energy inside not to come tear you apart.

Keeping the subconscious busy.

I came up with coping strategies of all kinds — physical ones, and mental ones using hope to raise my heartbeat. If I felt energized, I imagined I might be happy; and if I was happy, that might mean that whatever I was doing at the moment was okay. And if that was okay — my god I might not need to kill myself — and that made me happy.

Except: oh, god no. I manufactured that happiness from the beginning.

Deep down at some layer of neurological mud...

—

The big change has happened.

Before, seeing people replenished me, gave me energy, made me want to live and gave me reasons to do it. It was what I tried to work towards, and when I had people to be with, I felt things were right.



Then, when my life was falling apart and I knew I had to fix it — still, people were a distraction that worked. That made me happy for the moment, and gladdened me with the thought that I was still capable of being happy. I would go back to the strain of normal life, but I would have spent at least a few moments with my fists unclenched.

Now, being with people is a strain in itself. It is unclear whether it is *less* of a strain than being alone, or more. It sometimes is more, certainly, when I am trying so hard to act like a person someone would want to spend time around, and I know I am failing. It adds to the strain because it gives me something else to fail.

But then I go back to solitude — which to me is the absolute mark of failure (if it is involuntary, and is doing nothing to help the escape from solitude). And soon it is worse, and I am overweighted with stress, and I reach out to the only thing that has ever helped — people — and...

... and now that adds more. Everytime I reach out, I get further in a whole. Everytime I don't, I get further in a whole. The only difference is how fast. And it is fast.

(And I have been digging for so long, losing ground at superhuman speeds. Even if I could recover my humanity and my control, I'd never be able to dig out.)

—

I literally couldn't accept her love because I thought it was too good for me. I thought she was too good for me. In that, I thought she made me happy to a point I wasn't built to sustain, or deserved to sustain, or...

You thought I actually *liked* writing? No: I did this thing you said I was good at, despite the horrible solitude I felt doing it, because it appealed to the highest purpose I knew: if I succeeded, it might let me be so free in the way I interacted with people.

—

All the feels?

Fuck you. Distinguish between your fucking feels.

For years, Facebook told us how to communicate: like, or silence. If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.

Every other way our second-to-second desire-driven brains have evolved has been based in binaries. Swipes left and right, until recently Tinder allows up. Which is really just *farther right*.

Now we have six emotions.

Sometimes it's confusing. What does Jim Halpern's emotion say? If we can't define it, articulate it, explain it to someone — then we will call it its own category; it will get its own emoji, and we will cease looking for synonyms and analogy.

Sweet christ no. Never stop looking for synonums. Synonyms are the First Aid in the the emergency response kid for misunderstanding. I didn't mean this — I meant *this similar thing, or this, or this. Is that helping?*

If all we can do to explain ourselves is to repeat ourselves ... we all become that horrible tourist. You know, the one who talks louder and louder and louder when he isn't understood. And then, when the shopkeepers all hate him — he blames the outside world for making his throat sore. We are forgetting how much we can do to make ourselves understood.

But if we just respond with all of the possible feelings, then we create two categories of Others: those who have all the same cocktail; and those who don't.

And then, back to the Like or Silence paradigm.

This is scarier than Silence of the lambs. We are eating our own faces and replacing them with cartoons — as if bitmojis are more us than round banana yellow emoticons.

Silence of the Likes: we have eaten our feelings.

All or nothing.

WHen we say we are having all of them, we are

Soyennt of feelings. We are on or off. We are having them or not having them. We are a zero and then we are a one. If we agree to be this simplified —

iphones even highlight your words and suggest emojis to replace them. WOuldn't you rather be more uniform? Wouldn't you rather fit the mold even more? Once all the words have been packaged into the emojis — and all those emojis channeled into one

of six emojis, we've learned to channel any cocktail of those emojis defined as one of two things: all the feels — or something not worth feeling.

—> for what it's worth, i don't use the other emojis. I still either like or say nothing. or comment. I'm clinging to the period when we liked or didn't, but it seemed like we knew that did not encompass all human emotion.

— It didn't mean "I like the message contained in this." It mean, "I acknowledge. (And I like that you shared it [with me])." But now when a friend says, Here's what's happening in Syria, it sometimes looks like I like (which might as well be love) everything that's going on.

— Hedge your emotions: don't commit to something too real. God forbid. but now we don't recognize "real" unless it fits into one of those feelings. We're practicing not feeling anything. Like muscle memory of any other kind. If we practice using certain phrases — good morning, whats up, how are you — when the world greets us, we'll automatically greet it back with something we've practices.

Now when the world shows us something that happened, we'll react with

Wow! LOL! Grr!

And we'll have had so few conversations that use other ...

After a few good millenniaa learning to write and express things, so that when humankind came in contact with parts of itself it had long been separated from, it might have a way of explaining how the abstract parts of its thought had shifted — why me having been socialized in some thousands of year old ways might not be different —

Articulating difference is what allows us to bridge the gap between differences. That is: if I know *how* we are different, I can point to how we are similar. If all I can do is notice a difference [I have different feels!], and then all I can say is *Different! Different? Different!* then we will never move beyond.

How awful is it that the only people I can stick to now are the ones who stick to each other because we have no one else to stick to.

—

So often, I've liked to think — if I met someone at random, I would be able to see eye to eye. Maybe 80% of my country? That No matter what our views on most things, we'd be able to connect at fundamental levels — and I'd like them. But when it seems like the country manages to make 50% of people Trump supporters (and of course that's not true — there's everyone under 18, and everyone who won't vote for some other reason [which might be worse])... if that's what *half* this country is, I realize I must be far more wrong than I feared. I can't talk to anyone. I can't do it. And I can find myself eye to eye with the blackest cynicism — it's all entirely the same. Nothing matters. Everything is corrupt and unfixable. But that doesn't lead to Trump. There is the impulse to watch everything burn — to call in someone with no relation to the thing you hate (Washington) by sheer dint of their irrelevance. Ok, that much checks out. And then if you still want to see everything burn, you get someone who actually seems like he'll set the world aflame (starting with his own hair). Ok, actually, never mind all this makes sense.

10.10

The only reason I was ever able to date you is because I thought I might marry you.

—

You know what's terrifying?

All day I think about how I'm not doing well enough. I'm sad because I've failed at being happy. I'm sad because I am sad.

And then I summon the energy, you know, to fake it until I make it. And I try to pretend to be happy.

Some nights, yes — some nights I have succeeded well enough. And I say, goddamn, I think I might have done it. I've convinced those people I'm happy, and I was happy to them, and we were happy together — and I'm happy about it.

And then: I feel that I have to write about.

And I fail to write it up / write it down / write my way around it.

And that failure makes me sad.

—

seriously though:

the idea that we'd "get another drink here because happy hour is almost over" [even when we didn't want another drink] is an absolute testament to the idea that "good deals" are more important than meeting desires. I'd rather take advantage of something being half off, than decide whether or not I want the thing — or that I want two of them.

That is the sign of capitalism working.

10.12.

The way I tell offensive jokes is for a purpose: to experience the greatest amount of power.

Like two magnets snapping together — powerful enough to rush towards each other from farther and farther away.

Like strapping on pads and asking to get hit as hard as possible.

In a way: just to know how it feels.

To experience something extreme, all while knowing the experience is contained with a degree of safety.

(And when I write in words like this, cold ones, scientificky and with all the echoes of pragmatism — it makes it sound like *these* are the thoughts I have consciously whenever I make a joke. They're not. These are the reasons that I think I've found engraved in an ancient rulebook — one I must have read in utero and absorbed and then forgotten. One whose lessons are very much the prime causes of my actions, but not at all because I'm thinking about them. Do you know what I mean? I'm not calculating as much as it sounds like I might be. I just want to feel.

10.16

We love everything we don't hate.

(Thresholds for tolerance of hatred vary.)

We love everything that takes our attention that we don't hate; in proportion to how much attention it takes.

Living things take our attention far more easily than non-living things.

(We have to learn to train our attention on almost all non living things.)

We hate everything that limits our power.

The ability to satisfy a desire is power.

(Some hate not only what limits their abilities to satisfy a desire, but what does not *aid them* in satisfying a desire they still couldn't otherwise have met.)

A dog takes attention. It asks for nothing. (If a person does not have a threshold high enough to withstand the hatred that comes from the chore in doing a chore for a dog. Cleaning up a dog's poop interferes with the ability to not do that, to not bend down, to spend time in *any* other way, and that would otherwise engender an amount of hatred. The other possibility is that the cleaning up a dog's poop has been redefined as an actual desire, perhaps because the dog became an object for love, and being recognized as such: actions in its service are desired. (Perhaps that is another good definition of love. Loving something means desiring to do good for it. [Loving a non-living thing is different, and means feeling that it has only ever done good for you. {And saying, "I love sriracha even though *sometimes* it has burned my nostrils," does not indicate that it has ever done anything but good for you, that it has ever done not-good for you. That is, it is possible to conceptualize the burning as part of what makes you desire the thing in the first place. The burning is not bad, because the bad is incorporated into something good — it gives value (through difference) to something good, and you recognize that. You recognize that because you love it. [And when you love it, you are willing again to do things in its service, to do things for reasons that do not originate in you. When you love something you are able to expand larger than yourself.}}])

If any of this makes sense: it seems we can describe even the most complicated of emotional and social processes by reducing them to binaries upon binaries upon binaries. 0s and 1s. Or: the other metaphor that exists in the world, older than the paradigm of computer code is the paradigm of the code of physical matter. Quarks have three elements, that can each be — oh wait, no, they are not reduced to three — they are reduced to two: each of the three elements of a quark must be either up, or down. Everything can be reduced to a binary.

And maybe those quarks are the best possible metaphor: maybe everything can be reduced to a binary — and in its next largest unit, it is in a group of three: fully yes,

fully no, or slightly in between. The way Goldilocks' porridge makes sense: too hot. calibrate. too cold. calibrate. just right. Having three yes/no coordinates for something is a way of locating it as efficiently as possible.

Experiment:

Someone picks a number, say between 1 and 1000

You guess and the person says: too low, or too high. That's it.

You get one guess: what's the average error

Two guesses: what's ...

Three guesses: ...

Four...

At one point is it the most efficient — the greatest reduction in error per added piece of information *after the first piece*. (*Something* will always be worlds away from *nothing*.) I imagine 3. First you get nowhere — error is something like 500. With two, maybe you can get down to 250... 50%... or — is it always the same? If we always have the opportunity to *get one more clue*, is each clue proportionally equally useful/useless? Is there never any reason to stop?



10.18

I think when you get to the point where your version of “stimming” is reliving old memories — reminding yourself of the-way-things-were and, for the brief and poignant moment of stimulation, tricking yourself into thinking that’s the case.

I am doing this 24/7, and varying levels of consciousness and attentiveness. Sometimes I’m completely conscious of it, and I know how damaging it is, how much reliving two years ago will wreck me in the present. But I need an escape, and very often, I don’t have enough stimulation to stay awake (in which case, if I am in public I need to find something, or if I am in private I may collapse/let myself fall asleep). But then I am asleep — and I face the other problem: that I no longer have enough stimulation to want to stay alive.

I believe this is why my dreams are the way they are, and why there is no escape even in sleep now. I am doing the same forms of habit-forming, neural-pathway dredging stimulation all day. The “pleasant” dreams are harmful now. Alternatively, I have nightmares of all kinds.

No matter what, I’m losing sleep. I’m either shocking myself partly awake with fear, or lulling myself into that addictive nostalgia — the kind that will make the addiction stronger, the need for sleep more dire. The need is growing, the ability to fight it waning.

Since I left Columbia, I’ve only fought this overpowering tide in my head

And at a certain point it wasn’t worth it to pay the therapist to tell me that I wasn’t lost to the world. I know how much my brain is ... rotted. corroded, and corrupted. ruptured. and punctured. and not fit to sup with.

—

I didn’t pick an art to pursue because I saw how they all, by themselves, had been coopted — that nothing would let me live in escape from cash. Value always was on popularity first... money maybe... the thing itself — where is the thing itself?

Maybe if

ah fuck it.

Ha, I don’t mean that but you know: I lost the footing and I fell off the ship. You have to understand how long I’ve treated drowning by swimming alongside a ship I could have climbed up and onto.

10.20

In this debate season we talk about losing faith in the democratic system.

Trump says the count of votes may not be legitimate, and so, true or not, the seed of doubt is sewn.

What does it mean to lose faith?

New agencies in recent decades have joined forces to help the public lose faith in the news. If only because one side of the media has helped us to believe the other is spreading false information, or spreading information falsely.

The possibility that there is a disagreement — that the truth will not be the truth, and that the ones we trust are not trustworthy in the way we trust them... this means that there is no firm ground. If we are all equal in the eyes of the Vote Counter, we are all, at some level, each other's peer.

Now, the people who might once have been unified in the act of voting do not feel that they have received equally from a power that subsumes and circumscribes them all.

That is how the media could have been the fourth estate instead of a church. There is nothing in whose eyes we stand at equal heights. And so, because we are aspiring for height, we attempt to knock each other down.

That is our animal nature — and the nature of so many other animals as well. If we are not equally powerful in some major way, we will fight for supremacy. [cite] It is too unsteady to exist in constant contest unless we are the constant winners.

This is why the world has mistrusted itself: because we do not trust the faith one another has...

First, church and state: can we build a national identity that puts the nation as the highest order, in which we put our common trust, and in whose Trust we are commonly kept. (Is it any wonder that the largest national Trusts are dying, and will not be saved? What better measure for the declining trust that we nationals have for one another than the declining coffers of the national Trusts?)

We trust each other because we do not share faith in something inviolate, something sacred. We lose trust when we think that faith is not there, or when we cannot see another's faith as a perfect metaphor for our own.

We lose trust when we can't see that another's "favorite metaphor" means about as much about their character as "favorite color" does. Loving *red* might mean I'm bellicose. Or it might mean I'm flamboyant like [those shoes]. Or it might mean nothing at all, or something so vague words only make messes.

And there is a beauty to a sacred thing that does some good and no harm. We should know what comes crashing down when it comes crashing down:

"Steinbeck: when the gods come crashing down..."

This is how it is with adults. We realize they are not fonts of fairness, egalitarian masters of justice. And with that, the child adult divide dissolves.

Yes, we criticize the government for being paternalistic. But we created states to play that role. But while

people lived under chiefs and monarchs in just that way.

Democratic states were created to uproot that classic family reunion trope: "you can't choose your parents."

This relation to parenting authority is perhaps the greatest metaphor in the time of elongated-childhood and delayed adulthood, when we don't want to go BoysII Men anymore, we want to stay *Girls*.

In an interview, Donald Glover said that he always thought it was strange that white kids caught on late.

Catcher in the Rye was stupid. How did it take kids until their late teens to realize all adults were phony?

Relations between "races" are described by divergent group relations to authority. And if I don't believe you are controlled by the authority that controls me... how can I feel ...

We don't trust each other if we don't trust that they trust what we trust.

10.23

I read Camus and it is like the sounds my head has been making for 27 years come to life, come to words. They resonate so loudly — reverberating in the harmonics of my brainstrings (bear with me) — that I can only take in little bits at a time.

They provide filing cabinets for the sheets upon sheets of loose — but typed over — paper that has been collecting. And every time I accept his cabinet, I have to spend time filing the papers away.

I read 11 pages of Camus last month, and I haven't been able to read more. I am full, and I am trying to stick my old thoughts to his so that they can have company outside my own head.

This is what it has always been like with thoughts, to some degree. With his, the resonance is so strong...

10.24

People are going to think that I killed myself because of whatever-the-last-thing was. Oh, it was because his car got towed twice that week, and all the tickets, and...

No. No it wasn't. Have you even been listening?

I'm not at all mad, just — do you ever think to think about how narrowly you're thinking? You cannot pack all of life into the last round of things.

—

I had told myself that the work I was doing was worth doing, or necessary for the moment. It was a way to catch all of my anxieties ("Do Something!") in an activity — an activity that, if I took a small step back, wouldn't make me say "This is all an escape! This is digging me in deeper!"

I got a stupid paper done to get a stupid paper done. And I made myself learn things that would then be somewhat useful over dinners or with people I wanted to impress, or with friends I wanted to entertain (because every task needs *at least* three motivations — these two plus: creating pain that, in its cessation becomes pleasure).

And when I lifted the burden I slammed down on my own head, I lived in the city of infinite reward. People are pleasures abounded, and the only struggle was to combine them.

There is no reward I want to wait for, live for.

10.25

Have been thinking everything makes a difference.

It made a difference because I was on the edge of coping, and little things could push me back from the edge as I was falling, or nudge me further...

My heart pounded in class before I spoke — because I imagined the way I spoke could matter.

10.26

Maybe I've always known that I had a huge memory problem — that something was wrong with me, and I didn't want to address it, and I wouldn't have to if I could cope and hide it. Maybe this is why I've always felt compelled to write things down. I knew if I didn't get it down — then it was gone for me.

And if it was something I witnessed individually, experienced by myself — there would be no one to remind me, and I would forget, and it would be as if it never happened. It would be a wasted moment. As soon as the present was gone, I'd have lost it.

And if there was anyone who was about to hand you a present — one you knew would disappear in your hands the first moment you lifted your eyes from it — then, then you'd tell them, no! no not to me! please give it to someone else.

And if you cannot, then stand there with me. And when you have to leave, then I'll be standing alone with that little present, and I'll disappear, too.

—

God, I am crossing the place I thought I could never get to:

Going out makes me so uncomfortable that I would *rather* be alone than have the company I might be able to have. There are small choices, and they would make me more uncomfortable than not, and I wouldn't feel "proud" of surviving when I made it back. So I will stay in... all day... and I will stop responding to people, and everyone will stop calling.

I can only understand the voice in my own head. I'm not "insane" enough to think that the voice is not (also) me. But still, that is the one I can hear, and understand, and follow at the right speed.

And someday, maybe soon, I will imagine those voices are someone else, because I cannot bear the thought that I am really this alone.

—

Write drunk, edit sober. What did Hemingway think about getting high?

I can't get into a clear state of mind no matter what under any circumstances. If I am high enough, with the right momentum, I can write things that at least, for a moment, I think may make sense.

When I come back to them sober they may make sense, but I will not trust that they do. I might not be able to read them. Really, in fact, I can't read at all, I can only write — where the words can only be read in one direction because, to the right, they don't exist yet.

—

And I will always destroy Us by picking at me. Because I will not see where me and us are different; which part is nucleus and which part is membrane. I will pick at the the thing I think could only make myself sore and it will make you sore enough eventually to quit.

Or, maybe worse: I won't see how just picking — poking and prodding at *how things are* — could make you sore. *I'm just saying...* I say. And I'll go on to suggest that things don't have to be the way that they are, which, by itself, is a little existential challenge.

If it is something challenged that matters — and we have not yet been interested enough to build up a defense — then we might get defensive. No one wants to give up something that matters before having something more than equally valuable to replace it with.

