

Gordon Hall <rehgordon@gmail.com>

dreaming

1 message

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To: Gordon Hall <GORDON@gordonhall.net>

Wed, Sep 4, 2019 at 11:47 AM

Hi Gordon,

I started to compose this email in my head after I visited you this spring, and now it's a different season. Partly what I'd like to say is about a kind of slowness though, so it is right in a way that I've left the intention to write to you unattended and passive.

The morning after I stayed the night at your and Octavius' house you asked me if I often remembered my dreams or maybe if I often dreamt vividly. Yes I do, I said. It's true. Last night in one dream I adopted a puppy. In another I slept on 'art bed' -- a perfectly functional and to all appearances normal bed whose wooden frame was art in the logic of the dream. Then (back in real life this spring) you said you don't usually remember your dreams, that you value this allowance of creative expenditure since your waking life is so much given over to wrangling your creative energies. The comment struck me not because I love dreams so much, but because this version of waking life you described seems so radically different than the one I live through, which seems to be primarily built out of impasses, boredoms, and other states of absence. Of course not entirely: I write messages to friends, I compose essays, I ride my bike down a hill. But the point isn't that these moments of action are the good ones and the rest are wasted time. Sometimes, in my periodic passes of depression, it seems this way, that idleness is a form of self-injury; and it is I guess sometimes. But when I'm able to approach things more quietly I understand these non-states as active interests. I like the feeling that is not a feeling, the thought that folds back to its beginning. Somewhere Freud writes that the positions of active and passive are operative not because they are fixed but *because* they switch. Maybe I have misconstrued that but it's true right? True that there is something generative in these moments of 'wasted' time: on both sides of the spectrum from the unconsummated leisure of lying by a lake to the intense nothing of lying bored in bed. I feel undirected and uncertain often; I don't know where I'm going, or least I don't have a concrete image of the stage I'd like to arrive at someday. But I have to, I think, think of this uncertainty as determinate. I can't find a solution, because I think ultimately I am invested in this constitutive uncertainty. Ok. But what I think is interesting in here is that this position seems to have an affinity with a position I think you are interested in with your art. (And hence the affinity I have always felt with you and your art too): indeterminate bodies, queer forms of reproduction, stages for forms of relationships not yet imagined.

Am I saying that I feel like one of your sculptures? Maybe. Or that I would also like to feel the stillness and care these bodies are vested with in all their indeterminacy. I'm thinking about the work you do as a kind of care work. You're creating these forms, yes, but maybe what's more potent (for me in any case) is that you're caring for them. Creating them to care for them. We talked about this once: you about the importance of the material labor, of doing this work yourself. Of course all labor is a kind of care work, but especially this sort of labor that is invested in a (strange) kind of reproduction. I'd like to have a kid partly because I would like to be pregnant. Of course I can't do that—and so I have to think in some way the fantasy is founded on that *can't*. Not because it will be frustrated—I'm not that much of a masochist, though of course I also am that too sometimes, and certainly more than a sadist (but those positions too really are about the switch: Freud always oscillates between theories of a primary masochism and a primary sadism) but because it is incompatible with the present forms of thought we have. Near the end of *One Hundred Year of Solitude*, a novel I loved as a teenager, one of the characters in his old age retires to a shed where he casts tiny silver fish in silver and then melts and recasts the fish. This seemed to me then an ideal form of work. Determinate and loopy.

I don't quite know where this message lands, though if I'm am being true to its subject I suppose it should fold back to an earlier moment, but really I suppose all I've done here is keep folding. I'm trying to figure out, partly by writing this message, how to practice caring for the body I'm in with all its indeterminate inclinations. I don't know what I want but I can feel which way I'm leaning.

love
willy