

SECTION ONE: Biographical Data:

Please tell us very briefly about the following:

1) What is your date of birth?

3/30/89

2) Place of birth

New York, NY

3) Current place of residence

Brooklyn

4) Other places you have lived in your life

Manhattan, Connecticut

5) Relationship Status

Single

6) Siblings

No

7) Parents, grandparents

Both parents, one grandma still hanging in there, knew all my grandparents

8) Children

nope

9) Occupation

Freelance musician

10) Education

BA

SECTION TWO: Likes/Dislikes

1) What is your favorite color?

I don't have a favorite. I would usually say blue just by force of habit, but thinking about it I really just like color.

2) What are your favorite sounds?

Tibetan singing bowls, meditation bells, the sound of someone using the "human microphone" at OWS to communicate something worthwhile, the wind, upright bass, tambura (Indian drone instrument).

3) What do you find most beautiful? Least beautiful?

Sunsets have never ceased to astonish me. I remember one in particular, when I was sitting in an airport in Tennessee on my way back from Bonnaroo (having spent 3 days seeing incredible music and taking lsd). The sunsets down there

are especially beautiful because of all the pollution, I think. I was reading this book of Rumi poems, and one of them moved me to tears. I had my eyes closed, and when I opened them I saw this magnificent sunset through the window. But it wasn't just the sunset and that it was particularly beautiful, it was also a certain state I was in, where I felt like the sunset was opening me up, moving through my chest and belly.

When I think about what I find least beautiful, what comes to mind is a kind of arrogance that thinks it knows everything, that thinks it can elevate itself by snarkily refusing to feel wonder at anything that is really new, unfamiliar. Like, an example that comes to mind is the way a lot of my friends reacted to OWS. From the second I started reading about and participating in OWS, what I felt was a kind of wonder—that I just had never before seen people my own age, in my own city congregating with such a remarkable combination of anger (at a failed system), love (for each other and for the commons we were building), and general intelligence (a Marxian term whose technical definition is probably something different than how I'm using it here: what I mean is the emergent, collective "mind" of a crowd that could move on its own, could take the streets, could push back the police, could call for and execute a general strike in three days—not "herd mentality" in a pejorative sense, but some kind of embodied, group intelligence that was really smarter somehow than any one of us, not stupider). So anyway, I felt this wonder, and when I spoke to certain people about what was going on and my excitement about it, what I received from them was just the antithesis of that in a way. There were people who were just so politically tuned out that they just couldn't understand why anyone would be so excited about something that wasn't the latest pop culture scandal or whatever. There were politically tuned-in people like my parents who wanted to evaluate what was going on based on whether or not it would help Democratic politicians get elected (which it very well might not, if we maintained our critique of those Democrats' very many failings). But there were also people who were coming from the same place as me socially/politically who had the same critiques of OWS any reasonable person should—that sometimes it reproduced the same structures of domination it was attempting to present an alternative to, structures of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc. The difference between these friends' critiques and mine was that theirs came from this elevated position (often in academia) outside of the movement that refused to be inspired or moved by something wondrous at the risk of losing one's critical mindset in the "general intelligence." My critique came from responding to something wondrously new, but wanting that newness to pervade, not wanting it to replicate business as usual as far as domination, co-optation, and mindless festivities without any precise awareness of the injustices we were reacting to.

4) Describe your favorite/least favorite beverage

Favorite: green tea, both hot and cold. Takes the cake. I love the way it tastes, I love the way it wakes me up, the mind it gives me.

Least: very sweet mixed drinks, like rum and coke.

5) Describe your favorite/least favorite food

I don't have one favorite food, sorry. I love local produce from farmers' markets. I love particular items from particular farms. I guess one favorite would be grey oyster mushrooms from this farm in upstate NY that I sometimes work for at farmers' markets. It's a long cylindrical thing, about six inches long by 2 across. I cut it into quarter inch-thick slices and fry it in a pan with olive oil and *maybe* a little bit of garlic. The slices wind up having this really peculiar, almost scallop-like consistency. Very delicate and delicious.

Least favorite: mayonnaise that's not homemade

6) Describe your favorite/least favorite place in the world

Favorite: Canyonlands National Park in Utah. There are these huge rock formations there that formed out of softer rock around them eroding, but they look like *someone*, probably not a human because they're just way too unfamiliar for any person to have dreamt up and created, put them there. I hiked in Canyonlands with my parents when I was young and I remember at the time that I was frustrated because I wanted to take in everything and also write it down so I would never forget it, but that was obviously impossible, and I wound up forgetting to enjoy what was right in front of me sometimes because I was so hung up on preserving it. Then I came up with this invention, like a three-D all-sensory camera that would simply capture everything around you at a given moment, not just what you could see/hear/feel but also the little details you inevitably missed, what was behind you, etc. This device would preserve literally everything so that you could revisit it later without worrying about capturing it.