Maybe sometimes that is why people who want to learn to interact with “others” spend so much time defending themselves. Learning what the defenses are to the things that matter. I thought what mattered most was being similar to other people.

I was interested most in being similar to other people. What made me most different, was my obsession with being the same. You can see why I got tangled up.

The feedback loop doesn't break all at once, but it helps to introduce another voice. This one, mine.

—

Fear:

If I subspecialize — I will begin to lose connection to people. We will not be interested in the same things, and so: we will be different.

If I start learning languages (even academic ones) in which others are not fluent, then we *certainly* will not be able to be fluent in the same things.



The only way I can retain a connection to people who do not speak my professional language — who are not interested in so much of what I spend my time trying to be interested in — is through money. That way I can still experience things the way others do... but only others who spend money in those ways.

—

When I was young: I realized that I was not everything I wanted to be.

This was my first terrifying realization: I was not in every relationship I wanted to be in.

Right. No strange thing. What makes us different, though, is how we respond to that initial dissatisfaction. My response was the kind that could have turned out extraordinary, or could backfire.

Very young — I knew that I wouldn't be comfortable even if I was dropped into the situations I wanted to be in. I couldn't even hope to win the lottery because I knew I'd be forbidden to cash the ticket. I would be outed as an imposter.

So I had to train, to make myself comfortable — to prepare for the possibility that I might get what I wanted. If I could do that... then at least I could sit back and hope. I could hope that if my dreams came true that I would be awake and dressed to live them.

But I didn't have the space to practice. I knew I couldn't learn how to be in a relationship with my dream girl if I didn't have a dream girl.

I had movies and TV. I internalized how the guys that got their dream girls acted around those girls. Of course, I took into account how much the girls they got seemed like the kind of girls I'd want to get me. I took into account that it was television, and they were acting, and this was all scripted.

And then I went to go live a life. It was all acting the roles I wanted to one day get.

And people saw me and they said: well, isn't he marvelous!

The one thing they did not take into account was that I might be faking. The girls treated me the way they treated me because I treated them like my dream girl. Far from perfect, I still aimed for perfection — (and sometimes they saw me aiming for perfection) and that came of well.

To friends, girlfriends, baristas and grad school admissions boards , I came off as something I wasn't, but something I was trying to be.

But it was something I wasn't trying to be *with them*.

Even if it worked — and it often did — and you let me be what I was trying to be; I wouldn't have really wanted to be it. Not the way I wanted other things — the things that gave me energy to practice all this long.

They were only a practice, see, for the things I hadn't found (or: had been too afraid to speak with). Don't you see? It was all only a practice — and I practiced so long I missed the show.

— —

There are lots of mentally ill people in the world. I'm one of the ones that also happens to be "smart" in many of the traditional ways. And that might mean I have the power for self reflection that would satisfy academic standards. That is, if I were a psychologist, I might have breakthrough things to say based on my very good understanding of this thing — and understanding I have because all I have to do is feel it. What I mean is: I might be seeing the trend of voices building in my head and understanding the social processes (loneliness) through which I might declare that they were something other than me.

And that might be helpful to scientists trying to understand what is behind something. It also might be helpful in alerting you to what I basically am, and am becoming. I tried to warn you about suicidality probably from when I was about 11 onwards, and heavily since college. And no one wanted to believe I meant what I was trying to say.

—

I was never able to say “not right now”, to someone who made me ask myself “why is this thing that you think is important important?” I was never able to say — this thing is sacred to me — it is important and I don't question it — and I don't want to question it.

I figured they had a right to ask, and that, if I couldn't justify the thing's importance, then I shouldn't be spending time thinking it's important.

The trouble is: there are many things — perhaps the most important things — whose importance you cannot explain. You lack the words for the feelings. And while sometimes it may be because you don't have enough to back them up — at other times it may be because you have too much.

And it is a terrible reason to question something to death because you can't choose what answer you want to give.

10.27

Aspiration: excellence. (Elegance?)

Stakes: competence.

I spread myself to the place where I was barely competent in any of the worlds I took part in. Sometimes not competent, but willing to fake competence in the hope that it might stick.

And now that excellent is not something I can be, I can no longer be competent. That was how I kept it together — that hope that I might one day be more than scrambling and faking it.

And now that I see excellence not as an option — I wonder why (I know why, just read the rest of this!) I didn't choose a path where I could have been competent, and happy being competent.

— —

When I was around my best friends, I could act like the person I wanted — I could pump energy into the thing I needed to be. And people loved me for being me.

So why wouldn't I broadcast that person? He *worked*. I just wanted to work. How many yesses did I need for every no?

(One no would do it.)

— —

it's like, i used to be motivated by things that would happen in 40 years — and now it's gotta be something within the next couple hours.

That's supposed to move in the opposite direction.

— —

The voices... the craziness that makes outside so uncomfortable now. Will I get so used to giving up the fight with that discomfort... I will stop — as I did my entire life — putting myself in social situations that felt bad because I wanted to fake it until I made it to a life that wasn't alone. And once I stop, I will truly be alone. And I will be even more uncomfortable out in the world...

No wonder most writers didn't give talks before — the only thing that made them content, or happy to be writers, was the thing that made them happy not to be around other people. Going into solitude in order to build a community in which I could be myself... that was a bad idea. I don't even remember how the people I like really speak.

— —

Oh God — and by that I mean oh Goodness, and I mean to say, not the thing that stands for God, but the thing that God stands for, the thing that could unite us, the thing that we all want in our own ways with our own definitions: goodness — that's what I mean — the things that are good... those things... oh, you: I am so sorry that all I managed to do was write.

10.28

Trust.

As we get older, I don't trust that you are showing me what you are.

Even the nicest interactions, maybe that is all because you want to preserve my company. Like: you don't want to scare me away. Like: I am useful largely because of my ability to stave off your loneliness.

—

There's a problem when you pride yourself on doing something you feel the whole world should be doing. Because if they begin to, or even if you manage to change the-way-things-are, then you lose that very source of pride.

Proud of difference... with an effort towards lessening that difference. Two parts of the self, the one that defines and identifies, and the one that acts, falling into conflict.

—

You'll never be able to take the writing just as writing, because you know me. But I am writing it just as writing, as if maybe you didn't. If we can't ever create an object that is engaged with independently, without any knowledge of us (or as little as possible), then we will never really be making art.

We will be making something that stands as a reflection of ourselves — that we have created as an appendage.

But if we want to make art as art, it must be perceived individually.  
In that way, if there were a creator of this world, we could see this world as a work of the ultimate art. Ultimate because we have the option to perceive each thing on its own terms.

—

If I don't believe a word is semantically, meaningfully, usefully-for-my purposes different from another word, or another group of words, I will use the simplest, most basic word. "Said," for example, instead of anything else — maybe even instead of "asked" (or "exclaimed" — when punctuation can do the job a word might. And in that way, the work can be read honestly, sharply: every weirdness of the words is a weirdness for you to take.

---

What if there is such a thing as a “semantic rhyme scheme” — it doesn't have to do with sound, but with meaning.

[ I set out to prove that the world wasn't as scary as we imagined it, but I was bored and restless to discover just that. ]

Here, “I set out to prove that” and “just that” are referring to the same thing. So the first and last part of the sentence rhyme. So it's a kind of ABBA rhyme scheme, or ABCA.

But if I made it: “I set out to prove that the world wasn't as scary as we imagined it, but discovering just that, I was bored and restless.”

This would be a kind of ABAB rhyme scheme. Your preference for things like may reflect your preference for how the world is ordered. Do you want short term symmetrical rhymes (ABABABAB), where meaning is made in a kind of beat, or are you more tickled by longer symmetry, where beginnings reflect ends...

---

When there is a choice between A and B, and I have been stuck, anything that suggests C (especially if C is “do nothing”) will win me over.

Was able to be totally alone.

When I start looking into my depths, I feel more alone than alone. After asking myself deep questions, I see myself in the scale of the universe — “deep” really means “how large a space does it effect that is not me”. It means, if there were a list of important things, how deep would I be in the line up? If the “meaning of it all” were the sun, how deep would I be in a well?

—

Anythign I find intereseting, I have the thought: I could have dedicated my life to understanding this — not doing what I’m doing now.

—

We never reach the point where we *don’t care what people think*.  
I need to care what people think.  
But I cared what *everyone* thought.

I’m still writing, not in no part because I care that people think that I did not waste those years. (And the years that came after in trying to prove to you that I did not waste them.)

I cared that people thought I was *like* them. [That’s the simplest form of caring. Imitation, the most sincere form of Flattery. And so I needed to keep moving, proving I was like everyone... ]

... but I wasn’t like everyone. Some things were different.

There was a crack — some of the things I cared about were being proven impossible. A limit — one i couldn’t run away from. I could care about what *everyone* thought.

And that is a first step towards being able to make decisions without asking *anyone* for help.]



---

People say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. No, sincerity is a form of flattery. The more sincere we appear (to people looking for insincerity), the more we appear to care about the other person. Because we are conveying our openness, our truthfulness, our everything...

And our sincerity imitates the other. Sincerity is a form of imitation. Therefore...

---

All of academia is like a question and answer service for the rich. The rich ask questions, and those are the questions that get asked.

The “academy” has been taught to police itself according to the rules that Money finds rigorous.

That is all the “truth” found is ever used for. To satisfy someone else’s curiosity, or to be used as part of an argument for money.  
(Likely, the curiosity is about how it can be used in an argument to make money.)

---

Soon the real test will be here, once I have committed to a story line. Like Sheherezade, my life will depend on my story telling. As soon as the story fails to hold the listener’s attention, I will die.

I have always had such trouble picking a story.

I will do what they say: I will speak what I know. I will tell the story of my life, for the audience’s entertainment. But unlike Sheherezade, I will be telling the story to myself.

I cannot live until I commit to a life. But once I commit, I will only have one story to tell. A curling stone thrown across the ice. I won't be able to change what the truth is; I will only be able to change how I tell myself about it.

All there is is the story: everything I do and say is part of the story I am telling myself. If the story's not good enough, or if I'm not convinced, I'll have to kill myself. Who could ever live through a bad story?

Can't stop apologizing, trying to bridge the gap between the way things are and the way I want them to be. If I tell you, I think, maybe you'll know that I know things shouldn't be like this. And that way, you might still agree with me — even though I'm doing everything wrong.

—

I wallowed in my depression because I wanted to spend conscious time in it, to find a solution for the problems that were there — and not to distract myself from them, in the hopes of learning how to distract myself always. I wanted to be able to have my eyes fully open *and* be happy.

In my case, much of it may have just needed a leap of faith: if I had chosen to engage with the distractions, they would have become real. Learning to enjoy time isn't a distraction, necessarily.

I don't want to think anymore. Ever again — each one is so goddam awful, and co

why finish  
thought

word  
sentence why finish

there isn't anything here but what i'm scraping out again  
fuck me  
adam, i'm goddammed

please forgive me for giving up. but i promise, i tried. i just tried in all the wrong places. or enough wrong ones. fuck i'm sorry.

keep it together: really, this is what I want. I am sick, and I am tired of looking for treatment and taking all your time, too. Let's all move away.

—

Adam is supposed to be the namer of things.

I have trouble enough with that — but one thing I could never name, oh yes:  
me.

The namer can't name himself....

(who calls the baker, or whatever that thing is about it)

10.31

America:

Internet celebrity:

The business of attracting reputation for how little you appear to care about reputation.

Love me for how little I need your love. (And that is what my first/only great love told me. And that is why I will never have love again, because I need it from anything and everything; and I am so addicted that I can't put off the immediate for the longer lasting. I put off my whole life for a future I would never live.)

—

What do we need gods for now that we can deify humans?

Before, there was no way for a person to spread their cult wide enough to dominate as much of the world as they'd want to in just one lifetime. It took hundreds of years for a religion to unify its group, and man needed to build off that unity. He said: I rule in the spirit of this thing to which we all agree — at least on one count we can agree to agree, that this god is God.

But now we can spread a person wide enough.

The trouble is, man has an interest in being God. Where once we might have said: ah no, I recognize you do not rule in the spirit of this god, and so I can rebel against you without undermining my deepest principles — now, we cannot say a man does not rule in the spirit of himself. Whatever he does, he does for the reasons we once loved him. And if we doubt them, he can explain, quickly, to all of us. And it is easier to believe than to question everything we have ever known.

The only way not to be so shaken is to have something larger that we can hang on to when the bottom falls out. We must believe in something common — if not a god, then a Good. It is not hard to see when a man does not act in spirit of the Good.

## 11. 2

It's like I've been living an entire class within a classroom. The field of norms is so extensive — and yes, perhaps I can come try to come across as both smart and human, creative and controlled, unique and like everyone else... but it will take real effort to

---

I used to believe my acting was different than lying. Because I said, none of my acting is hurting anyone, and it will all be defensible in the end, if I can act my way to where this role is no longer acting.

But, now I cannot bear to be me — I can't bear the roles I'm playing, and I don't think I'll ever turn it into truth. So... the urge has taken me... to lie for its own sake. I get nothing but the experimentation with that world — the one in which others take what I'm saying as true — but that is an escape from my truth, and I can venture out of my head if I think the others are fully engrossed in this fake world [Westworld], and that is the best I can hope for in any moment: a momentary escape.

---

To never have to experience loss, I insulated myself from loss — by making it seem, to myself, like I depended on no one but myself. But now, still, because I have lost myself — I have lost everything. I put all my eggs in one basket.

---

I don't want to sharpen my voice anymore. So that my voice will cut a single person at their skin. I don't want to speak for no one but myself. I want my voice to be comprehensible and powerful and to resonate at levels deep enough to feel without thinking and articulate enough to understand without feeling. Like a heavy blast of bass from the subwoofer, audible and inaudible and effective in both ways.

I don't want to become more personalized.

---

“Give something color.” I mean, choose among the details that do not have different value, but are valued simply for being different.

## 11.4

Need for content. Only got discontent.

How far is the distance between the now and the fantastic? (And how much time is there to get there?)

I mean: a fantasy that encompasses all and describes *the way you'd want everything to be*.

As a kid, the distance is huge — but the fantasy goes as far as it could stretch. There are prayers — but they are far, far away; so far that we might never *expect* to arrive there, but still get something good from having that prayer, and moving in some direction that feels towards it.

In fact, at least as young people, we start off moving in those directions. Much of that fantasy is contained in what it almost always is to grow up. Burgeoning independence, expanding rights, freedoms... and the distance between now and fantasy shrinks. Even if the fantasies get farther away — we catch up. The kid's ability to imagine near infinite distance shrinks.

b0: NOW

b: fantasy [asymptotic]

[÷ time available] [negative linear] (interpreted perhaps exponentially)

—

all of this is processed to control action;

variables (how much money is an effect

—

What is it to write outside of your native speaking language.

To have different tools for different projects.

If following the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the mind is restructured by differing language structures — and if we agree that a differently structured mind is suitable

for different tasks — wouldn't it make perfect sense to use different collections of words in spheres that make use of vastly different kinds of language.

– It takes a different kind of language to talk about the subjective than it does to talk about the objective. That is, it is simpler to make reference to something we can both see than to describe to you something you have never seen, maybe never thought about, maybe can't conceive of. Complicated introspective, downwardly digging investigation: this asks for a totally different kind of language than does an investigation of something visible to everyone.

— It used to happen: writing in Latin and Greek. French and German. Happens all throughout the postcolonial world, where French trumps Arabic trumps Berber languages. It happens in every household where someone has come from *somewhere else*.

This: because my friend had said: Americans always think of failure as a kind of success. In France, failure is failure. Et je me suis dit, comment est-ce que je peux en penser — comment est-ce que je peux échapper des pensées déjà réglées.

Et voilà — ce que je peux faire: je peux écrire en français et retraduire moi-même en anglais (comme Mark Twain aurait aimé, ou détesté).

Je n'ai pas l'intention d'échapper de ma propre tête. Je ne soutiens que l'idée qu'on a des têtes différentes, et on peut les accéder si on change la langue — la code avec laquelle on s'adresse aux idées du monde.

C'est que: les concepts existe, mais aussitôt que je les exprime dans une langue ou une autres, ils prennent la forme de cette langue. Si je veux regarder la forme même de cette langue, ses assomptions — il faut que je la regarde d'une autre avantage.

Alors: revenant à la question de l'échec américain, permettez moi de changer la code.

Et puis, à l'instant de la réalisation de la fantaisie, l'acteur se rend compte de rien sauf l'incertitude. L'incertitude de direction; c'est à dire: il ne sait pas où aller. Car son direction a été conduit, choisit, réglé par la distance entre la fantaisie et l'instant — à l'instant où les deux sont les mêmes, l'approche est foutu. C'est



exactement comme la boussole vers la pôle du nord. L'instrument qui donne les directions a besoin d'une distance. Aussitôt que la distance est disparu, l'instrument cesse de fonctionner. Mais: c'est cet instrument ce dont l'être humain dépend d'agir dans le monde moderne. (C'est à dire, le monde ou les êtres sont capables de reconnaître une distance entre l'instant et la fantaisie. Soit dans l'instant, et soit dans un avenir imaginé.)

On parle souvent des «Meccas» des choses spécifiques — des industries divers, des arts, des cuisines. Mais on ne reconnaît pas suffisamment que chaque pèlerinage nécessite une distance qui *reste à la fin*. Si on arrive exactement sur la bout de l'obsession: le résultat est chaos. Par exemple: en priant, les musulmans s'orientent vers Mecca toujours. Sur les avions des pays musulmans, il existe des indices sur les écrans: «Mecca: par ici, x km. à y degrés nordouest» De plus en plus proche à la destination, il devient de plus en plus facile pour ce nombre de degrés de changer plus rapidement. Dit autrement: en Alaska, la distance la plus courte à Mecca est vers le nord; si je conduis 100 miles, c'est la même. Arrivant en arabie saoudite, à Jeddah, Mecca est vers le sud. Si je conduis 100 miles, je peux faire la distance la plus proche vers l'ouest, vers le nord. Mais on n'arrive jamais à la source exacte. À Mecca, dans la ville même, on se dirige vers la grande mosquée. Dans la mosquée, on se dirige vers le Kabaa, dans lequel on ne peut jamais entrer.

La réussite serait l'échec. L'échec de cette façon de vivre.

Et donc, on ne veut jamais «réussir» parfaitement. Arriver à la source de la fantaisie n'évoque que chaos. C'est cette prière sur lequel l'enfant à rester toute sa vie. C'est toute la fondation de son expérience.

Aux états unis, on a construit une solution solipsistic, tautologique — mais utile quand même (peut-être seulement si on ne s'en réfléchit trop). On s'est dit: l'échec *est* la réussite. Ou: l'échec est complètement nécessaire pour la réussite totale, *mythique*.

Et comme ça: we manage to convince ourselves over and over again that *getting everything we want* is possible. We think we can arrive at the perfect, and so we keep looking for it. There is no point at which we say, *ça suffit*.

