

Hamletization (After Life)

Write a monologue:

“I watched a person die today. It was violent and sudden in the way that all deaths are violent and sudden. With the emptiness and sadness of a late-period Warhol film, filled with product placement and useless extravagance compromising nothing with inevitability, it spread itself languid over the afternoon, into the evening, and squeezed itself into the early hours when there is a kind of silence heightening sound, and across generations still somehow unaware of their own morbidity, the obesity of their absence, the simplicity of their blood to spill, the ease of their spine to snap, their esophagus to close. Lungs will pump until they don't. The line is fine; a human being is already one twitch a way from a corpse in the first place. All at once a person is no longer alive and yet they are not legally dead. They are hijacked by their muscles, their voice is possessed by a thin airway of soured life, trapped as in a coffin prematurely interred, and nailed in by our society's refusal to unfurl its iron grip on dignity. Whether their presence remains throughout the long hours of decay or is refracted into nothing by the pale, whitened orbs of their eyes is a mystery frighteningly incalculable in ramifications.

I did not love this person. I barely even knew them, tied only by a translucently weak and oft-mocked familial bond. But I wept. I wept for our mortality. I wept for my future and my parents' past. I wept for all those whose deaths I could not witness or comprehend, for all those whose existence was noted by many simply as a numerical or historical figure- in the cancer wards, in the home, in the concentration camps, in the streets, in the police cells, in the cotton fields, in a crossfire, in a choice, in a fire, in a flood, in a moment of unspeakable, strangulatory cruelty, in an explosion, in a pandemic, alone and surrounded by the nouveau-chic yellow plastic of hazmat.

The husk reminds but the loss erases. Oh, if everyone could see this kind of death (not the glamorous, blood-covered gore of the battlefield, nor the quiet, Rubenesque neck-limpness of the stage play, but the biological struggle for survival which trembles the body with mind-numbing terror) every day, the world would be so exquisitely real!!

Similarly, a fate is not decided but it is certain. And we all live under the same death sentence; the hope of a singular, solitary, limited-edition commutation keeps us alive, and the falseness of that hope keeps us deceived into hating each other in the survivor's guilt of the newly born.

[The final gasp of the body lasts forever while the last gasp of the mind is eternal. These are two different things.]

21st century memento mori: do not forget that you will die just because you can. Sooner, later, it doesn't matter. We are all in some way simply just waiting to die, just as every rising of a curtain is the expectation of its descent; here, however, none of the corpses get a bow, as Polonius does, Laertes, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, Hamlet himself, all smilingly pleased with their own verisimilitude to the unknown. Just so today I was waiting for someone to die- no, be declared dead- so I could go home in my meek but triumphant existence, make myself some dinner, check my email, set my alarm, and go to sleep with the expectation that I would wake up in the morning. Time is finite and never retrievable, so regardless of what you do with it, make sure you believe in its finitude. All else is vain and pointless.

Among this vanity and pointlessness is the American health care system, a barbaric and byzantine web of false promises and terrible lies. Here is a place of cruel and unusual treatments for unnatural deaths. Here is a place where the untenable “they” can keep you alive purely for the reason of prolonging your drugged agony or agonized sedation, lest something be [Too. Sudden.] Nothing is sudden in this 24-

hour culture, where the days expand like skin over the bones as one is stretched to one's limit, where the news media scampers in a monotone like the gerbil Sisyphus on his adorable 4-inch wheel. And for every 24-hour cycle there is a 1,000,000-dollar revenue to be tapped until dry as the oil wells. Every drip of morphine is a cent in the coffers of the new beggar-king class of PhDs and third party hospice CEOs.

Perhaps for the sake of this fear of suddenness, the act itself, the only sacred enigma, is unrecognizable, a sanitized bestiality.

It is ironic that our death-cult of a society, the longest-lasting of all euthanasia, fears the honorable instant. Or perhaps it fears what it will see reflected in the placidity of that moment of absolute stillness.

So we sat the opposite of shiva and no one said a kaddish."

By ~
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In memoriam