Midtown manhattan is one of my least favorite places. I hate it when I look around and see no one who really seems like they're there. People just bump into each other sometimes because they're not paying attention. No one pays attention. I guess it's the opposite of what I described above. They don't bother to look around because they think they've seen it all before, it's routine. But if they looked, they would see a lot—like who they're about to bump into, the color of the sky, the way the light hits the buildings, etc.

7) Describe your favorite/least favorite place in the town/city where you currently live.

Favorite: Greenwood cemetery. I live about a mile from it and don't go there nearly enough. It's a cemetery from the 19th century designed by Frederic Law Olmsted (the guy who designed Central Park and Prospect Park). Back then New York's bourgeoisie had this very beautiful notion of death, that it was not sad, or not just sad, but very romantic and beautiful. So cemeteries were supposed to be a way of getting outside of the hustle/bustle of city life and back to nature. I think they were supposed to be public places not just for the dead aristocrats' descendents but also for the commoners, to go and feel all tingly about these dead people who were some of the movers and shakers of New York City at that time. I find it really interesting that the burial places of these creators of New York culture were supposed to be a space where people could get away from culture. Also the notion that those movers/shakers were supposed to be somehow (at least in their death) outside of culture (in some paradoxical sense that also gave them the authority to create culture *for* everyone else, to plan the city, commerce, everything). And of course, when you go to Greenwood now, you don't see what you see in Canyonlands or some place like that—that is, something really unfamiliar, not-human seeming—you see this haunting scene of nature; what you see is nature haunted by these cultural icons who had to leave their mark on it—even the pathways in the cemetery are named after them, and as a result wind up having the same names as streets/avenues in Brooklyn and Manhattan!

Least favorite is above, Midtown manhattan.

8) How do you spend your free time (hobbies, sports, etc.)?

All of my time is free. I don't do anything that I don't want to. I make my living playing in the subway, and I have a blast doing it. Some of my peers look down on it because it's not a prestigious gig and it's the same tunes every time and it's not a ton of money, but fuck that. I have a great time doing it and I make the amount of money I need, so who cares. Other than that, I spend a lot of time practicing. I spend a lot of time reading—in college I mostly read philosophy. Lately I've gotten back into reading philosophy, but usually with more of an explicit political focus and often outside of the traditions that interested me in college. I love reading fiction but don't do it nearly enough. I love staying informed, reading the news, and also critiquing it when it presents a pathetic excuse for journalistic rigor in the name of presenting all sides (as if all sides had equal merit and presenting them all constituted objectivity). I spend a lot of time at planning meetings for OWS. I find the work that people are engaged in there

exhilarating and inspiring, at least as much so (perhaps more than) the visible demonstrations, the encampment, etc. I listen to music wherever I go and listen very actively—I am always trying to learn something about composition, arranging, solid and creative bass playing (I'm a bassist).

9) What are your favorite/least favorite art works and why?

My favorite/least favorite art works are music. See below

10) What are your favorite/least favorite written works and why?

One of my favorite written works is a posthumously published essay by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty called "The Intertwining—the Chiasm." MP talks about the way in which the body is intertwined with its "outside" and the fact that perception relies on the ability to be perceived from without. The essay borders on a prose-poem. I find it heart-wrenchingly beautiful, through all its technical philosophical problematics and dense, interwoven sentences that can take multiple reads to even begin to grasp, because what Merleau-Ponty is describing is nothing other than our thought-defying, silent, embodied connection to the world and to others. Here is one passage I find particularly beautiful:

"For the first time, the seeing that I am is for me really visible; for the first time I appear to myself completely turned inside out under my own eyes. The body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside. And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression."

You can take what you will from this passage. For me, what it means is that I cannot know myself without knowing what is "other" to myself, which also means what is new, what is unfamiliar, what is challenging—that I am inseparable from what is "outside" of me; that "outside" and "inside" imply, co-constitute each other.

One of my least favorite written works is "Articulating Reasons" by the analytic philosopher Bob Brandom. The prose makes me want to shoot myself, and the argument is essentially that there is nothing in human experience that lies outside of reason, nothing that is paradoxical, that is hard to grasp with words. Yuck.

11) What are your favorite/least favorite musical works and why?

My favorite works are two Miles Davis albums that for me are inseparable: Bitches Brew and Live Evil. These albums are the reason I am as passionate

about music as I am. They both came out of a period when Miles was trying to deconstruct musicians'/critics'/listeners' formal assumptions about jazz. He did this by taking musicians who were trained to play comfortably in that setting (as well as some who weren't, who came from R&B bands) and pushing them outside of their comfort zone. Setting up one chord grooves where there was almost no composed material and they just had to truly improvise—not around a set of changes, but just purely, in response to each other and whatever they were hearing at the moment. The music is intensely challenging, as it came out of struggle. It is also intensely beautiful. It makes me scream, leap for joy. When I listen to it on the subway I can barely contain myself—I don't contain myself, I grin from ear to ear, I bob my head around like a maniac.