Everybody has reasons reasons to distance themselves from themselves. But where do you situate the distance?

Danish: “they” — depersonalized, decentralized, it’s no one.  
US:

Trend in Denmark.  
In US, not in writing...  
in my writing: We... I mean I.

11.5

How bad do I have to make things... in order to feel, when the pressure goes away, something like the bliss I used to feel?

I do not know where to find bliss anymore. So the pressure, I make.

I think we'll see more and more people — anyone who asks themselves why they are doing something, why why why, until they have an answer that they feel is true, and hides nothing from themselves — and is not content with “money” as an answer, will teach himself to stop asking questions or kill himself. There are the people who make that questioning in itself a way to get money — in some ways avoiding the question by being able to answer it in both ways at the same time. It is a kind of quantum existence — a Shroedinger's Capitalism, and while it may manage to contain the dissonance for a single person, it leaves the system unchecked. It makes it so that those with the strongest desires to questions, those who would sacrifice their life before working just for money, at the root, will end up doing just that.

—

I was so disciplined that I kept myself from having the kinds of awkward habits I'd feel embarrassed if people knew. Like, imagine someone saying: I just online shop for hours, not to buy anything, but just because it feels weirdly good. For me, I keep myself from doing anything like that. I was disciplined enough to know it wasn't good, wouldn't do any good, so...

... but all that means is that the faults I do have are the kind that I make sure no one knows. Not like something I bring up but I'm a little embarrassed about — little awkward hobbies. No, no, my issues are the things I'm hotrifically embarrassed by — and they are so infrained as habits, and more embarrassing because they are more ingrained, because I have never been able to change them. Like being unable to get up in the morning. Like being overactive and jealous. Like thinking that when people called me brilliant it might have actually been true — thinking it reallyy probely was true. I will never recover from that arrogance. There were two paths: one where I rejected it, and another where I was granted the public acceptance of it. Instead, I screamed at everyone who was kind to me — stop telling me that I am something great, because I won't survive the disappointment. But I wasn't relly rejecting it; I was asking everyone else to help, all while soliciting their continued praise.

I watch the autocorrect change words now, even right ones into wrong ones, but it's ok. It's like a little last joke.



## 11.8

Codes of conversation:

Look at the top of the page; used to be different languages  
(Eng / SPA)

Now, it's mostly different social media forms.

These are the different codes we switch between.

People are able to translate power in one sphere to power in another. This is essentially a challenge to the ideas of the balance of power.

---

“What’s wrong with Theda Skocpol?”

We refer to “The Hill” to involve all of DC;

We say “suits” to refer to execs — a part standing for the whole.

Legs to refer to a whole person...

Sometimes, even a name is a kind of metonymy. Why? Isn't the name the person-itself? Perhaps, but I'd like to think a person is more than a name. There is what they are called, and what they *are*. The name is shorthand for what they are; and in this case, it's something that has basically no correlation.

So I can understand the *stylistic* approach: What's wrong with [x]? It's using the name to stand for [Skocpol's Ideas]. The same way we might say, what's wrong with the Jets — we're talking about what's wrong with the Jets as football players, because that's what they do. The academic writes, shares ideas.

Says one critic of his subtitle; “He then made no points illustrating that anything was wrong with her, just the theory she used or how she chose to apply it.” Yes. But I think this is actually the proof of what he did really mean — that the name was supposed to stand for the theory.

But beyond this stylistic/ideological argument — there is a pragmatic one. The effects of this attack will be misinterpreted, consciously and, perhaps more dangerously, subconsciously. We never think we are talking about the mound of

grass in DC when we say the Hill — but when we say a person's name, we certainly assume we're talking about something deeper under the surface.

---

we create absolute fights when we don't consciously want to deal with something at the moment. subconsciously we've convinced ourselves that we don't want to deal with it at all. but: so I destroy something fully because it makes some demand on me, instead of figuring out how to minimize the demand. I don't know how things are with things — but with people, I think that absolute cut off is almost always less good. almost always less good for more people; a total of less- goodness in the world. All because eventually, every problem comes to a head. And if we are used to answering in absolutes — if we have no room for mystery — then we force ourselves to make whatever choice will resolve the dissonance between what we feel and what we (think we) want.

I am with you — but you are not with me enough. SO:  
I am not with you as much as I would like to be with you.  
I cannot make you with me as much as I would like,  
but I can make me like you to be with me as much as you are — that is, I can reduce how much I want to make you with me. If I convince myself that I want you with me zero: I don't want you with me at all.  
Then, all I need to do is make you with me not at all. And the dissonance will be resolved.

They say hate isn't the opposite of love, apathy is.  
But it is very hard not to care, when once you cared.  
Dealing in absolutes: love, if it doesn't work, goes to hate — because apathy is too difficult...

11.9

I can't bear to run errands in a car, on silent streets, because I can't bear that time moving through total solitude.

I don't know why solitude makes me freeze so. As if, I can face the frigidity as if every cold molecule of air is a knife. And if I stay still I will feel less of the pain... and if I move, I will feel it again and again and again.

That is how I feel about solitude. As if the empty spaces are sharp.



11.10

I'm particularly poorly situated in the attention economy — because I've always been given too much.

We live in a world where the attention we can garner is equivalent to the money we make, our ways of making a living. I have been given too much for what I have fairly earned. And I have needed too much for what a person should rightly need.

I need attention just to be able to focus my own attention.

If no one is paying attention to me, like tinkerbelle, I dissolve. I fall apart. Like a pile of sugar in space, I'll just drift apart.

Need money to make money. Need attention to get attention.

The only way in, maybe, is to get attention from those with money — to insert yourself into that cycle. Just perpetuates.

11.14

Not smart enough man.

Tooo abstract but not smart enough to have kept a tether on the world, to know how to get back.

I am like Hansel and Gretel but with ideas. Like, I wanted to get as far into the realm of dangerous exciting thoughts in the forest as I could — but I never wanted to lose my home, where I knew it was, where I knew it was comfortable. So, I droppedd breadcrumbs. Breadcrumbs of thought that kept me rooted: I know how to explain this to this person here, but could I still explain it to mom? Farther and farther away I got, because I still thoguht I'd be able to talk to them.

Then I was risking really breaking off — because my life was getting so different from he average; living in the apartment, alone almost all day, writing. My experiences were going to be so different, I was going to be more and more different. So, how to stay connected at least to the *stories* from regular life? TV, sure — but that's been Hollywooded. Family, sure, but they are far away and older. Friends are moving fast in different directions — hard to know how to keep up and feel like I was doing a good job. So: the partner. Someone to keep me rooted to another chunk of the world, someone I can trust is keeping an eye on “how things work”. While I go off farther and farther to indulge my purely untethered curiosity. How awful that I even wanted that.

11/.22

Do I still think there's anything to find in all this sorrow?

11.23

Tonight I tried to try and hang myself — that's all. Injuries mostly to my ankle, if you can believe it, from kicking through a plywood wall.

—

Dad's down there, and I'm hanging from the drainpipe, arms around it, extension cord around my neck. Get the fuck out of here, I say. I say, it's over, or something like that. And he won't leave, and so I yank myself down and begin choking slowly — it's not a high drop, it's my own weight doing the work — and he tries to grab me.

He's gotten older, I realize.

He's older than he was when I was young — obviously — that is, obviously to my eyes but never to my gut. He can't hold me up. If I were dying, he couldn't save me.

He calls for mom. I know he didn't want to do that. Bring scissors. She does, she cries — but not as much as I would've thought — maybe she can tell no one is dying tonight — and the scissors break against the wire. Another round, the wire breaks, and I'm left alone with half the cord, smeared with blood. There is still enough to try again, still long enough. I feel my neck, and there's nothing there, no scars. The blood is gushing from my ring finger, it seems.

I'm tired. Too tired to die, and too anxious it's still misunderstood. I have planned the idea but not the act. This is not an act of chaos, but an answer to it — and yet, it is never easy to say something quiet above the noise of war.

11.29

I believe my face is more honest than my history. That is, I believe you should judge me by my cover.

To the

My face, I've been told, is ambiguous: Greek, Italian, Persian, Tajik. The first role I ever played on television was a Nepalese conman. Not that the conman  
My history, as far as I know: is a white Jew from the Caucasus, blood congealed in America over the last hundred-and-almost-fifty years.

Nearing the sesquicentennial of my rooted lineage in the New World, I find myself as unrepresentative of "American" as I am its fair ambassador.

That is, insofar as "American" is a thing — I ain't it. And I am, entirely.

What "cover" means is not what it used to. No, "cover" means something closer to what "dust jacket" once did.

We do not judge books by their covers quite so much — not when other people are looking. We judge them by the flaps that give us just a little taste inside.  
And we might say, *ah! So much better to judge by 100 words than a single picture, no?* And I'd say — sure, if we didn't pretend then that we'd read the book.

Because that's what we've done.

---

How horrible to have gotten away with never changing your mind, just pretending to change it.

---

You should never trust a word I say anymore,  
because each one has  
the same  
purpose

each one  
has a mission,  
a demand

love me  
love me  
love me

and each one  
has a  
question  
a  
question  
a desperate  
question

what will make you love me?

11.30

If you're insecure enough, you almost need people to be obsequious in order to feel comfortable — or, at least in order to feel that you are not doing something wrong by your presences/presentation alone.

But soon, or for confident people: even constant positive reactions to how you are will put you on edge. There will be nowhere you can just *be* if you are either insecure for failing, or insecure because you know you are being noticed...

... and the noticing can never be ultimately good.... it's a kind of self-awareness that takes a person outside of the moment they are in.

Perhaps that's it: if you are desperate, then to be taken out of that moment is worthwhile, a respite. If you are in a place of comfort and power, to be taken out is disorienting, and terrifying in its state of being blow wide open.

12.27

Always been like this:

See what someone else thinks. Try to understand.

If it doesn't make sense — try to reframe; make analogies until their relationship between them and the world and their feelings (agent + place + emotions: subjectivity in a nutshell?) could be measured like yours in some case.

And then, you have at least one point of access — one way to see the world through their eyes.

But this is why I'm so afraid of losing grip on "pop" culture. With some people, that's the only thing you have in common. For some people, it's the only thing I can assume they like. Or even more conservatively: it's the only thing I can assume they know about. If I don't share any references with someone, it means I can only ever communicate in the abstract. And at a certain point, that is both miserable and vague, and wants to test its logic on something concrete. But, if you don't even share a vantage enough to see a single thing in common, you're stuck up there in the clouds.

Ok, so: communication will be cut off entirely with some people (a lot) if I don't know what the most (numerically) popular things are. Any kind of things.

Not to mention being ignorant of their feelings: first you want to understand someone's reference; then you want to understand their orientation to it. First understand what they know, then understand how they feel about it. If you know that, you can get in someone's shoes.

But I'm forgetting that because I don't even know what's popular. And I don't talk to anyone who knows so I have no way to know what anyone else thinks about what anyone else thinks about. I'm not just separated, I'm alone in being separated. I'm maximally alone because I don't even know how alone I am.

---



I was very against pirating music. I didn't. In the earliest days of limewire, I judged my friends for it. Never out loud, I don't think, but in my head I had to ask myself: is there something wrong with Billy's *character*?

But I gave in. And when I did, I always gave the same reasoning:  
I wouldn't have bought it otherwise.

The only follow-up worth asking is: what does your indirect participation in this system give to the system?

Maybe it's nothing. Or maybe it's something I couldn't quite see.

- On the popular side: it is the opposite. What if everyone is participating in something and you do not. What does your lack of participation in the system do to you? Sure, what does it contribute to the system (nothing, and takes away nothing) — but more powerfully: what will you lose from *not* sticking your hand in the current and lapping some of the stream of everyone else's consciousness.

A metaphor, for public consumption:

A virus, takes hold in the blood stream [things go viral]

A blood stream circulates [viral media circulates]

Stream of consciousness [public stream of consciousness]

— This stream has been gathering speed. Long ago, it was impossible to hit a critical mass of the world... now... faster and faster... within a day or two, a video can be known by the majority of the country. And more and more mid-scale viruses.

---

Plumb the depths plumb the depths plumb the depths, they always say. I always thought that was grandiose — like other people weren't living in their deepest.

But what it means, I think, is: your most alone.

Here's what I think: the "deepest" part of ourselves is the part that is farthest from everyone else... that cannot be shared. Not because we do not try, but because we are not able: we do not have the words or the time in our thin body to tell you: this is who we are.

I guess what I mean is that I've been seeing the world atilt: your "deepest" may have been my "farthest back". Everything you thought was buried, I thought was on the surface — just farther away from you.

So: To go and spend time down there means facing the feeling that you will discover something that makes you permanently alone. Every second is a second facing the void, and ever second is a danger that you will get stuck.

When I lived with her, I knew she would come home, and I knew that when she did, I would feel less alone than ever before. She made me feel safe to go plumb the depths.

And now, I can feel that I'm actually living my most solitary self even on the surface. It's so awful I'm desperate not just in my head but in my bones and flesh to find other people. How can I go deep when I already can't breathe?

—

If you can't hear their music, how will you hear their words?

—

I have two settings:

What you feel is right is better than what I think is right or

What I think is right is better than what you think is right.

That is to say: suggest something to me. Either I am ready to take your advice, in which case I will take it and never look back.

Or: I was never really listening at all.

I can't hear your suggestions any more — because you showed me that you cared less than I did, and that sometimes, if I was bold enough to push back, you agreed with me from the beginning. And so now I feel: if I argued with you on everything

— or, if I told you why I wanted what I wanted, you’d agree with me practically everywhere.

And I still wouldn’t agree with you if you did the same.

So: if we both had infinite time, we’d end up on my old side, not yours.  
And so, let’s save some time.

---

GUTS:

I can’t create art anymore if what *works* — what I am trying to make — is not something that resonates with my gut. If my gut says wrong and you say right — then I’ll never be able to give you my best work. Most of the time, I won’t be able to work at all.

So: if you cut off the phrases I think are certainly simple enough not to distract most people, and you say — no, let’s put those in bland phrases, not original ones — then we’re changing how people read. They need to, when reading me, have a certain number of (that’s weirds) per minute. Otherwise, they’ll be complacent in their reading. And this needs to be read with, at the very minimum, the belief that “this might be weird” — or “I might not understand this fully and *instantly*, and that doesn’t mean it’s bad and it’s wrong and I should stop”.

---

Some day you might say: how did you not tell me — it’s like you didn’t trust me, or like you were acting, or like you were keeping secrets...!

And I will say — well, sure. It’s like planning a surprise party — is that such an evil thing? Only: I have been working on this surprise for years, and I thought it would make you happy, if you did not get mad at me for planning it.

-

The thing I shouldn't tell you, both because I think it can't not have some kind of not good effect — but have to, because I can't not tell it:

Is that I have heard that before. And I'm guessing most people have in some way — or, even more so, people have felt it and not said it (and the kinds of people I hang with are the kinds of people who *say* things — but I hear this sometimes, I think, because it is what I *want*. That's what I want to do for people. But sort of for everyone. I don't feel I can or should or will for that many people — but I wanted to have some way of making those feelings happen for more people.

The only people that will spend time with me now despite what makes me insufferable, or at least challenging — or depressing, or maybe boring... are girls who want to have sex with me. That's all there is. That's all there is.

And that is a real kind of intimacy that matters. But: it's not the only kind. And not at the expense of all the other kinds. And too addictive a drug to not have mitigated with other sources.

—

I don't ever want to email anyone anymore. Writing is too ahrd. Writing is work. SO et's only talk.

—

We limit the things that are in our power — we declare them off limits, undesirable — to avoid facing the truth that we could have them, that things do not have to be the way they are, that there is no *real* meaning in doing what we are doing, in so far as it is meaningful because it is *not* that thing.

## 1.4

All those dopamine hits from connections with other people: other people, other people. But where once it took another person to connect with other people, now the dopamine doesn't care: it is possible to "connect" all alone. Social media... where once it took a single friend, a rightly placed compliment to make confidence — now it takes a hundred.

Devaluing friendship.

1.5

It was like this — if I could be something completely different, foreign, other to someone — then I wouldn't be held to the same standards on any other the things we did in common.

Like, imagine I was from Madagascar, and you played squash. And I meet you in New York, and you go, hey cool, a friend from Madagascar. So many novel things I can be for you. But if we can *also* play squash, your favorite game? Your *thing*? Then I'm sure I don't need to be as good as Phil, your regular squash partner.

But now imagine I do that with everything I am and do. Just so long as I am always the outsider-let-inside. And I gather different insides to be a part of, and begin to spread myself incredibly thin.

...

-

Is a person with severe mental disability, unable to think/remember/concentrate — unwilling to step out of a pile of his own shit just because he's not motivate to move, even though he knows you think it's gross — is that person, if he forces himself to concentrate and act like a normal person, a normal person? Like, I feel that it takes me 105% of my energy to keep it together, to not devolve into all those things. But I don't have enough anymore. I was never a sane person. What I mean is, looking like an unmotivated “normal” person, or being an incredibly hardworking cripple — can look the same.

---

1.6.

I took the last thing I have any positive hope in (the book) and started to gamble with that. I gambled with it so that fear of Even Worse would be my currency, the chips I bargained with. If I won: all I'd feel would be Not That. All I'd get back was Nothing — the fact that you'd taken a couple of my worse thoughts away.

There's a relief in that. A relief from bad which I have to treat now as a substitute for good.

And it was hard to fear that anything would change, because there isn't that much to worry about. So I had to try hard to get enough relief from nothing.

1.20

Fear of death of life of death.

What?

Just came out like that, but I can unpack it, if you wish:

I am afraid of dying — I must be, otherwise I would have done it a hundred times by now. Or: I am afraid of the transition, if only because I do not have the tools to do it well. That's what it is, I'm sure. I always hear myself saying to the coroner who finds me — if I had had a gun, I would've gone sooner.

And it's the death of this life I am afraid of — because life is the only thing I've known.

But it is a life of small and large deaths, mostly – of the deaths of moments and of hope. So why would I be afraid of losing it?

—

Today, another at the pit of a long trough, the recessed bed where extinguished hope



## 2.3

I have completely forgotten what it like to be happy. Or: not quite forgotten. The sadness now is a comparison. The sadness now is the comparison of remembering.

I'll only be able to be happy again when I have forgotten entirely what it felt like to be happy. I'll only be able to say — I guess this feels good — when I have forgotten what great was.

I will see a hill and call it a mountain because I have been for so long away from home.

## 2.10

My first therrere, I took the white-matted pictures that had won my high school photo competition and pasted them with blue gook to the white cinderblock walls of my freshman dorm. I would be there for nine whole months. I was moving in.

When I left, I took them down. I put them somewhere. I'd put some of them back up the next year.

The year after that, it was beginning to seem temporary. I think the white didn't both me so much. It said, *you will be gone soon*. It said, *don't worry about connecting to me*.

Senior year, somewhere else again, I put a couple things on the walls.

Mostly, I lived in a permanent sty, the source of a constant anxiety I never fixed by cleaning it, and faced at every moment with a simple defense: this is not forever.

After college, I moved to Abu Dhabi. I put nothing on the walls because it was never home. It never would be, I told myself. How could it, if I would leave someday?

Then Michigan, Alaska, Michigan, Switzerland, New York. If I ever hung a picture, I don't remember it. They were never my homes. My girlfriend had the real reason to be in these places, and I just had a laptop. The world outside the apartment was exciting enough, and the world inside my head was cluttered — there was no space in between to decorate. How could I spend any time building anything around me, when the outside that was already built — Detroit! le jet d'eau! Denali! — would be gone soon? How could I spend time building anything around me, when my insides were on fire (and they would be with me always)?

For another year, I was vagabond.

Tajikistan, following other people. Shanghai, accepting an invitation. Los Angeles, following no one (except everyone). Chicago, to be filmed. Iraq, to film and be filmed.

(If someone else were watching me, I always thought, maybe I could just live.)

When I moved back to New York, it was under the guise of a long-term connection. And in an anxious flurry, I did furnish a semi-furnished apartment with more essentials, small decorations. It was easier because the place had everything it needed, and every touch seemed like an act of polish. I bought a bureau for clothes and lugged it up to the fourth floor, and when I set it down, it weighted me to my new neighborhood.

A nine-month lease. But... I wasn't moving in anywhere. I didn't let myself.

I left an unpacked box under the bureau. I saw it every day and it said: *you do not live here*. It said, *soon, you may be gone*.

In the boxes: the binders law schools had sent me, saying I could come. I'd never wanted to come.

...

Connecticut? A flurry of furnishing, too — far harder because everything was blank. And the only things that were here — the whatever-you-call-the-category-of-things sink handles go in — have broken. But there never was any heart to make this house a home. The walls are blank.

Except.

Except in the room I share with my roommate. My bedroom is the illustration of my lack of commitment: unadorned and yet ravaged in disarray. But in the dining room, there are pictures. There are signs of life.

They are not the pictures I took in high school, but ones I took years later. Not mounted on cardboard but printed on canvas or framed and propped on the lintel almost as if they belong.

I can take them down easily — but at least I put them up. Because by myself, I have no commitment to the future. With someone else, though, I care about the present.

When I used to scream, it was because — I think — I was coming to terms with the end of my life.

I hadn't fully accepted that I didn't want to live. And I screamed because I felt the dissonance between the split parts of me then, one committed to life, the other yearning for death. I screamed because of the rough feeling of being dragged over the threshold between one belief and the other.

Now, I scream because I'm not dead yet. I'm screaming at the part of me that is dragging its feet on the other side of the threshold. Look at him, delaying — his tricks. I am screaming at my failure to hang myself properly, to get a gun properly. I dream always of firing through my temples.

I used to worry that I'd shoot and not die. That I'd maim myself. That a 90-something percent chance of dying wasn't quite enough.

Those are the worries of the uncommitted.

I don't have the now — I yearn for the chance to have a ninety-percent chance. I yearn for the chance to have a hope and give it a moment to come true. I yearn for the hope of even having a hope.

This is how far I have come from wanting to be where I am. And I scream because I am still here.

If you find this, please help me die.

And if I am dead, please: care less if you care any, and understand that my code — after a point — was too corrupt to fix.

—

And you'll say — see, you can put sentences together! You aren't distracted from any clear thought by the raucous caucus of screaming interruptions!

And I'll tell you again: *only about this*. This is the voice that shouts over everyone else, and can silence the others enough to be heard if you feed it enough attention.

I can tell you why I have to do what I have to do, because, if it is — and it is — the last thing I do, I will try again to have you understand.

I am distractible like a chipmunk, cheeks puffed with cocaine.

And every new object of attention is the source of pain. My eyes flit left, right, up, down — pain, despair, disconnection, failure.

2.13

Lke I will have to push her away before I die.

Because I will not be able to leave life knowing I am leaving her...

She'd've already had to have left — there'd have to be nothing to lose.

And you say, so why can't she make you stay?

And I'll say: in part: I don't know. But get inside me, and you feel this. You'll know.

2.15

Was always too pragmatic to ever be a true artist.

Was too idealistic, too dissatisfied to be anything else.

—

Texted friend at PhD program in England:

“How do I get out of here”

Except, at first, the “autocorrect” gave me: “how do I get it if here”.

O’s turned into I’s. Instead of a plea for escape, it was a question about... acquiring something? Some “it” I must have wanted, conditional on something about this place, this “here” I’m stuck in.

How do I get *it* if here... if there’s no *it* here to get, maybe?

How do I get *it*... *if here is where I have to stay?*

O’s turned into I’s. All that initial shock turned into something concrete — all that outward-screaming sorrow brought back to something about *me*. (Putting the *me* in lament?)

An optimistic autocorrect, to be sure. Or — my thumbs are getting fatter.

—

Resolve your paradoxes before you find someone else to click with — before you ask them to resolve them for you.

I've been trying to figure out what it is about the question "*what are your pronouns*" that bothers me.

It's not that I think the idea behind it is valuable. The question implies that certain sets of categories (chromosomes for example) do not necessarily match up in the expected way with certain other categories (who you want to have kids with, gender identity, what hobbies you like, what your favorite color is). And in requesting an answer, the question asks: help me realign a couple of those categories, insofar as they relate to you.

That's great. On the macro level: categories, almost always, are stupid. That is: they're clumsy, and a population can only ever fit into the prescribed options like Cinderella's sisters can fit into her shoes, chopping off a toe or two, and still failing to make it work. On the micro level: categories are *always* stupid. That is to say: *no one* is average. That is to say: no one's categories are all average— no single person's individual traits and characteristics and preferences all correlate one to the other in the most automatic, most expected, most common way.

That is to say: no one is ever a completely basic bitch.

There are always "contradictions". That is to say: there are always traits and characteristics and preferences that will make you say: *huh! she's that* and that?

The answer to "what are your pronouns" might make you say that sometimes. Most of the time, it won't.

I think this is what bothers me. The answer most people will give will tell you next to nothing — and a meaningful question that gets mostly meaningless answers runs a particular kind of risk:

If you're looking for meaning, you'll make some. And if there wasn't really any meaning there — you're making stories up yourself (instead of finding them out from other people).

Asking a question that will tell us what we expect *most* of the time would be okay science if we were prepared not to make any extra conclusions even if we got the answer we expected. But who can promise that?



Why not ask a question that will always give the unexpected?

Why not — if our goal is assume that categories need shaking, and our wish is to learn where to position a pronoun — why don't we ask:

What are your contradictions?

[[There may be simple ones, that have been voiced very little but are easy to understand: *I look like what I think a boy looks like but I feel like what I think a girl feels like*. And there may be very complicated ones: *I live in Boston and I'm a Yankees fan*. With every contradiction — which are, of course, not contradictions at all — we learn two things, and a third like a powerful gift; like the nuclear fusion reaction of the two fusing together.

[[Mine:

An academic — professionally in one of the quietist and most solitary kinds of professions, at least most of the time. But I love electronic music — trying to make it, listening to it in a hundred different forms. Reflection and introspection on the one hand, and as close to outward-looking trance as I can get on the other.

That seems like a contradiction — but it can't be. Maybe there are two impulses pushing in opposing directions, but they're both costs

People have said that I'm an extrovert — but I'm also (almost, sometimes, often) unbearably self-conscious.

Jew but I speak Arabic.

Might seem antithetical in some way — but it isn't really.]]

These are only “contradictory” because of how we've defined our social space, and how we have positioned ourselves within it. In telling you my contradictions I tell you far more than I ever can by telling you that I am a man that identifies as a man that lusts after the things the majority of men do. There is no information in that unless you want there to be — and what you find in that *following* should tell you far less about me than what you discover that contradicts a pattern.

Two things happen that serve both to hear my voice and resist the muzzling of any others:

You will know what makes me distinct. And, in knowing that some “contradiction” might exist in one body, you have the chance to question where the boundaries should even go. And learning to redraw the boundaries is what we wanted, wasn’t it?

In fact, the Arabic-speaking Jew is a contradiction after all — in the sense that *contra dicere* originally meant “to speak against”. These little things speak against some spoken or unspoken expectation. If we truly voice our contradictions, we can go from speaking against, to speaking *for*.

— categories are dumb, but that doesn't mean doing away with all categories; it means recalibrating categories as best as possible when they aren't so terrible (fix, don't destroy), and coming up with new, more salient categories when they are. Because a world this complex does need shortcuts, and it's our job as social beings to stay tuned when the paths have changed; and to make roadmaps for our friends if we can.

Need to get over the idea that a character is always a caricature, just because ethnicity is involved.

And we need to get over the idea that a caricature must be and always is offensive.

—

It's not every day my family of pro-cremation Jews sends around pictures of our relative's tombstones. But today I got a picture of my great grandparents' grave in Missouri, from one of their daughters:

*Thank G/d their gravestone was not damaged Sunday night when the vandalism occurred at the Chesed Shel Emeth cemetery in St. Louis.*

It's not often my nearest and dearest really think about the center of this country either — even though a quarter of my bloodline was filtered through St. Louis, at a time when the Midwest was being introduced to rugalach, and to the great mysteries of catching gefilte fish in the wild.

Part of me wants to get angry *as a Jew*. Part of me felt good: now I have a license to scream.

It is about as accurate to speak of this as an “uptick in Antisemitism” as it is to speak of skin lesions from HIV as a dermatological problem. That is to say: to call this “Antisemitism” is to miss the forest for the trees.

As a Jew with a history particularly unblemished by prejudicial experiences (as much as I was curious to find them) — I am biased. I have not had to push against the weight of antisemitism directed at me, focused on me as an individual. And so I have the privilege of looking up from this racist offensive now, even as the attacks are getting closer to where I'm standing, to see who else they are attacking.

And I say they, and not They, because there is no Them.

This is the sociologist's job, and the citizen's: to see where the collection of society's voices has made something greater than the sum of its parts, and to watch how that voice is broadcast to those who may, as one example, knock over gravestones in a St. Louis cemetery.

And just as there is no single Them doing the attacking, there does not need to be single Us-es getting attacked. We can keep the paradox of the American dream alive, standing alone and coming together all at once.

It's tough when "identity" is a factor in speech of all kinds, for politicians explaining their policy positions by way of biography, for entertainers pitching "authenticity" — maybe even for journalists. It's as if we can't trust ourselves to judge any new media on any of its own terms, and so we rely on our cruder senses. We know that we cannot understand the medium, and so we judge the messenger: *ad hominem*, *ad hominem*, *ad hominem*.

We cannot listen without invoking *identity*. Nor can we let ourselves speak without it: in hoping to rejoin society, we must stake out our place in the forum — a place where we hope to have some license to stand. Deep down, the awareness of our collective wrong-directioning has triggered in so many of us the need to speak out. So we dress ourselves up in our own identity, like halloween masks of our own faces, whatever is the flashiest that we can wear the best.

Can't see that we were already wearing colors good enough to take to the field? Those reds, whites, and blues we were born in — were those not enough? Did those not bond us together enough with common enough values?

We should not need any more dressing to join together. It is called common sense for a reason.

The historian Michael Kazin described populism as an "impulse not an ideology".

If an ideology tends to lose the forest for the trees, this impulse is the opposite — this impulse is an old one, and a general one. This impulse is a simple kind of energy. The childish kind toward lashing out and identifying targets to beat.

It is about as accurate to speak of this as an “uptick in Antisemitism” as it is to speak of skin lesions from HIV as a dermatological problem. That is to say: to call this “Antisemitism” is to miss the forest for the trees.

In a democracy, there is no license necessary to scream

Freud’s *narcissism of small differences* — the practice of distinguishing ourselves in greater detail from those closest to us — has a flipside. If narcissism makes me set things apart, repulsion makes me set them together.

(That is to say, I could rank ninety-nine slices of New Haven pizza by multidimensional quality, but I don’t need to go near anything that looks like a shit sandwich.)

It seems to me like this: if you chop your friends up into little bits, your opponents seem to coalesce — in just the opposite way — into a collective blob.

But there is only ever “things you agree with” and “things you don’t” — and the groups who qualify as compatriots in one and strangers in the other should not be the same for all things.

[I don’t do a lot of thinking about the center of the country. At least not on its own terms. I don’t often think of Missouri just to think about Missouri,

## 2.23

Ok so this is a problem.

*Content that is considered "not advertiser-friendly" includes, but is not limited to:*

*Sexually suggestive content, including partial nudity and sexual humor*

*Violence, including display of serious injury and events related to violent extremism*

*Inappropriate language, including harassment, profanity and vulgar language*

*Promotion of drugs and regulated substances, including selling, use and abuse of such items*

*Controversial or sensitive subjects and events, including subjects related to war, political conflicts, natural disasters and tragedies, even if graphic imagery is not shown*

Advertising revenue is the sole incentive YouTube offers the creators of capital C Content. There will always be the roar of the fan e-community and the thrill of clicking “upload” — but the driving structural force is advertising. And so the rules of advertising define the rules of creation.

The naked body, or suggestions thereof, have always been taboo. (One wonders, what if Italians had invented the internet? Or the French?) Language is censored automatically, following the rules of television but with no wiggle room for late night or premium cable or because-South-Park-just-figured-they’d-do-it-anyway.

But when controversies are defined by the prudish... we lose the last of what made internet content *fresher* than its broadcast counterparts.

### 2.2.5

Wed prunes the neural transmissions that are unpleasant.

So if you are depressed, maybe you can get high, and you'll start to enjoy the sun and not worry that it's burning you.

But if you are a kid and you are getting high because you don't want to do homework — then you are cutting off the transmissions that say “working hard gets you good things” or “you don't know enough — you should learn more”. And eventually if you cut them enough, those messengers will stop speaking.

That's what I feel is happening now.

If you are anxious, smoking might trim away more bad communications than good — leaving you happier. If you are lazy, smoking may make you unaware of your responsibilities — a blissful ignorance, but not a moral one.

Of course, none of these divisions are perfect. An anxious person may still lose the messenger that says “don't eat that fatty thing, it'll make you fat”. That was a good message, even if you interpreted it too fearfully, too anxiously. But if you do away with that at the same time as you do away from everything else... you may lose many things that held you together.

— I only ever wrote for posterity. Even if that was a posterity that just meant living longer than this moment — I wanted that. I did not want any moment that I wasn't embarrassed to live to just go away without a reward.

—  
—

I could have only ever been happy if I accepted that I was going to work a job I'd never heard of.

People said I'd do something great. So, I waited for what that great was. I tried to do everything perfectly so it wouldn't be *my fault* if it didn't happen — and then I anxiously waited to see what that opportunity would be.

But how would I know what great was, unless I waited for it always?

Instead,

---

People wait for

±

We created a language that is way too specific for our feelings.

We meet a mate, and we feel an instant connection, for reasons we understand and reasons we don't. And then we ask them something, and they answer in a way that doesn't make total sense — and we say: that's insane, I don't know who you are at all.

If we're lucky, they'll use that language to say — yes you do, you're just misinterpreting *this* as *that* when really I just meant "I am noticing that you exist". That is to say: I'm just here, and you're just here, and I wasn't trying to make any meaning in the world — and you took *all* the meaning in the world.

If we're not lucky, you'll turn off the brightest possible light because I touched the smallest possible switch, and you'll go off, when I could've only meant on. Let me say that again: you'll do a big thing for a tiny reason, and you'll be 180-degrees wrong about what you even thought that reason was.

---

Why did we have an urge to express ourselves?

Why did we have an urge to be anything?

Why would anyone want to understand their own feelings? Why can we not just look out?



Is it because we need to understand them in order to change them? But in understanding, we find more to change. Or: does everyone have very different thresholds about how much they want to dig.

ergpjergoiijergoiijaergoiaergoidvlknadvlknvdalknvlknerlkgarojgraeadvlkvadva

---

"DGAF"

```
<blockquote class="twitter-tweet" data-lang="en"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">Send me money and I&#39;ll send you straight nudes and videos for a week. <a href="https://twitter.com/hashtag/dgaf?src=hash">#dgaf</a></p>&mdash; Lexi K. (@_alexandrallynnk) <a href="https://twitter.com/_alexandrallynnk/status/833932205743185920">February 21, 2017</a></blockquote><script async src="//platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script>
```

Or this:

```
<blockquote class="twitter-tweet" data-lang="en"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">Another fart going for a new record <a href="https://twitter.com/hashtag/dgaf?src=hash">#dgaf</a></p>&mdash; Joseph I Dhein (@Dheinosaur73) <a href="https://twitter.com/Dheinosaur73/status/834989879377408000">February 24, 2017</a></blockquote>
```

```
<script async src="//platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script>
```

(The third in a revealing series.)

Transitioning to the DGAF attitude is hailed like a great rite of passage, like a second bar mitzvah.

As an adolescent we (try to) learn: there are other people who matter.

And when we've fully grown up, we learn the next step: and fuck 'em.

[Insert: chart of average fucks given (USA), by year]

We praise our pop icons of no-fucks-giving; we revel in “authenticity” and subscribe to those who tell us they don't care that we're watching.

Even the advertising that treats all of us exactly the same (as one sum of potential dollars) tells us to “Think Different.” I want to say I'm sure there's a middle ground — a place where “different” fits between “same” and “alone” — but is there? Are we asked full-stop to just stop letting the world judge our judgments?

Or did the Wild West just teach me too well that stoicism was the number-one coolest? That the best American was one who DGAF'ed his way across the prairie, feeling nothing until, perhaps, an infinitely understanding dame let him feel just one thing... just enough.

I think we feel wrong, after all this pretending to be on our own.

This is what I think: (almost all) people love (at least some) people. We love people and we love loving people, and one part of loving people is saying I love you. But this gets harder and harder in a world that celebrates disconnection, and replaces exchange with tit-for-tat following.

So we let ourselves vent our mutual mattering at special moments: at Christmas (for the family) and July Fourth (for the nation) and I-Do-Give-A-Fucks-Giving.

(The greeting card industry helped us on our way, simplifying things, letting us collect our fucks and give them all at once like Tax Day: to Mother, Father, our Valentine, maybe Jesus.)

And still, I think, it's not enough. I don't want to go through the year spiking between apathy and effusion.

[Chart of average fucks given (USA) by month]

Let me add another layer. It is the one that has made social life the hardest these days, compounded with this question of F-giving. In my head it sounds something like this: politics? society? giving-a-fuck? Politics-society-solidarity-solitude? Fuck, fuck, fuck! Politics. Society! Society and politics!

There was a time when I thought I could go through life without ever making a political statement. I had political thoughts, sure, but I felt like out-loud public politics would only separate me from people who didn't agree politically.