My least favorite music is so called world music that comes not out of any deep appreciation of any one tradition (or even a multiplicity of traditions) but just a shallow attempt to capture the flavor of everything everywhere and turn it into bland porridge—somehow the antithesis of a “bitches’ brew,” but I would have to think more about how, because at first glance it would seem like Miles was doing a similar thing. Interesting—I really can't pinpoint what it is that makes Bitches Brew brilliant but world music cheesy. It might have to do with the lack of improvisation (or the limitation of improvisation to short segments in otherwise through-composed works). Interesting though, that I love something and detest something else that seem to be two sides of the same coin.

12) What are your favorite/least favorite films and why?

Not a huge film person—off the top of my head I can't think of any that have really stuck with me.

13) Other likes/dislikes?

SECTION THREE: History

- 1) Write a short biography in three paragraphs. The first paragraph is about your childhood. The second paragraph is about your life since you left home. The third paragraph is about where you are now.

I was raised by parents who loved me, who wanted me, and wanted me to know that. When I think about early childhood I think about comfort and wonder, being so amazed by things like trains and my dad's nose and splashing in the bath tub. This was childhood—I had nothing to complain about, but sometimes I acted like a miserable little prick and let that get in the way of all of these wonderful things. When I reached adolescence, my dark side really took over. I treated my parents,

especially my mother, like shit because they/she were concerned about me and how self-destructive I was becoming. This persisted through high school. Toward the end of high school I found what I thought was a spiritual path based on some incredibly positive experiences I had that took me back to who I was as a child—but I attached them to an ideology and an institutional structure that in retrospect were extremely destructive and have had a negative impact on the last four years of my life.

I spent my first year of college commuting between Wesleyan and New York, for meetings with this spiritual group. I created this whole complex network of interiority that allowed me to retreat inside my own head just enough so that I could kind of retreat from other people (who had really scared me, provoked all kinds of social anxiety when I was in high school). This retreat actually served a purpose, because it made it easier/less stressful for me to connect with people. Halfway through freshman year, I had some life-changing experiences with psychedelic drugs that brought me back to the wonder I had felt as a child and also caused me to deeply question and move away from the ideological/institutional structures I had become attached to. At the end of that year, I left those structures behind. When I got back to school I preserved a rigorous, at times ascetic spiritual practice of my own. I meditated for an hour every morning before doing anything else, gave up all substances (later I reintroduced psychedelics somewhat), gave up sexual activity. I think the discipline of this lifestyle was something I needed, but I kind of took it a little farther than was useful. Often I felt more closed off to others and to the world than before. Junior year of college I was prescribed adderall, which facilitated my becoming much more serious about my studies and a lot of other things and general made me a happier person for a while (but again, I took it too far; gee, I'm noticing a pattern!). I also rediscovered what it was to just have fun with other people and be vulnerable. Towards the end of the year I took the drugs way too far and had to stop doing them altogether. I went through several months of really intense withdrawal symptoms, in which I really felt like I was losing my mind. Looking back, it's kind of amazing how close I came to completely losing touch with the world. I also had to confront my attachment to the ideological/institutional structures I mentioned before and deal with my complex feelings about them all over again. I don't know what brought me back to earth—things just kind of mellowed out with time I guess. I'm stronger because of these experiences, even though they were scary. I make this all sound really negative, but it was an adventure and it was about living at a certain level of intensity that made me more aware of the great gift and curse of being alive.

Senior year and since have been about rediscovering what it means to put all of myself into creative work. At the beginning of 2011, I had an incredible experience as a participant in an interactive performance group's (Playing with Reality) show. The members of the company were so incredibly attuned to the cues I gave them on stage (without ever having met me before) that they and I somehow co-created this story that was a total allegory for my life in the last few years. This inspired me to get involved with their work as a musical collaborator. I started coming to rehearsals with one or several other musicians who would improvise a soundtrack in response to the drama. I met Abe at one of their rehearsals and I'm excited to be involved in the creation of something that is as deeply meaningful and challenging to someone else as my first experience with PWR was for me. Since graduating, I've moved into a house with my band and production company and have been pursuing a serious career as a professional musician, getting involved in as many creative projects as possible and giving my all to them. That is what's important to me right now—that and also OWS, which I've become extensively involved in over the last few months. Being inspired by something other than my own hedonism has been grounding, and I'm thankful for so many opportunities to be inspired like I was when I was a child.

2) How do you feel about your mother?

I love my mom more than anyone or anything else in the world—except my dad, who I love equally. My relationship with her embodies all that is important to me—connection, responsibility, love. When I was in high school I saw her as overprotective, but I think that was a reaction to her abundance of love and to not knowing how or recognizing my need to be loved. I remember one time a couple of years ago when I felt really lost, I tried to think of a time when I felt safe, and what came to mind was playing silly fish games with my mom when I was in the bath when I was little. My mom is deeply intelligent, caring, and human.

3) How do you feel about your father?

I love my dad as much as I love my mom. He's filled with kindness and patience and warmth and concern and responsibility. He's been a guiding force in my life, especially in the last few years, when I began to realize how much I have in common with him, and how much I aspire to qualities he embodies much more than I do—his lightness most of all.