But now... there are the algorithms wriggling in and out of every corner of the internet that have found a way to link your estimated time spent looking at pictures of pizza to your favorability towards abortion. That is to say: politics is a wide river now.

And there is another thing that has changed since the-time-when: the things I might've said to one person, I can now say to 1,000. A story I might tell to three friends on the phone, I'm tempted to tell the world on social.

And when nearly everything is political and more than ever is public — if I followed my old hopes, I'd be left with next to nothing to say.

Perhaps if you knew me better, you'd allow me to say next to nothing, and we'd still stay close, and get closer. But if I don't know you, and all I say is trite — how can we ever connect?

I care about connecting. And I feel like I can't. I want to care and not care at the same time.

I've equivocated for years. I've wanted to take strong stands because I have strong feelings. And yet, insofar as I care what you think (and I have no idea what you're thinking), I feel trapped. Anything can be a conversation-stopper: what can I say if all I want to do is start conversations?

I do give a fuck. I GAF a lot what you think. I'm G'ing an F about most people I can remember, in some way or other, in basically every moment I remember them. ("What should I be doing Too much sometimes, certainly. But the remedy here is not the opposite, it can't be.

And yes, of course we have all heard that refrain (generally from the worst people): the problem is that I care too much! (And in an ironic twist, always, you somehow manage to stop giving them any Fs all at once.)

And so, the third rite of passage: choosing how many Fucks to give.

Or better: choosing how not to give a fuck about *how* you give a fuck (and how your fuck-giving is seen from the irrelevant outsides).

In carving out that space between zero and infinity, we sew ourselves into the social fabric. Ok, so I'm mixing metaphors — and I do GAF about it. But I don't care that much.

It feels amazing to let it go.

—

How could so many people get married?  
How could so many people ever fall in love? Sure, they fall out too, but what the hell, right? Is everyone insane?

No — everyone must be lovable. It's literally the only logical conclusion.

---

I'm not letting myself enjoy things. Because i don't want to enjoy something that I could never do again. And I'm not making enough money to keep living anything like this. I won't be able to afford groceries at this rate, never mind eating out.

---

## OUR SHOW

Why do we need “our show”?

Because we are in need of connection. And we don't *do* anything with anyone, so we don't have any memories to define our direct relationship to each other. We connect through our references to “content”. I am connected to you through our shared knowledge of some vast collection of mass media. But at the same time, we share that relationship to tons of other people. Most of us know mostly the same things. Everything is blurred. Nothing feels deep.

If we don't *do* anything together — forging unique memories between us — then we need to at least *know* something that we know in a shared way, that keeps us separate from other people.

What would work? If we watch something together, that we don't watch with other people — so I know your feelings about it and you know mine, and in that roundabout way we will sort of know each other. We want to feel the depth, and this kind of collective *watching* has replaced the joint *doing*.

I'm sure they said this about TV too. But most people knew not to keep their TVs on *all the time*. And they did leave the house. But if we absorb broadcast and livecast and podcast at all moments in all possible venues — there is no room for the individual to take shape, and there is no room to get as deep — as we feel in our bones we want to be — to one another.

2.26

I think, in the billions or so years of life  
we've learned what we've needed to live  
to live well

in our genes and our traditions  
in our sayings, lastly

there is everything we need to know

— but there is so much we need, and we are so spread out now, and there are so  
many details to continue to fold into a central truth — to connect to make

we are running fast with a basket of oranges on our head  
lash them down tight  
try not to let them spill out

i don't want to say anything new

i want to keep the oranges in the basket

i want to learn how to keep them together

2.27

A true perfectionist has no priorities

A true perfectionist will panic just as purely for a missed train as for a missed opportunity to change a life as for a miss opportunity to save his own.

### 3.5

I think I wrote a whole book just so people would talk to me.

ALL this time spent alone, all this time spent not building or living or nurturing or seeking relationships directly in the hope that something would click. But: um. Excuse me?

Who was I trying to live or be or see or what the fuck am I typing.

But it was more than that.

I wanted them to edit it and tell me: here is what we care about, and here's what we don't.

I'm a little computer. I don't have any thoughts of my own — I just want to echo you, each of you. I want to echo the world. But — if the feedback loop is a negative one — I want to be just the thing that makes the echos sound bearable. (And yes, of course, what an arrogant thought! TO think your voice will be enough to change the dissonance of the world?? You? TO say *You* when all I ever mean is *me, me, me!!!!*)

I never wanted to be this self centered. I am like a pilot. I would like to fly a plane, just to bring you somewhere. But the lights onboard have been flashing so bright. The alarms ringing louder than I can think, and so I keep my eyes in the cockpit. I flail around and I never really see the world, except to check that I'm not about to crash right into it.

—

There's a reason the parts are this way:

The Abu Dhabi Bar Mitzvah

N....

Another People Begin

First:



A commitment to accept responsibility; a commitment to changing

Then:

Understanding that that commitment to Change was really just “storm chasing” —  
t

[this title for the chapter is in the middle, not right at the beginning, and not at the  
end: because it takes a long time for that realization to even make a difference;

Quitting my job is the next stage in that commitment]

1.

I believe people are saying mostly the same things.

I believe we are saying versions of the same things.

I believe we are trying to communicate basically the same thing, even if we say it  
in different ways. Even if we are talking about something else.

When I tell you about my sore ankle and you tell me about your rough day, we are  
both saying: will you be there for me? We are both saying: I feel like I should  
check my network to see if my friends are still close. We are both saying: I need  
other people.

2.

I believe that if we can talk with one another, instead of arguing, or (even worse),  
talking past one another, that we will be better off.

Better off, I mean in the most general possible sense: more good. Everything will  
be better if we realize how many of us are saying the same things. How we do not  
have to reinvent the wheel for ourselves, and for our nation, and for our region and  
our religion — we can build with and off each other.

And if we recognize we are trying to fight the same underlying problems — and we  
agree on what those are — maybe we can stop wasting all this time trying to fight  
each other for not trying to fight the right problems.

Obvious that's gonna be tough.

3.

I need you to like Jazz. Because there is so much to listen to, so much changing at  
all times, so much that is unpredictable and new, that it occupies all of my  
intellectual brain (or most of it) — but, at the same time there is still a repetitive

quality that lulls the most biological brain parts into a rhythm. Body is put in its groove, and my head is given a wheel to spin itself out on — out of the house where it does damage. My head is given a rest from digging into its own flesh, all while it gets a massage.

—

The only reason I'm afraid of dying is the fear of not getting to experience something good.

I'm not afraid of anything bad. I'm not afraid of losing anything I have. I'm only afraid that maybe, maybe there would have been some kind of prize for all this suffering. And maybe it's good. Who wants to miss what's good?

What am I saying?

—

We don't want to please the powerful people — we just don't want to face consequences for our actions.

And that feeling of having acted in a way that will escape consequences — that relief — we mistake for pleasure.

### 3.7

Consumption, sure — but we consume so much more than we did before.

A CD costs half as much as it did before, without even rejoicing in its un-inflation — without even rejoicing that we don't know go to the store — but it doesn't do nearly as much. We used to be able to listen to one CD hundreds of times, over and over. Now, we tear through them. Now, we need streaming services that give us new tracks constantly, so that —we deal in quantity more than in distinction. We pay for time, we pay by the month, and avoid making active choices in what we consume. And when it is not about *what* but about *how much*: we are fully addicted.

—

I'm not afraid of kicking the bucket because I want to live in a bucket list.

There's no point in living if you're not doing something you want to do before you die.

3.8

I guess what I mean is:

everyone is capable of reflecting love if it can be shown to them, given to them, beamed at them.

i guess what that means is we are all the same kind of plant.

—

a kid's brain is elastic.

to grow up, to build in this way, we need to harden.

i refused to harden. as much as I could, when I saw the pressure to solidify — I tried to stay liquid.

(Forced myself to contradict myself to avoid conforming to my own taste.)

And you say: but so much of this takes a hard brain now.

And I say: so I cannot do it.

I can't do so much of this... I wanted to stay open.

Call it childish?

Call it childish.

3.25

Technology.

Has broken our days up into infinitesimally small pieces, and filled each one of those with a new worry.

Something new to tend, to garner for its own sake for fear of our death.

In New York: pale gray everywhere — a day that looked as if someone had forgotten to draw the sky.

I have walked these streets a thousand times (or less but claimed more) and still there is nothing quite as familiar as [ ]. The brunch place with \$2.89 bloody marys is closing because they can't afford their rent. The old string instrument music store is offering to play anything we like over the sound system because there's no one else inside. Everywhere that doesn't exist to pull your money away — because you're too afraid to not spend it, or to not be seen spending it, or to see yourself not spending it — is gone, and Bleeker street still reeks of brunch. The voices of the village have eggs riding on their breath.

Was that place my refuge because I liked it? Or because it offered a kind of cheapness that felt like a secret, that felt like...

I send emails before I'm done with them. Texts even more. I hit send while I'm still thinking about what to say, because I can tell I'm slipping, that I'm about to lose my train of thought. Pelted from all sides by other trains jostling for space. I send the train out of the station before it can be derailed.

—

I did believe “primum non nocere” made sense. And what if what doctors applied to their work, we all applied to our lives?

Does that imply I think of the world as something sick? And myself as the savior? I don't know... yes, in part, of course. But mostly, I think: it just makes sense as an aspiration, if it's possible.

But it's not possible, is it?

Especially when we see the effects of every action, in connection to connections to connections to something that might be harmful.

It's very easy if we just track how we spend \$\$\$. It's hard to spend a dollar at any kind of establishment connected to industry without seeing the harms that were obfuscated and excused in order to get you your dollar's worth.

I stuck my head into the river of all social experience — to shout at every kind of fish as they wriggled past and whacked me in the face with slick fins. I tried to soak it all in, snorkeling in other people's lives. I wanted to see it all — and for a moment I thought I could. I could recognize so many fish because I'd spent so long underwater, watching them, paying attention.

And then, I saw that all those fishes would never stop for me, no matter how well I recognized them. To dip my head into other people's lives was not to live with them. And all that was left was to pull my head out of the stream — to the silent riverbanks from which all of my peers had moved on.



## 4.2

I always got more out of being “on” than I gave. That’s why I could live to perform, that’s how I could sustain a constant being-out-of-place-ness, a constant sense of being somewhat ill at ease. I acted because I had to act. I acted because the stakes were high enough, because it would mean too much to fail. And if I could succeed, I’d be recharged with more energy than it took to put it all together. What a strange and magical perpetual motion it all was, until it cracked.

—

The only escape from capitalism is in accepting something I think we all like to accept. Almost all of us. Even the loudest defenders of corporate interest. That *something*, or *some* things, matter more than money.

Which is to say, a good investment puts money in and gets more money out. But: there must be some good investments that put money in and get *something that matters* out.

#### 4.4

I don't think you quite get it: I didn't write because I wanted to. I wrote because I needed to. That was the only way I knew to get it all out fast enough. I wish I could have danced it out, or sang. But people like me write it out, and it leaves that residue on the page. And in order to make some good out of pain, we try to sell it, or share it.

Or at least there is the relief for having taken something from inside out. That's what they say about poison, anyway.

I didn't write because I wanted to. I wrote to save my life.

I wrote in the hopes that I'd be able to turn the residue into something that cured me of the need. It was a paradox, always — that I'd write my way out of needing to write, and — in saving my life, losing my livelihood.

But I figured I had to try. And, while trying, to diversify — to get my train running fast enough on the residue that I could leap to some other car in motion, running on some other fuel.

I got so close once I could feel the wind of the other car. I could smell its exhaust and taste the glint of sun on its windows. A metallic wash in my mouth, the way it always is when staring into bright lights — but this time, I could see the hair of the passengers through a crack in the window, too, dancing in the wind. I could hear laughter, I thought, and I could feel my own death. That is: I knew I would die unless I jumped, and I felt that if I jumped I would make it — and there is no greater feeling than that hope, and there is no greater feeling than that clarity.

But it was excitement and hope all together to a degree I'd never felt before. And, as accustomed as I was to calibrating my act to my feelings (an example? *you're in despair, so pay close attention that your eyes don't look dead — otherwise people will treat you like a lost cause*) — I didn't take into account that it was a *new* feeling. I'd never calibrated to that combination of hope and possibility before.

And I jumped before it was time.

And, in the slow motion that accompanies all Near Deaths but no actual ones, I saw the car pull ahead, as I slammed to the pavement. And worst of all — and I saw this only later — my train wouldn't've killed me at all. I was fine where I was, however much that car would have been better. And now I'll never catch up to either of them again. And now I'm embarrassed for ever having tried.

For having ever tried.

Ever for having tried. \\\

—

Newsroom; editor receives letters from suicidal writer. Beautiful suicide notes over and over and over. Why don't you tell them they're not for you, or to stop? Why don't you just stop responding — people stop pitching when you stop answering — you know those writer types, even a rejection letter nowadays feels like validation, for this life lived without human contact? Because they are beautiful. Because they are true. Because I say they are sadder than what we can print, but that does not mean they are sadder than what we can feel. (So print them?) I guess I'm not ready. Because these letters are him, and the magazine is me — and if I keep them out, then I feel that maybe I can have my cake — and not kill yourself too? Yeah.

—

I don't really know how you can stomach yourself, getting angry at me for my sadness. That is to say, how you can pretend you've ever had a kind feeling towards me, and still feel my sadness as an attack on you — as my choice. It has only ever been about you, I think. You have so low a threshold for pain that you think any discomfort is wrong, and its agent is to blame.

The moment you feel empathy with something that isn't joyful (or with something that could use your energy), you feel attacked. That discomfort, what is it? It's connection to another human being. But you don't want that. You just want to feel

better than you do in every moment. It's shortsighted not to see the connection between the thing that demands some of your good feeling in a moment to —

oh nevermind. This conversation isn't going anywhere is it.

“You’ve only said negative things this whole time.” Define *whole time*? No — don’t. I know what you mean. But how could you react like that? How could you think that would be helpful? (Do you?) Someone you know has told you “I have never felt contentment in my entire life, except for short moments.” And you tell him, in the tone that says *I have been wronged and how could you*: you’ve only said negative things this whole time.

A short phone call with no overt silver linings: this *whole time*. A whole life made invisible.

—

All of this will be less accessible, less believable as a memoir. Write it up as fiction and others might identify. *But how I can I trust you if you’ve told me you’ve dug into your own brain until you went crazy and destroyed your life, if you’re writing this right now? You must feed on the drama and dramatize the bones. You’re not dying — you’re thriving on this. And that makes it all false.*

It’s too unbelievable that someone would want to know why they worked the way they worked to the point where they pulled every circuit apart. No functioning robot would pull its own plug. I’m not a functioning robot. Something’s wrong with me.

4.10

I can feel myself forgetting what it felt like to be happy.

It has been a long time, I know that, since I've felt a good moment.

But now I can tell that I am forgetting even that feeling — like forgetting a face.  
I will never know.

And I wonder: is that the only thing I can do? Remembering makes the difference so wide. If I forget, I might learn to call this new misery normal; and its tiny reliefs “good.”

—

Jerrod Carmichael:

Wont go to weddings because, why would you go and celebrate someone *making a decision*.

Funny. True. Marriage is just a big decision we're going to watch people make.

But: isn't that the most human thing of all — that *making decisions*? Making a choice. Doing what you do.

4.13

Human beings can't multitask — we just change gears fast.

Says neurologist: we can hold four ideas in our heads.

When we change gears, our brain asks for glucose. Then our body asks for sugar to replenish.

Sitting at the computer — emails, emails, a memo, that report, a new email, a phone call, news update, news update, an email, news update — would you like a chocolate?

Is the body politic is any any more separated from the mind of the nation than our mind is from our bodies? And if not — if the metaphor holds well enough and we can “scale up” a man to the size of a country so that we can take a better look inside — then is it fair to say the increasingly speedy pace of the news cycle, of information distribution is draining our collective consciousness of the glucose it needs to switch between meaningful tasks. And as a result, we demand national-scale sweetness, sugar rushes in the form of quick excitement — that'll leave us constantly crashing, and constantly needing more.

There are only two possible responses, I think: yes, and yes.

Yes! So: let's direct our attention at marking the sugars, and measuring our intake the way we would with candy.

Or: Yes. Of course. It has always been this way and there's nothing in this idea but a taking-apart and a putting-back-together of the Very Obvious. Mazal tov.

You spent all this time deciding whether or not life was worth living, dithering, mulling it over.

You think now that you've decided, you'll just get the life you want? Look around! The good ones are gone, buddy! The good ones — they worked for from day one, not wondering whether or not it was the game they wanted to play. You stupid bastard — oh, you haven't even decided yet have you?

You think you can stick your toe in — and *see*? You still haven't decided! You think you can stick your toe in the world “what if I said okay?” and it'll be Warm Enough? (And you want *Hot*, don't you. *Just Right!* Ha.) No buddy, the water doesn't come warm. The water comes cold in each of our separate pools and it is made hot by our own flailing.

Even those born in hot pools — they start feeling real cold — colder than everyone else even. I'll tell ya, it doesn't take as much flailing to make yourself warm enough in a chill bath than it does to make yourself burn in a hot one. Be glad the water's cold.

I can see you've been shivering out in the cold, waiting to come in. You thought the water would be cold enough to kill you and you wanted to find a way to heat it up before you got in. Well you're right about one thing buddy — it's cold enough to kill all of us.

4.16

Some kind of insane ego that thinks: okay, my life is of debatable worth, but my death would have some kind of meaning. That is to say, I'm not sure if my life is worth living, but I don't want to kill myself — because that's the only thing I have to offer worth value, and I'd want to spend it at the right time.

But who's to say that's worth a nickel? Goddamn, if your life isn't worth anything to anyone — why would your death be? Because it's your life, condensed, multiplied? Zero times infinity is still zero, good sir! A smidgeon times a ton is still Just-A-Bit!



4.18.

Funny to remember the critique of Nascar that echoes loudest — *how silly to watch people spinning on a loop, over and over.*

Such a short loop — sixteen seconds? eight? — dozens... hundreds of times.

And yet, so many of us listen to so much music that does just that. We're rushing to the festival — to the DJs spinning, waveforms wired in from their laptops: loops on loops on loops.

Such short loops. Sixteen bars? Eight? Four? Dozens... hundreds of times.

4.20

It's crazy how many people it took for me not to feel lonely.

How many people around.

And then, if they were there: how long did I have before the loneliness hit again?

—

I can hold on to a thought for almost no time at all unless I am summoning what I consider very intense, perhaps extreme concentration.

So I cannot hold onto a thought for very long at all.

In order to promise that I'll remember it in longer that time, I have to summon a huge amount of energy. Could have made this more efficient, but I never learned any organizing skill.

—

Soon people will simply dictate entire novels.

How could anyone ever do that. Ever anyone how will anyone keep up with the pace o the Talk-Writers, who speak like ink? NO one will.

So much content there is no way people's true preferences will rise to the top, above the crush of something that skews far more toward something else.

—

I was precocious — I knew how to sound older than my age. But: in my core, I wanted to sound like myself. But I knew: summon the older age, and you will impress.

When I wrote, I tried to write basically as smart as I could sound. If I did that well, they'd all call it good. Good writing. I was ahead of my age.

Now, ages have caught up. This was as far ahead as I'd ever get in life, especially regarding reading and writing (when would I ever have used the word "Regarding" before?) because I can no longer read and hardly ever write — everyone else is doing more at least than that! And so when I try to sound smart, I sound pretentious. I can't sound like I'm older than my age — I have to sound like I'm younger than my age.

---

The way they disseminate their research, in quantitative research, is through a largely qualitative medium: that is to say, language.

Now you might say: uh, yeah but what they *found out* was "countable" things, quantifiable things. But that's only true insofar as you and your colleagues think you are counting the same things. And what are those same things? Qualitative concepts. Language.

---

Writing too fast for my brain to think.

Thinking too fast to even think to write.

Most of this is so stupid, I know.

If I can't go back and connect the dots of thoughts in my head, I probably never thought them. I'm higher than I am grounded — that doesn't mean I can really fly.

---

Major division between people:

Some people can never stand the idea of working a "9-5". Their only options in life, unless they are to feel their soul has been crushed, is something where they are more in control. Where there is the semblance of greater freedom.

---

You gave up all this control, for what?

French vacations.

Psychological mindset: it says — don't give up that much freedom. We would rather use mental energy to worry than to simply use less mental energy.

---

It will kill me to have so little truly “free” time. Maybe none. I feel as if I have sacrificed all of it for years — keeping perhaps minutes a day safe for really free thought. But still: minutes a day. NO matter what pressures built up, there would be a way to vent it out for minutes a day. I could somehow release all of my worries.

I could have chosen so many jobs and I'd've had enough free time. If I was a banker working 100 hours per week, I'd know I could delay my fertile every day to freedom after months or years. But that freedom would be intense, and made almost boundless by money. I wouldn't be free as for as long, but I'd be free to DO MORE.

How long do you want to be free?

How *much* do you need to be free to be free?

French understand, you need to be free longer than 1 week per year.

Crazy thing is that this is all that has happened: the middle class (those who work those jobs) are no longer represented. IN classic Fritz Lang style, people are okay with enslaving the masses

a week of freedom is getting close to none.

---

Are all new popular social rhetorical forms (e.g rap) the forms where people made the most physical metaphors?

Physical metaphors.

References to physical things?

EDM:

music that has the most *physical* reactions?

It is actually connecting with biological rhythms (rhythms of brain patterns... why is a certain tempo pleasing, or exciting, or slow?

Slow in relation to what?

In relation to a

—

My huge problem:]

In the arts, and even in journalism: most of the art is being descriptive. You do not have to explain why. You just explain what, and a bit how. You do not have to explain why.

Academia is about asking why: why why why. Causes and effects.  
I didn't understand that entirely.

[I wrote a damn travel book.

It's just description.

I didn't even want to give half-reasons for why I cared about the description (I didn't want to even put me in it to start) — I just wanted to describe. I thought the sheer difference and similarity, or whatever it was that you saw, would be interesting. I didn't care "why."

And the only reason I did it this way, after all this extra pain: was that this was what there was money for. There was money for books and not for travel descriptions. And we can say that's good or bad or neither, but there is something certainly true: a system directed towards money was in charge.

]

(I can see the residue of the thoughts about "physicality" here).

Do you want to know why?

(That is, do you even think there is a reason? )

Or do you just want to know what?

Personally, I think it's all basically arbitrary. So no "why" question is ever really that interesting for me. Just keep asking why until the answer, inevitably, is: chemicals work their ways into our biology (affected by other chemicals we put in), over time, with a spice of random chance.

But hell: the diets of the vikings really affected what they could do.

Meat. Strength. Lots of physical work. It allowed them to be imperialist.

The Brits didn't need that to imperialize — they could use a kind of inward-looking, hyper-controlled (call it “repressed”) emotional state to learn how to most efficiently control massive populations. Hell — such few, weak people (a few guns to be sure, and that certainly led to kinds of extreme power: thinking guns were more than just something that could kill one person, and allow you to kill the shooter while he tried to reload, even if you only had big sticks — that could really change how you see people.

It is elementary forms of religious life — that is to say, elementary forms of all life since religion began to group people. Some things become sacred. And what better way to become sacred than by taking a sacrifice. An entire life of meaning is stolen by the thing.

The destroyer (of one thing) is the creator (of another).

All this to say: of course it's not crazy to imagine in a time when certain objects and materials and physical powers were outside the realm of visual, even heard-it-from-a-friend experience (even outside the realm of imagination) — that in that time certain things would strike people in *certain* ways to have huge reactions.

—

other people are such big stimuli for me. but they used to be positive (i stood in their shoes and looked at me, and said, I'm entertaining enough, good enough to have around) and now they are negative (i see me and think either, i don't know him he adds nothing to me; or, worse: this guy is bringing me down). I do not have the energy to act at all times anymore, as I did before. Almost no energy to act that well at all — to bridge the gap between total despair and Good Enough to Have Around.

this is why i consider myself an extremely fucked up person  
i'm still imagining being other people  
and imagining what my effect on them is  
and trying to calibrate

—

Growing up around actors:

What a beautiful emotion you're showing.

Oh wow, Harold, come look Harold! See how the tear is — oh, Harold!

It almost makes me want to cry!

—

What does ISIS find funny?

Not talking about violent vs. nonviolent. [Already studies that show that.] Get from Yegor.

Violent people are going to find violent things funny, sure.

But if you *really* don't also find this funny, it's going to be harder to understand. Harder to really understand what that means, too.

Moreover, it's better to find things simpler than violence. Violence takes so many forms and must have such a complicated relation to our brains. We imagine ourselves being hurt, we compare the person getting hurt to ourselves and others we know — our brain feels fear and relief and so many powerful things.

But if a fart joke is a category... if a fart joke means something to someone. Then goddamn we're onto something likely simpler. At least more accessible and more positive as a way of connecting. And perhaps less taboo, making it easier to find common ground faster.

]]

I Just cant stay organized enough to put my good ideas in the place where they are rewarded (in any way). They disappear in files like this. I might be panning for gold, finding even it's just flecks in the pan, thousands over years and years, and if I just ran some water over them (and edited this text), I'd have pounds and pounds... and millions.

—

Languages people use are because of money.

Now we have institutionalized linguistic boundaries to create feedback loops in language usage (you live here you speak this, you speak this so you live here). But before things would have changed much more fluidly....

—

Sometimes you don't know the customs of a place.

Sometimes they aren't going to teach you.

A position of power has two choices to someone below: help them up, keep them there. If they want to come up and you want them below you, you knock them down. If they want to come up and you want them with you, you help. You either want equality with others and yourself, or you want to be above.

At a certain point, everyone wants to be above someone. Generally soon — at the point at which they see they cannot go higher, or they will be too much below someone else, or...

—

People supported academics when they believed they were supplying them with information they actually wanted. But they don't actually want anything that comes from academics now — no one can understand it.

Milgram discovered that people could all turn into Nazis. That scared the American public like a horror movie. Call it what you want, but it affected them — and I think most people didn't regret having had that experience. It was an academic that gave them that. they saw it.

—

I saw people really going through the crisis, and I was performing it. Because I'd been having it forever.

The crisis, I'm feeling horrible because I never tried to write a book before my career got in the way. Yes, I agree with that and saw it coming which is why I had to try and write a book. But it was a gamble — it wasn't worth failing.

—

I don't want to listen to my own judgment now, because I'm constantly depressed with no hope — and that is making my decisions insane. I do not act like a person I would want to be. So the decisions I make are insane.

—

Which words are the most semantically charged?



I bet words like

Main Dish

Main course

Entree

Appetizer

Starter

Are intensely charged: because it's basically impossible to say those words without choosing something that correlates highly with income. So your wordchoice reflects your "worth". And your worth, of course, is what you are worth.

---

We don't know what we want so muchh that we are willing to create machines to decide thisngs for us. UNTil we are living our whole lives deciding by what the market has valued. And the market's values are determined by algorithms. And the lagorithms are calculated by machines. And the mcachines are tended to be humans. But the humans can be replaced. And the machines canot. And we do not rebel — because all of what we want and value depends on a system, not a collection of individuals.

Which might have been okay: if only our system wasn't designed to take away our choices.

---

I just really confused how much love a person would have for someone else, at minimum, in a relationship of a particular kind.

Your friend — what would you do for them? Your colleagues, what would you sacrifice for them? How much time would you give if they asked a favor? Your first dates and second dates and third dates? The guy at the coffee shop who has made you tea — what would you do if he called you for a favor?

I assumed too much (keeping the golden rule in mind, for sure), probably because I never had that much to give. So I didnt' see how hard it would get. I never had that much to give. Some... and I always felt I could give more... so not used up, and

not impotent. And so I continued thinking — if I need to call in favors, there are some there.

And now some of the favors I call in from powerful people are far more personal than I hoped they would be (can your famous father help me, just a little, with this thing?) — and the favors I call in to people still around me are unanswerable (we don't have any power you don't have). I have fallen into powerlessness because I made no decisions. I still have the residue of connections from being around the powerful — but I don't have anything else. People who are on their way up, not down, do not have the same memories — and so predict very different trajectories.

—

When you don't have a solution to a friend's problem, what do you feel?

I feel so powerless. I don't like feeling this powerless.

Normally I figure I can help, I can think of how I can help... even look for information. But if you are really out of ideas — anyone's suffering is not only sad, it's offensive — it says: *you* are weak. You cannot help. You cannot stand.

4.20

At what age do we decide, okay, we can turn down the intensity of our friendships... like a dimmer switch. Jooop — we don't need to talk every year.

—

I don't think I've ever liked two people that I think couldn't like each other.  
Sometimes a bit harder, but never impossible.  
How could it be?  
Could I be that wrong?

## 4.21

**Adam Valen Levinson:**

fwiw, i hate myself for sounding like this too... so like, at least in part, i'm on your side i promise

**Rebecca Tropp:**

that last part shouldn't have made me laugh, buuuut it did

**Adam Valen Levinson:**

when you haven't stood on common ground in a long time, people can forget you ever did

— —

If I can't get rid of the filters (distance) between me and *somebody*... I'm lost.

And if I hate my life, and don't want to tell even the person closest to me again and again that I am miserable — I will need to make my own filters to deal with them.

My own filters which take energy to keep up, and I'm getting [tired — added 10 days later].

—

We are the last generation that remembers the feeling: *it would be improper to share this*. For some reason, there is a reason not to share what I am doing right now.

If I were to send a picture of my dinner to my friends, it would seem excessively sad, or enormously strange.

Before: not sharing was a sign of contentment, of not-needing-approval. Now: not sharing is a sign of having nothing worth sharing. Of having nothing to be proud of. It is the great sin of the social media giants to have pushed that shift in culture.

We share, and we make money for the giants. We share, and we make more money for the people who do not share money than for the people who need money. We share, and we expand the gap between *haves* and *have nots* and *needs* — all in a desperate need to remain in, or stay out of, or escape from, the category we're truly in.

Sometimes it works — enough liked memes, or enough followers for sex on camera, and you might find that you can buy everything you've ever wanted. Or: I might

perform to my friends who *have* things, that I too have enough things to remain in their company. (Subtly, we all manage the boundaries of our acquaintances — consciously or unconsciously, we manage others' closeness to us as a function of their neediness as compared to ours.)

4.22

I just want to live in a place where the tomatoes taste like tomatoes.

—

I never knew how to decide because...

People say “i never knew how to get that feeling anywhere else.” Something they fell in love with. Skydiving. Music.

But any feeling I’ve had, the best ones, I’ve had doing something very different. Music, comedy, acting, writing, eating. But more than anything: being with people in all kinds of random ways. Maybe just: the relief of loneliness, with the added kicker of something great. In a feeling like that, so much ecstasy I couldn’t tell the difference between one kind and another. So what do you want from me — a choice between diamonds?

4.25

All meaning we make is dependent on how much meaning we are willing to make.

How much meaning we are willing to make + how much time we spend making it.

A painting in a museum, one at which we have insulated from our critique of its worth and have decided simply that it is “worth it”

But what is the *it* that it is worth? It is worth “not critiquing”, it is worth “letting it in”  
— simply: it is worth making meaning out of.

And by its situation in particular places, volumes of particular meanings are possible: like plugging a microphone into a different amplifier.

4.27

It is my loneliness that is the sinking ship in all of my metaphors. I am lonely and so I cannot think about anything small — how can I rearrange my desk (deck chairs) when the entire ship is sinking?

But if I am with you... with someone I think might not go away... then maybe I wouldn't be so lonely — maybe I could work because I would have smaller problems, small enough to hold in my shrinking head.



4.30

I only liked writing because writing is like answer 20,000 questions at once, over and over and over — with enough right answers to feel as if you are succeeding enough, with enough of a challenge to feel as if you are winning and winning. Like running through a finish line after an exciting race... and then another... and then another.

Which word? So many thousands of options — so many options, so many determined by context, but so many questions to debate... and to ask *yourself* knowing that you know the answers. “What does this sound like?” “It sounds like *this*.” And like that: it is a way of communing with the self, at the highest volume.

## 5.1

What is it like — the feeling when you are so desperate for engagement that you are completely uncritical. Like being so starving you will eat handfuls of chocolate cake you find in a field — even if the cake might just be packed dirt. Either way, for a moment, you'll have relief. Just to have something in your mouth... do you hear me? Something in your mouth that you can even pretend to eat. You haven't even been able to pretend anymore.

And like this — a glance from someone, as if to say, *I see you*. But if you see me and I have been so invisible for so long — then what? Should I content myself with a morsel when I need a mound? Should I say *thank you for noticing that I am starving, now I'll go die in the corner*? Or do I ask, lightly, politely, unassuming except for the hope that we might continue to see one another: *what else can we do*?

You can see me begging in your eyes — don't let go just yet. You can see me needing more than you meant to offer. It was a polite wave of the hand, and I'll take it as a hand I could hold on to... if only for a moment... relief from hanging off the cliff.

—

Like I've been high forever — and my mind was open and racing with ideas — just with some part of me still able to distinguish between high thoughts and important thought. If I couldn't be high, I wouldn't have the ideas. And if I couldn't be low, I'd sound, on average, insane.

—

Sometimes things are bigger deals to the person you're interacting with than they are to you. Or less big. There's almost always a difference. In many cases, there isn't too much to do. But in some cases, when the gap is big — there is huge variance in possible outcomes, depending on how a person acts.

Being arrogant: acting as if the thing matters *less* to you than the other thinks it should matter.

Keeping it cool: acting as if the thing matters *less* to you than the other thinks you think it should matter.

Versions of lame: acting as if the thing matters *more* to you than the other thinks it should matter

## 5.2

In America, nearly none of us were born here.

In America, we are orphans in a new place.

In America, we don't have a motherland or a fatherland — we have a homeland.

—

When I was 23 or 24, I start writing up the life I was living when I was 21 and 22. At that moment, I froze my life. I wasn't really living anymore, so much as I was remembering, rehashing, revisiting and analyzing. All so I could share. I stopped living so I could package-for-sharing the life I'd lived.

I thought: if the stories shared might help other lives be lived — like, enough that they might *warm up* enough other minutes to justify the ones I'd frozen — then it'd be worth it. [I keep telling myself it was worth it.]

But was that really what I thought? Or was it that I might be able make heat for myself, enough to justify just for me the life I was gambling away in the hope of living

That is to say, the time spent writing is not the time I feel most alive. It is not that at all. It is the work I feel I am best at, this digging around the insides. I am trying to walk back by talking the terrible road humanity has walked since it taught itself to talk [see: Wittgenstein]. I feel alive in that I feel I am getting in my own way least, sometimes, and that means I am putting my own energy to use as best as I can.

The time writing is time in the mines. And there are many days when I can love the mines, love the search, love the dirt, love the feeling that it may all collapse and crush me forever (because a challenge with no consequences is solipsism, onanism — it's shit). But on the day you tell me I have mined enough, on the day I tell myself I have sold enough to never go back down again, I would stop. I would stop because I think I'm getting less energy out than in, unless you tell me otherwise.

It cannot be just for me after all — *on the day you tell me it's not worth it, I'll stop*. And I'll go back only for little visits, maybe not even all the way down the shaft, maybe just to peer into the dark cavern and think *I used to go down there*. Maybe just to remind myself of what it used to take to keep me up and running.

And if on the day you tell me it's not worth it, I have not mined enough even to power *me* — well, then I'll have nowhere below and nowhere above to go. I'll just collapse like John Henry, if he'd lost, if he'd collapsed in the middle of the mountain — and I'll ask only that you seal me inside and forget me. And: that you forget how much energy

I wasted on myself, freezing and thawing and sharing (and selling). And: that you remember, that freezing life to share it later is a bit like freezing bread. Maybe. Maybe it makes sense. But have a damn good reason.

### 5.3

The desire to do it, at a point, runs counter to the ability to critique it.

The most passionate impulse is allergic to “is it good or not”?

5.4.

All I have been seeking is a way not to be embarrassed. Or to be embarrassed in the fewest moments. Now, I am embarrassed all the time. Because I imagine if anyone thought about me, if I passed into their minds at all, the best I'd be is pitied and the worst I'd be is an arrogant disgusting failure.

There was

No space between praise and embarrassment.

If I did feel some praise, some admiration, I felt naked, and in that nakedness, embarrassed – stressed I wasn't doing enough. I don't mean much by admiration, just the thought "*ah*, he's doing things right". A little positive. And if I didn't know a little positive, I was certainly negative.

## 5.6

I know that I have been depressed for most of my life — almost never happy, and when happy, almost always from pure relief. Real “good” was only ever a bonus. The good I knew was not “bad”.

That’s why when, like today, I experience new kinds of sadness — new depths, as they say — it’s surprising at first, like a restaurant critic tasting a new cheese. Then the pain of a dark truth, and a pain on top of the pain from noticing that I’ve sunk lower than ever before. More alone. More hopeless. And I always say I didn’t know it was possible... but that’s because I have been living out of fear that the worst would come to pass, and there is a certain horror that can only come from the thing truly coming to pass. New levels of solitude.

I am normally knocked unconscious by my worst depression, all the blood and energy draining. I am awake now, not energetic, but sharp — as if I’m about to witness my own execution. I think this is what it must feel like... close... to be about to commit suicide. Resolute, calm, but a bit nervous — and excited to be nervous after all that despair. There is only numbness in despair, no nerves.

—

We are the elite because we have learned to name sophisticated pleasures, and we know how to call them up, and afford them.

Like an animal that could have different kinds of orgasms to suit its mood. life was supposed to be simpler.

5.7.

I thought I could write my way out of it.

If I just *articulated* well enough... I would gain total control. The monsters would go away if I could name them for what they were.

But.

Adam is the namer of things, in Eden, of what had just been made. A new thing, and he named it. He did not name things to destroy them — he named them, if anything, to give them life. More: he named them to welcome them into the world. But mostly, his naming did nothing at all — and the fruits and the fishes and the trees would have been everything they ever were before without him there.

If there were monsters in Eden, he would have done better to give it no name. And with no name — however much we have talked about the fear of nameless things — it would have always been less real to him, and less real to other people, and less real to him again by virtue of what others knew. And soon, the monsters would have been lost to history, because no one gave them the time of day.



## 5.9

The feedback loops, oh the feedback loops!

When I feel shitty, I ask for nothing I really want, because I imagine you saying no, it's a bad idea, why. I imagine you critiquing me for asking, hating me for asking — I imagine things will be worse when I ask.

And so I build nothing, and nothing gets built.

So much of succeeding is thinking you'll succeed, if only because there are still yesses in the world, and if only because the noes count for nothing. That is: they count for nothing good, and nothing bad — and who wouldn't take a gamble when you can't lose?

—

What's the point in being happy if no one can see it?

And before you say, sweet lord the boy is past where sense is even on the horizon, know this:

All my joy is just energy unspent — and I'd rather spend it on you.

—

## BREAK UP LINGUISTICS

Many say language is the feature that defines what it is to be human, separates our species. Many say it is the lens through which all social life is filtered, the framework on which everydarnting is created. Language as metaphor is powerful (“she spoke through her dance,” “the eloquence of his spice mix was lost in translation”) but the point is: you talk to your friends, you can't really talk to your dog.

Now, for the next part: language, Chomsky said — and disagree with him if you like, but it won't make much difference here — always relies on a process mathematicians and linguists call *recursion*: essentially, a doubling-back on something previously said, and an application of that knowledge to the future, like a tank returning to HQ for a resupply. When I tell you about the worm I *found*, *caught*, and *ate* — each verb requires you to go back to base, to retrieve the “worm” and apply it to every relevant verb, as they recur. Found what? Caught what? Ate what? Every answer is in the past.

What I'm trying to say is: the most fundamental part of the most fundamental human thing is reliving the past. What I'm trying to say is: it is very hard to ever get over a break up.

For the better part of four years (mathematically speaking, of course), I have been understanding every present moment through the filter of an increasingly distant past. I asked a question again and again — *what am I missing now? what would fix this? what feels good?* — and I answered with the distant answer: *her*. In my head, the “her” I'd lost four years before recurred like the point of a jackhammer.

It may be the most human thing in the world to relive our own histories, especially in the modern age of Snap Stories — but who wants to be human her *entire* life? The only way out is to put the object after the verb — to *do* only what is yet to come, and has never been (yet) before.

What I'm trying to say is: I'm not trying to go to my friend's wedding alone now, and maybe the answer to *who should my plus one be* is “you.” Email below.

5.10

I'm not manic, but I don't feel entirely depressed. Thoughts whirring.

Perhaps I'm so depressed that the mania only serves to keep me awake.

—

I refuse to use racial categories for any kind of statistics, or description. And that may sound extreme, but I'll tell you why: at the simplest level — because nothing in the world is black & white. (Hell, nothing is even “black” or “white”.) And yet: our census divides America into Black and White. And hispanic, which has subcategories: black and white.

Am I missing something... or is this missing something?

In a deeper way, it's because I remember hearing the I Have a Dream speech as a kid. And we will never ever be able to achieve “content of their character” if we continue to focus on what is quite literally “color of their skin”. We pretend that we are not talking about color, but about a thing we call “race” — which was only ever a marker of color. If it captured anything else, it captured bits of what we might've called ethnicity — but then where is that in our statistics? Do we find it more racist to speak of Nigerians and Touareg than we do of Blacks? Have we just ground down our ears to be numb to that oversimplification?

5.11

Of course I'd trust you with my heart.

Anybody would do a better job with it than I would.

There are only two settings, with the current, or against it. Even treading water is pushing hard against it.

And floating with there are only two options: this is the direction I want, and this is not the direction I want. There is also an escape from choice: *I don't know*. But "I don't know" is rarely true to the heart. The heart feels yes or no, just as the skin feels *hot* or *cold*. The heart knows when it is comfortable.

When I let my brain go now, it has been made insane — it does not do what it used to do. Forgive me, I need to die. I can't make sense, except in short bursts about what it is to think about what it is to think about what it is to think. The dizzy boy needs to get off the roller coaster. It is not fun anymore, and it is getting worse, and I have lost everyone I came to the park with.

—

Elementary school, I lost friends because I skipped ahead a grade to try to be my *best self*. Leaving elementary school, I lost friends because I changed schools, to a better one, to try to be better.

Middle school and high school, my relationships stayed weaker because I was always frantic, because I wanted to be friends with everyone and so stayed friends with my few elementary school transplants, the three of them, except when one found a group that could be more consistent and concise, and another moved on altogether. None of them ever hung out with the others. I couldn't decide, and so I was always close to having nothing.

College, I had some groups that were tighter. Still I bounced around. The bouncing was easier, because groups were always willing to join. More often, at least. I bounced into one group with the wherewithal to host gatherings. A secret society. Basically: drinking, but in the way everyone can be convinced to: in style.

After, I left the country. I couldn't bear to lose friends to work, to watch it all disappear and to get nothing for it. So: I demanded a change of continent in exchange for that unavoidable solitude. I made friends, but we were always temporary friends, friends who could be friends until death, but not friends we'd spend our lives with. We knew we were all just waiting in that airport city, coming and going.

I committed to a permanent connection to a girl. I said: this, I could do forever.

But the anxiety — the knowledge that she was my only true defense (on the scale of forever) against absolute solitude — was overpowering. Sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes — I panicked, as if the solitude was already there. And soon enough, it was. Because who can stomach that much panic?

She left, and I was left again to rely on a scattered network. A spiderweb can trap a mouse if the web is perfectly crafted — if it is made of enough threads — and for a long while, mine was. Young people make strong threads, and my friends caught me, so long as I didn't put too much weight on each one.

But the threads weakened soon, even as I stayed stuck. I wasn't weaving new ones... I just flailed in the trap I'd laid for myself.

I made a TV show about making friends in the places "you" would assume to find enemies. I wanted to make friends farther and farther away. But solitude crept into the space that expanded nearer to me — and after I'd followed the draw of the show upwards, Icarian, to fall when it snapped, I fell hard on a thin net. I shattered connections because I fell too hard on them. I landed on a kind of solitude I'd never truly known — only feared.

Frantic, kill me. Kill me. Kill me.

My worst fear in the world — to live alone — and I have made it true, all by chasing other people. No irony lost on me, I promise you, but your love, I'm afraid, must have been. I could never just take it and keep it. Afraid of losing everything, I treated everything like it was already dust.

I will die alone, certainly. I will never make the money and conquer the depression enough to build from this solitude into togetherness. I had every opportunity and every energy, and for 20 years I fought against hopelessness. I have lost now, and there isn't a coming back. There isn't a second chance to climb a mountain when you lose your arms and legs the first time.

But I would like to at least die with the memory of togetherness. Do not let me get so much farther away from that memory that I can't even die with the thought of other company.

—

At academics, we look with a certain kind of skepticism — if they are not involved in the digging towards something we understand its use. That is, curing cancer is a worthwhile pursuit, because we will take the cure, apply it to problem, and feel that something has been done.

The problems of the humanities, and the social sciences are less clear. In order to understand, the social scientist complicates. In order to simplify, to see where pieces can be combined, he brings together.

Don't you dare overcomplicate our lives without offering something.

That is the license the artist is granted. The license to complicate. The license to create meaning from nothing where there was only meaninglessness before. The license to turn a urinal into a think-piece. The license to to kill time you could have spent on yourself.

—

Here's a full glass.

Can hold 16 ounces, looks like, and I've filled it with ice.

The only open bottle on the counter is a bottle of gin — 2L, wholesaler brand.

What I mean to say is: if you think there are mixers, you're mistaken.

What I mean to say is: if you didn't know I did this, we are farther apart than I wish we were.

But:

I don't have a simple habit of filling water glasses to the brim with firewater. I have kept myself from taking such obvious escapes, because I could see the streetsigns "ESCAPE" and I would be able to tell the driver: no, not that one, I'd be ashamed to take that one, or to be seen taking that one. (More on that later: that conflation of *doing* and *being seen do*).

So I have fractured my addictions into a million pieces. My escapes have been crushed like collapsed tunnels in a coal mine.

— —

Write drunk and edit sober is a way to keep the splintered writer both successfully apart and manageably together. Or manageably apart and successfully together. Sure, yes: capitalizing on the differences between the Self Who Lives and the Self Who Critiques — while also insulating the soul from schism of those two selves. It is important for any individual to protect hisself.

—

She said it to me so lightly, after a second beer at a terraced bar in revamped Pittsburgh, so lightly that I needed to replay the tape in my own head. I did, and I heard it again, and I asked her to repeat, and she did — just as she had said before:

“I want to fuck that podcaster.”

And I knew who she was talking about. PJ Vogt, from Reply All. And, not I knew what he looked like

No wonder we fall in love with podcasters. In a world where its rare to hear a human voice without feeling judged or judging — that kind of human interaction is rare. There is *so much* information packed in the tone of a voice, the timbre the lilt the speed, the articulation, the phrasing.

And in insulating ourselves from face to face interaction, we have decimated the amount of information we get from every human interaction. Our brains are the product of hundreds of millions of years of tweaking. We learned to see and to hear words, as our kin and our friends and our enemies say them. We learn to make *meaning* from the pacing of a sensitive question, or the microscopic twitch of an eyebrow.

And then, in having a fraction of what we used to have — but still needing to live the same number of lives — we have tried to calibrate.

In a world lived through text but felt more and more through pictures, we are at a loss for connection. The *voice* carries so much connection in its frequency.

Just the same as a person in motion gives us thousands of times more information than a photo — especially a curated photo, chosen just to argue with us.



5.17

I have tried to be like a neuron in the hive mind — bouncing back and forth between everyone, to keep everyone in mind, to stay connected to everyone. But even a braincell specializes.

—

Like a boy with total freedom, and so many choices: a kid in the candy store.

I ate life so fast, like hard candies and sweet ones.

I ate life so fast, my belly hurts now. I am exploding and sick.

But don't worry: I had the chance to taste so many good things.

I've been ready to die for a long time — ever since I saw that I had gotten addicted to candy. Life is not a candy store — and I have wanted to metamorphose, to join the world of the savory and the unsavory, but I could never leave the candy store. I'd like to die now, ever since I knew it could get no better.

5.19

Sandra says:

We're all trying to recapture the past (old sport:). I am feeling myself aging, last year of my twenties, a lot of the friction and excitement are disappearing, incld. in my relationship.'

I say:

100% I feel you. But if you actually feel the excitement disappearing, is that the desperation we are talking about? Does it mean excitement isn't actually disappearing? Or: and I think about this post break-up again, that part of the excitement is the fear of losing something — and to actually commit to it, by definition, takes that kind of excitement off the table. (But good! Fuck that kind of fear!)

And I say, to myself, why could I never let go of that excitement? Because it was the only thing I could ever accomplish — and I was afraid of actually accomplishing it? *beginning* a life with someone?

The summer makes me feel as if anything is possible. I smell the trees the way they smelled when I grew up. Summer smells like summer. And I think, what do I need but enough money for sandwiches and someone to love? And I think, why couldn't I have just believed that years ago?

—

It's never been like this: that doing a bad job is a good step towards getting a good job. I mean to say, that producing shitty videos would build an audience, and that audience — quantified and faceless — would act as the ticket to more thoroughly supported undertakings. If you build it, They will come. And once they come, other Thems will follow, just because They are already there. It works, and so it goes largely unquestioned.

But — is this perhaps how it has always been? My father tore up concertos... I'm sure other writers burned entire books of theirs. There must always be bad on the way to good.

But still, then, there is a difference: the growing process is supposed to be made public. Because without a public, every performance is worthless — and there is no

such thing now as practice. And once the performer has grown good, he will have already built his audience.

And yet: that audience will never react to him the same way, seeing “the good stuff” as they would have if they had not watched him grow. It is like a parent watching his own kid: there is no way to see the thing itself at that point.

5.21

If you don't love me,  
I certainly don't love myself.

But then:  
how could you ever love me?

And that's all there is.

5.22

Omg

Fucking: I appreciate horror movies now.

They might frighten me enough to actually be entertained. That is to say, distracted — from the absolute misery I feel any second I ask myself how I'm feeling.

Are horror movies the fuel for the extremely depressed? Fuel to keep going, that is. Or — a treadmill to run out the energy...

6.9.

Now that there's no amount of love I can sustain without supporting it with a life I can't afford — there are no lives I can afford to live.

I can't keep up with the costs of the new desires of modern life, made and remade and creatively destroyed. I think we had landed on something decent, something that did not need the constant checking — *is this good? is this good? is this good?* — and the inevitably fussing that must follow.

But I can't keep up now.

—

I don't want to seem ungrateful ever... it's just that nothing will ever seem like enough — so long as I remember what it felt like to feel excited.

I don't want to seem ungrateful, but nothing will ever be enough now.

—

I have two feelings: this is good, and this is bad. They get carried through quickly, through loops louder and louder bigger and bigger, until the good turns into incredible, and the bad becomes unbearable. So makes sense that anything that seems at all good, I get so overexcited — can't wait — need it now, especially because I'm always in need of a fix, because I am always in withdrawal from hope.

—

Perhaps it was never “hope on loan” at all. It was only ever money. I was really living beyond my means in that simple economic sense — no metaphors needed. And I'm losing hope that I'm not going to have to face the consequences.

—

There was an uncanny valley for entertainment.

We couldn't bear to see our entertainers as real as they actually were — the seventies were supposed to look like the seventies. In that, we could have some distance from ourselves when we didn't see ourselves in 8K. Sharper than our eyes really distinguish from reality. The only difference being the flatness of the image (Which we are handling fast), and the movement on screen, giving a little uncanny....

## 6.11

In a perfect world maybe we'd all get rid of bylines — in the hope that as readers we might learn to see everything for the thing itself.

And sure, there would be some reason to trace an individual's train of thought through their work... but maybe the artist's marking could be like a mason's mark — there if you wanted to find it, but nowhere else.



6.13

It has been until now — until this year — when a man begging on the street could still hit me like a thumbtack in the foot. Sharp, pain and anger and sadness and sickness.

How could it not — when that is a suffering that is entirely avoidable, what with the resources available to our little group on earth, this country of ours — and when the reality is so atrocious?

And i block it out now — in ways I was never able to. Because how can I function these days otherwise? Because I already have let so many tacks in my feet, from walking like an idiot, and deliberately not wearing shoes.

—

I would give anything to stop writing a narrative for me to live — or frantically trying to find a livable narrative to fit my already-lived and to-be lived life.

But that is literally all I am.

—

6.14

It is not the badness of the day that make it bad. it is knowing there is no good coming.

6.18

I used to be able to schedule breaks, force myself into breaks that gave me space from my addictions.

TO take a bus somewhere, a train, to get on a plane — to walk even — these things would separate me à la cold turkey

—

A world of distractions, and I have never been able to be distracted from love. And the distractions are addictive now, proven so, but yet the love pokes through. Is it just another addiction, a stronger one? Is it morphine against the constant cigarette-lighting of an Instagram checked for likes, that flick of the thumb, like the flick of a lighter, pulling us out of ourselves for a moment of action-by-routine freedom?

God, I'm sorry. I say "us" and all I ever mean is "me" and all I ever want to be is *us*.

—

So liberating to have always said: if life is not what I want, I'm happy to die. I see no moral/absolute distinction between life and death — no *need* to choose one or the other — so there can be, at least, no life worse than death.

And yet: to have one foot in that camp... to keep a mental timeshare off this plane of existence... that takes a big stretch. so much that there is no way to ever be here anymore...

—

I am indecisive as a religion.  
And I have not found an art to process ambiguity.

—

3 year old looking at me. I am at memos comfortable being examined. Because I know that my self-consciousness is then just self-awareness — aware of the things about myself that others are aware of. What it means is that me and you are thinking in the same way.

But: I am only comfortable if I think you are happy with what you see. Admiring?  
Simply: that you see something *good*. If you are seeing something bad — I am

embarrassed. I believe then that you can see my embarrassment. I believe then that you have gone from seeing something bad to worse. I become more embarrassed, and — do you see now? — all of this compounds, like the worst feedback from a broken microphone.

But of course — there is a mistake in all this: that self-consciousness is never real self-awareness. At least not actually awareness of what the other thinks. I am only ever looking at you looking at me. I am only ever behind my own eyes — and it is extremely arrogant, misleading at the very least — to think that I have escaped my own and come to sit behind yours.

And of course: that is all I ever want to do. Behind *mine*, in my own head, there is nothing but the noise of so many possibilities, debating, debating, debating. Can't you see how much I just want to be outside? Even if it is just to look at me again...

## 6.22

It's not that we are becoming more okay with sex across gendered lines — we are growing accustomed to much simpler things, which trickle up.

That is to say: there was a long moment where we wanted our men to be hard and our women to be soft.

But now, simple softness is not so easily the mark of success — and deliberate hardness means something clearer.

And as we grow to want men and women harder than before, then it becomes easier to cross the blurry borders hard and soft once helped demarcate.

6.23

There is a great excuse in being able to turn a stereotype on yourself. Jews are cheap, or anxious, or good at math, or or or.

All of these things are like excuses, ways of passing the blame from me to someone else. To a larger group. Blame or congratulations — anything, I can share it.

Don't take that away from us. All of us, whatever it is.

6.24

Got into this habit of not solving the problems I knew I needed to solve, delaying them, because they were the only things I could put my finger on.

So many anxieties with such amorphous shapes — “the future” “money” “loneliness” — that booking a plane ticket became the only carrot I could see how to catch. And so, knowing myself, knowing that I need good moments less than I need to know that a good moment is coming, I stretch. I never quite book the flight, because then what? Then what will I have that I know I can do? Then there will be nothing but all this openness — and no closure still within reach.

—

It is better now to create your own language and see if it sticks, see if people understand — all they need to do is *think* they understand — than to build on the languages that have come before.

We create our own dialect, our own artistic forms, and pull audiences from the faceless population. And good, we say: no limits. But: for as long as the forms have existed, we have learned to make meaning within them, and around them, and through them. We have learned what it means when a writer shouts

Limitations — like performing clean comedy — are power to a form. If we accept that *all* limits can be bent, that nothing is sacred, then we have created a space where everything is likely sacred, and the rules are up for grabs in every moment. Wonderful and free, yes, but do we not then lose the chance to speak deeply?

—

For so long: my mind has never been in the same place as itself. Any kind of distraction, I can still think about something else. And those something elses are powerful and terrifying. Even what I am working on, I can think, but how will this save me from a lifetime of permanent loneliness...?

—

This is why I have to kill myself: I am so sick of wasting time, so embarrassed by the way I destroy my time. I freed myself from immediate commitments, but I unhinged myself from the kind of pressures and the kind of clarity that helped me decide what to

do... and I have become entirely wasteful. All energy is wasted. All thoughts undercut other thoughts. I have to kill myself to stop wasting time.

-- --

Divide and conquer...

how is society being divided most quickly? In what ways where networks were denser do they now seem weakest?

I think divisions across age are getting divided into smaller and smaller pieces. If there used to be a certain cohort of posters for teens, now there are separate families. And 21 year olds are divided from 25 year olds and worlds apart from 28 year olds. What are we?

—

I admit that there is nothing worse than all this impotence

Which makes the pain this will cause my family  
At least In part

A  
Comfort

---

If you have never wanted to get into a fight, just to have an interaction with the world not rooted in apathy or pity -- then you certainly don't understand my depression



6.29

They say, that feeling of losing your childhood home, if you had one. They say — how destabilizing to have lost the place that was always there, always there in memory, always there.

But what if you didn't lose it all at once? What if one day, the dining room was gone? Then your brother's room.

Years later, the bathroom where you brushed your teeth thousands of times, and skipped brushing them another thousand.

Years later, your parents' bedroom was sold or disappeared or faded away. And years after that the couch where you sat for everything.

And only near the end, the bed where you slept as I child and dreamed...

and dreamed...

and dreamed all of this  
would never happen.

—

Let's do an experiment — all you here at these hundred tables.

On the count of three, let's all shout for each other's attention. Just try to get people's attention.

1, 2, 3.

Ok good: some of you jumped early. And you won people for that. What, did you think these rules were sacred? Smart: some of you realized that the rewards would outweigh the penalties, and that certain winnings can never be rescinded.

Others: you shouted louder. Others, you never spoke, so that when you did, your voice carried louder across your table — and by extension to your neighbors.

What I see: that you began to look at the people other people were looking at.

--

You think I don't know some of this is overwrought? Of course! But it's a diary for fuck's sake. You let someone behind the filters, and hopefully they'll get something that looks different than what's after the filter.

I don't think there's anything I'd stand behind if I looked at it from five years or a good night's sleep or a generation's distance. And so if I think like that, nothing ever comes down.

And on one hand: I know then that there's no reason to ever say anything.

And on the other hand: I know that sometimes it's helpful to people to say something. Or it can be good...

—

We're supposed to get excited at all the right moments and be "cool" in all the right moments. Be cool in proper proportion. As a kid you started getting erections in class... seemed inappropriate, but eventually you learned that was normal.

But an erection in a meeting, or even at a first date at dinner? Even though we've all learned what normal is — it seems wrong to not be able to control it, to not know how to quell excitement, or to suppress it, except when it is perfectly un-uncouth.

All that energy, repressing energy.

Do we not think that excitability in some domains relates to others?

### 7.7.17

China: I do think I'll kill myself this month. This is going to seem super clinical, but try to read it in a normal voice — there are incredibly high balconies with no anything at all, and nothing down below. The temptation is super strong. Yesterday I tried to break the window out of the office building I was working in (not the first time I've tried to knock a window out, to at least feel the feeling of having a real, immediate possibility) — but there was a way, eventually, to get to standup.

And I did well on stage, but felt that everyone I thought I might be close to is only ever going to be a person I am a friendly acquaintance with. And how could it not be that way, when I am only ever in their town for a month, and I have never been more than a special guest, a repeat visitor. And what would I have wanted from them, either? Undying love? Ha — that's probably it. That's probably the thing I beg from others to fill the void. Takeo Doi would know so much more. (Takeo: the computer made me type your name 7 times before it accepted that Takeo didn't mean "take". This is the world we live in — forcefully smashing the things it doesn't understand. And sure, you might say it isn't forcing if I can change it back — but isn't that quite the disadvantage?)

—

I applied to schools so much, I got used to people reading me like a student. Which meant I could get away with a ton. Which meant I could sound cliché so long as I sounded idealistic and hopeful. And so I learned to pretend, and I thought other people actually liked the pretender — and I thought they believed what I was pretending — but really they were just playing the game, and knew it was all a game, and thought I knew too. I was like a basketball player after the game shouting at his teammate carrying the ball: *whoa, whoa whoa, you're traveling!* Bro, the game is over.

—

I am so fucked up because I found a way to tap into my stores of dopamine with pure imagination, and incredibly simple things, and worse: logic. I reasoned my way into thinking that there were still extreme hopes alive, that dreams were still possible: that I might feel the ecstasy I could tap into just a bit, forever, as a day-to-day.

And that way: my fix was not just on hand, it was already in my head. And when things got even a little bad, I hit myself with it. I've run out. I've got dregs and I can feel myself licking around my brain just to walk myself back off the ledge. Really, though: I'm empty. And I was supposed to have emptied out before — if I wanted to ever be a

part of society, of any group I've ever been a part of or any group any of them had ever been a part of or wished to be — but I kept myself doped.

I am only my chemicals. I could have been so much more, but I operate on the tiniest leash, the shortest string needing dopamine, needing fixes, needing company, needing validation, needing comfort, needing love, needing someone to know all of this and to *tell me*, no — to *convince* me — that the future would *still* be okay. But why would I ask that from you? When I know deep down that my brain is imagining meanings, that I have made of the world what I make of it and that next to nothing, if that, is really fixed? That if I say I love you and I learn to believe it, then it is truer than ever, and as true as it always was. That if I say this tastes “bad” — that unless I am talking about something unhealthy or dangerous, it is because I have learned to say that, by a process of decisions arbitrary to the “goodness” of “taste”. That is to say: it's all bullshit, and I know that.

So why am I so depressed?

I feel myself slipping away from the world I held on to, through money and acting and cleverness. In fast decreasing order. Really, I could buy my way back into the company of friends if only I could buy a house I could call everyone over to, and plane tickets to visit, and my own freedom from labor. I never wanted that, not like that: I wanted to do, to make, to help, to join. Only then would I want to just “be”. Okay, laugh at the clichés, but I have no thoughts more complicated than this, and I think the simple words will do — however grandiose they sound like this. I think they do sound grandiose like this, but you can read this in whatever voice you like. Give me the benefit of the doubt and read with a wink in your eye, and you might hear me in there. See this as lunacy or mundanity and you'll find all of that, too. You won't ever be wrong — but you might miss the meat of it all.

—

Movie Idea, like INSIDE OUT — but for a brain affected by technology;  
President — let them in;

—

Technology, against my best intentions — has gotten me addicted to so many things. I tried to stop it, I could feel how massively powerful an affect it was having on me. If friends said they felt “A little lonely” when they didn't get enough likes, I could feel how a quorum in my brain went into panic mode. There were still others who said: *are you out of your mind?* But they were in the minority. And “me”, as president — I said: ok,

let's compromise. We'll let the bastards in — twitter and texting and a professional life that still needed social media in order to survive — but we'll keep a close eye on them.

And in the end it was worse: they came in and demolished my mental resources. Every bit of attention I might have spent on something I wanted, we wanted, went to the phones addictions. The phone put on a clip: I had to watch. My brain cells that were supposed to be remembering an idea or thinking about the future or calling a friend — they were all diverted by the *divertissement*. (The language has all the clues: viruses are the goal of most “creators” nowadays.)

And largely because “I” had trained myself to be OCD about finishing things, because everything I had previously let into my head went through such a strict selection process. I hardly could ever read, because every line triggered a thousand thoughts in my head, so I read only what had been vetted, in my mind, intellectually and socially — what would make me think like the person I wanted to think like, and what would help me connect to the people to whom I wanted to connect?

I was obsessive, and I never let myself quit. I figured, maybe the reason these things were tough was the reason they were good for me — and I learned to despise Giving Up, like all good Americans, and that was all the logic I ever needed.

It made me so ready to be utilized in the service of something, anything. And it made me so ripe for addiction.

## 7.9

Pulsing stress, worse than ever. Need to jump. Need to end this.

Certain kinds of clarity come with the depletion of particular emotions: no more hope, no more ecstasy, and now I see the routine as a panacea. I once knew that that was how it acted, but I had enough other feelings to fight back against its siren song: come, join the opiated crush; come, stop thinking and just do for the sake of doing.

Anyway, if I had felt only this and none of the erotic and intellectual and heartfelt ecstasy that I scraped off in fragments every day, then it would have been easy to go to law school.

7.10

To have fought myself, and won.

Dragging on my own legs, the baby pulling. And you'd think I'd still move, if slower.  
But no — I am there, trying to run all while avoiding stepping on the baby's fingers and  
face — and soon, I'm tripping, or shuffling, exhausted. The weaker me won because  
the weaker me never let up.

—

mind like a fist  
clenched

won't  
un  
clench

won't  
un  
clench

can't  
think

so  
so  
tight

squeezed  
in  
on itselef

mind  
like  
a  
clenched  
fist

and i have tried to unclench  
all of it  
by punching the wall





7.11

At some point in my lair I noticed a fundamental problem :

That I could not decide who to be.

I did not know what I wanted to be when I grew up. And I could see that I had opportunities. And that when I didn't choose them, they disappeared. I could see that if I never chose, I would have the worst of all possible worlds: alone, impotent.

And yet; how could I choose when everything felt wrong? Or, seen another way, everything looked completely right.

I retired my brain: to feel satisfied when it found a good distraction, and to ignore as much as possible, the alarm that still rang like a fridge door left open: this, still wrong.

## 7.12

See I get it — I'm on fire, and I'm still doing the things that cause fires to start. If you're in a forest burning, probably best to close the gas canisters still leaking fuel; probably best first to stop fanning the flames. Sure. But since *thinking* is fanning my flames, and *evaluating* my situation as one in which I have failed, and lost access to the things that made me ever feel Not Bad, since those are what keep the fire burning — fire being, in this metaphor, physical and mental pain — then the first way to address this is to stop me from thinking.

That means full institutionalization. But of course, even that is about “stopping people from thinking” — and in that situation, I'd just have more reasons to think of myself as a failure, outside the bounds of any normal where people recover and find a life worth living. All I'd be able to do in that situation is to think more, and to work on glorifying that kind of collapse as something somehow “worth it”.

But see, all that energy spent spinning a narrative for myself — trying to convince myself it's ok — is selfish energy. I am done spending energy just trying to save myself. I wanted to contribute to the world, but I am now draining from it — or at best only serving myself.

What I've done, for years, is to try and decide what I think about something. And then to bounce around, into dozens of different shoes — first the people in the room with me, then the people I think I'll come into contact with with this particular thought, then everyone I know. These days, I'm hardly ever in a room with anyone — so there are many cooks even in the test kitchen. I almost never make it out with something I feel confident to show the world — because it has almost always been attacked in a way that I cannot fully recover from. I go to meet other people always injured by the versions of them I played in my own head.

— — —

— Herd mentality is really something. A thought must have a threshold where, once enough people agree, it is impossible to shake — or exponentially more difficult to go against.

At 25, the hope the fighting spirit, the  
our-friends-are-on-the-path-and-we're-not-and-that's-okay... but by 27, 28, 29 at the latest, the desperation to be on a path is too much. We are lying to ourselves and to each other, and that makes us want

Here's what it was!

At the same age as we were learning to see things in more and more nuanced and complicated ways — growing up — the internet was coming of age, demanding that the world find more and more lowest common denominators, that the world simplify, speed up.

And yes, attention spans shortened-by-modernity and the complexity entertained by long reflection have always been in conflict — but it would be silly not to see the rise of the internet as the second (in printed memory) industrial revolution. And then, to see our mini-generation — Bar Mitzvah age as we learned to calm down by dialing-up, and then as bee-bong-bzzz-beeeebong-beee turned to broadband turned to fiberoptics — as the lost generation caught in the middle of a great transformation. To either pick a side, or to split apart like a boy with legs on opposite sides of a cartoon earthquake.

7.16

So I can imagine what Taiwan feels like to expats living in China now — the freedom, the ability to connect with so many of the things (good and bad) that China cuts off... or worse, makes more annoying to reach. Behind the firewall, there are all our newish addictions — the clicking and tapping and sharing of our social networks that China does a good job of pulling us away from.

Destroy an existing society and we'll reach out for a new one, sure. Or we'll cower in small corners watching the new world work. Sure.

And the crackdowns on drugs, my god: how could they exist if people entered mental spaces where the phones were completely meaningless — where systems were shaken, if only for a moment, in the great wide rooms of single people's imagination.

—

I can tell that Writing The Thoughts Out is less of a relief than it once was, when I learned to see that as both pleasure and solution. An indulgent medication, maybe. But... that was the only drug I think I ever learned to turn towards something Productive. If I can't even do that — then what?

—

I'm in the Hongta Hotel with Sam, who has returned through the heat.

Discussing my life, and problems.

Hot balcony of the hotel mezanine, in the empty bar with the 15 dollar martinis and the piano they somehow let me play.

Pastis.

Checking a bag — incredibly hard to understand where to go — he's doing something not many people do over here, saying so many words, saying so many words that I can't even break into syllables...

But I follow them into

7.18

There was a time, I remember it, when I didn't feel the troubles. When — at moments — I would feel free from the pressures on me as a person.

—

7.19

I was saying someone start filming my life so i can try to live it

someone start filming my life so i can live it

someone start filming my life so i can concentrate on living it

someone please live my life so i can live it with you

how did i never know i could've been living it myself

—

Why can't you be happy?

Why CANT you be happy!

They say.

Jesus, if you can't just be happy no one is ever going to want to see you again.

I know, I say.

I know!

But I'm not. How do I prepare for things to get worse?

Can I accept that I've lost, and will you forgive me for giving up?

No?

Just know this: I don't feel it, and I can't fake it any longer.

7.21

As a writer, I could maybe live each moment, and weave a narrative of many moments after.

If I am living online, I am forcing each moment into a narrative, perhaps a narrative that only needs to fit itself... but it pulls me out of my whole life.

## 7.24

I wasn't just self conscious. There was always a vantage in me from where I could look at myself with total viciousness. I didn't just see me: I looked at me with hatred. I didn't always take that voice seriously — most of the time, I let it roll off — but I heard it. Always I heard it: this is what is wrong with what you're doing *right now*.

If I could take him into account — these critiques of the voice that knew me well for my whole life and saw everything in this moment — then I would be prepared for any attack, any critique, any rubbing-the-wrong-way. I could be charming, because I could anticipate anything and everything I might do that would un-charm.

But still, this voice was unbearable at times when I had no way to avoid doing what he critiqued me for. And then I'd try to shut him out. And now I can't. He's right. I'll never be able to support a family. I'll never be dependable. I'll never get out of my own head enough to live and not regret the past, and the opportunities I squandered. It has been too long in this self-centered universe to know to live in a world that does not revolve around me... however much desperately I wanted to live in it. There is no gravity for me in that universe.

Disgusting American parenting: please, let us teach that we are connected without having to connect through the self. We are connected not because we are all the same. We are connected because what we do affects one another; and those affects begin to affect all of us in similar ways.

We are greater than the sum of our parts — and the difference between that sum and that greater sum are those effects. We are affected by those *emergent properties* because we all live in this planet that keeps the consequences of our actions bounded by physical and mental spaces. We keep hitting each other. We are connected because we exist here, and we do things. We do not have to be connected because *you* and *I* are the same. Your difference is no threat to my existence. Just recognize that whatever you do will affect you too, in time.



7.26

I wanted this book for me, but I wanted me for us.

I wrote this book like something I wanted to give... and now what now what now what.

This is the day that dream hits Zero Chance, and I have to say: there will be no glorious dedication.

7.27

It used to be that if I had a terrible day — too exhausted to think without feeling real pain, then I could stop. It would be okay. The relief would justify itself, and I could find solace.

But if every day becomes just that — without even having a bad morning — straight from the beginning: too much... then what?

I trained myself to push myself as hard as possible, but to offer relief when most needed. And now, if I do that — I am nothing.

I can't live against the pounding backdrop: you are wrong. You are not doing enough, even for you now, to survive. Needed so much to be given authority that I accepted it over children, to teach, assuming I could retain the respect of my peers. But I have no peers, and I will only earn the respect of those who assume I am respectable and do not grant themselves the liberty to see otherwise.

—

I've got standup at 730-9, with a few friends here that I feel supported by, and that I could be open with. Depressed comics addicted to various drugs, still capable of smiling and saying warm things. I'm looking forward to it, and I hope a couple other people I know will come. I'm not sure what set I'll do, but I'll try to be as natural as possible. And I think I will kill myself at midnight by jumping out the window of the friend of a friend's apartment I'm subletting.

Enormous apologies for any mess.

(There is a man walking out to an armored truck, pushing a cart with a metal briefcase, flanked by four-ish security with guns that look as if they might have been shaved from black plastic. At first, I thought he was being escorted out — his face was puffy and red, his eyes swollen looking across the amber-lit lounge cafe it seems this Chinese office building downloaded from Pinterest. I thought: wow, a real Shanghai Madoff. But then I saw the billy club in his hand, and how he was only dropping off a briefcase in chains, and not wearing chains himself, and the security disappeared in the truck and the man slid back through the office, casting his eyes back left, back over the lattes.

And I think: how much sadness can a person have in his eyes before I notice his sadness? I mean: how ready am I to assume *that's just the way he looks*? And how blind has that made me to everyone's everything everywhere.

I'm babbling, sure. I know. I think I've made quite a mistake assuming I could ever make sense of anyone's eyes. And I spent so much time trying that I allowed myself never to come to terms with what I knew was behind my own.

(I can't stick around to grow crazier. Even though I'll make the rarer choice to die than to live (and I'll be surprised if this doesn't get more common, if it's not made more illegal) — I still believe in our fundamental sameness. We are many things, and we are *in* things — and I simply can't get my *Am* and my *In* to match. I hope you can.

—

I'm from the generation where there's no validation on social media that can outweigh isolation in real life. That is to say: you might tell me by text that I mean a lot to you, but if I can't see you — it simply won't stick.

—

Brain and body have fully schismed. Cannot motivate body to get enough chemicals to sustain what brain needs/expects.

28.7

This is where there starts to be shame that I won't be able to talk to anyone else anymore ever again. You can't be a person who finally admits to people that you are going to die and doesn't do it.

What am I doing — my only solace is telling myself, tonight is the last night. Tonight you will jump. And I passed out on the floor because I could imagine wanting to sleep. And having something I wanted meant I could choose that instead of killing myself. Lazy cowardice again.

I have been staring at nothing or myself or talking to a best friend for hours now. For three hours I have moved ten feet and gone in circles. This is a kind of torture that should have killed a healthy man — but in forcing myself to live like this, I grew accustomed to this kind of trapped-ness. This isn't normal.

And so then just leaving the house becomes a big thing. Speaking to someone else becomes a big thing. Working on something with someone else becomes an incredibly rare thing.

29. 7

The tortoise and the hare.