



I am a Dog Shitting

2002

My stage in my life is to er... try to separate myself more, that's how much I do it. The reason I do that is because I had a mother who was very emotional and erratic, so that em.. her mood really affected what my treatment would be. And so I had to really, I guess as a protective measure, I actually sensitised myself enough that even subtleties of her mood shift I could pick up on, so that I could then try to intervene by doing something funny or something sweet or get out of the way or... So, I mean, I didn't know what you were going to ask me, mind you, but I gotta say that you kind of asked me the very thing that er.. affects me constantly and just because I'm trying to be more and more of a healthy person, actually trying to find – it's like a boundary thing, really, right?

I mean some of the things that people tell me are extremely painful to hear, you know, I don't think it is.. it is a connection, you know, like it projects everything in tears – projection of the pain, it begins with her telling me she had breast cancer, you know, then she just went out and but I would have liked very much, you know, ? just the pain for her. Or even, just... the hurt. To know that somebody is going to (blows her nose) is going through that, and there's the pain and the fear and all that.. just.. So that becomes – where's the line between me and her, you know? I don't know, and it's for me too, you know. Was that empathy?

That is empathy, and having protected yourself from that, you know.

You don't see it coming. (blows nose) It's every time there's something like that, and it gets you, you know, which I think is the word I would use because it's going passed. You're defenceless, right? It's like coming in around the edges er... you don't see it coming. And I don't know – if you saw it coming, I don't know if you could protect yourself or not, you know, because... it's pretty hard. But at first it doesn't happen that often.

It's more of an emotional barrier and a barrier which is almost like a force field in that you are disinclined to look at something or to say something. you know, it's not... it's not a literal thing of granite and bricks going up in front of me or separating me from something, but em.. it's just a way of distancing myself from maybe a situation that's either going to be physically unpleasant or time-consuming, and, you know, after a certain point of your life, you realise that there are certain situations that are going to waste time, result in a lot of unpleasantness or embarrassment, and you tend to avoid that. So I think.. I think the wall that I'm talking about is just really the reflex action of avoiding that which is probably not going to be extremely pleasant or interesting. So it's.. it's not like I'm existing side by side with the situation with a wall between, I just take off down the road or... the thing is something I don't choose to embrace.

To imagine that all those other objects around you are actually subjects' knowledge – it's only apparently objects but in reality are the same kind of interior creature that you are. It's not automatic, I suspect. It's still not automatic for most people, it doesn't seem to be, it's certainly not based on the way people act, and it seems that, again, most awkwardly in at the moment politically, personally, emotionally – on every level, everyday – we are engaged in a constant... I feel like I am, I have.. I have to be quite conscious of that. I feel that that's partly what I'm doing everyday is... and the times that during the day when I'm failing are those times when I automatically react to somebody just as a... without any.. without taking into account their inwardness, their whatever – the thing that I most cherish about myself, the

fact that though I seem to be moving around the world like an object that's approximately 5 foot 10 and about 100 and whatever it is, 58 lbs, and of these dimensions that ?

potentially to you looking at me, I'm infinitely large on the inside. I have a whole universe of infinite dimensions. Now I guess it's scary, and I work... and my assumptions, okay, and I have to.. it isn't always a natural thing for me to know that all these other people around me who are jostling next to me are also little universes that I'm jostling up against. They seem to simply be things in my universe that I'm having to deal with. I take for granted that most people don't.. I see it, that's 'cos that's how I feel I can interpret the behaviour most people exhibit to other people, whether on a large social scale or on a day to day person to person scale, is that most people don't make that leap. It occurs to me, as I've said it, that maybe there's a more frightening possibility which is there are people walking around who have... who actually think or even have it's not a world that they are NOT ? universe as well but are in fact objects. That's really scary, and I think that's probably true, that a lot of people for one reason or another do think that, and haven't had their eyes illuminated to know what they are. But I take for granted that... that we get messages on the tv all the time telling us, no, no, no, you are a unique, wonderful, special individual.

I'm a mirror, really. I mean, I'm who I am but also, I'm a mirror. They're looking for whatever they're looking for, you know, attention, interest, maybe something to wear, er... but they're not interested in my personality, they're not interested in my life. You know, it doesn't take you very long – most people are not interested in anybody else, they're just interested in themselves, and talking about themselves, and spreading out themselves in in kind of the world. And so, you know, part of my job is.. is being there to allow that to happen, you know, I don't give it away. I rarely ever tell anybody anything about myself, and I'm rarely ever asked. You know, they might like be interested in what I have on or who did my hair, or do I know a good facialist and all this kind of stuff. Or where did I get this or that, what gym I go to, but only because it relates to themselves. They're not interested in me as a person, you know. And it's.. that's just fine. I'm actually interested in them as people, and I don't laugh at them, you know, 'cos they just chatter like, "Oh

that's nice," you know. And, you know, it's not... it's not idle curiosity but part of my being able to dress them is knowing as much as I can know about them. You know, who they are or what kind of stuff they are actually projecting out and, you know, around me. So, you know, that's where in fact it makes it fun, you know, it's... it's really learning about somebody and enabling them to function in the world, you know. Because, you know, clothes are like an enabler, they enable you to function, to do.. like, wear a dress for your job. I dress for my job and I dress it in a way that it amuses me, it represents who I am; somebody else would dress it a different way. And of course my clothes say tons about me if anybody cared to look but, you know, it's not really what's happening.

I always want to be the same. I don't want to seem any different, because I know that my physical self changes, but then if I always constantly appear to be even-keeled and constant, then that is never a... never changing. I think it would be really shocking for most people to see me really upset or angry or sad, because they've never seen me express those emotions before.

INTERVIEWER: Would it be embarrassing?

It would not only be embarrassing for me, but for them too perhaps. There are some people that could, I think.

It was always very important to me, again for almost magical reasons, that not to... not to allow any... not to oppress but to be pretty careful what ? all those magical ways of warding off the resentment that naturally rises, for example, sometimes... you know, em... at someone else's success. Sometimes you have someone that you like, someone that you love, you know – I don't actually feel this as a problem, I felt it much more twenty years ago, say, or fifteen years ago, when I was 25 or younger. And.. and I somewhere got that idea that there was some danger in.. in those elements, a certain kind of envy but also a certain kind of competitiveness and also a kind of resentment that was toxic.

I'm not alone very often because I work a lot and I'm with people all the time. But there are instances where I am alone, so.. and one of those in when I'm driving in my vehicle. I'm alone. In a sense, I'm really not, because all these people on the freeway, you know, that I pass or that pass me and look over, and I see this person crying or staring, or whatever er.. thing is that I'm getting.. doing at the moment. So... And, you know, the other times that I'm alone are early morning and late at night, and... or when I'm gardening I tend to be alone. But that's somewhere when I'm usually focused on the gardening and not on my emotions, so em.. To really be alone with my thoughts is.. is not something that happens very often.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you develop devices not to be alone with yourself?

Sure. I mean, like it's too obvious isn't it? I mean I have wonderful time job, and one 20 hour a week job, and then I'm engaged in gardening or making art all the other times that are waking moments. So the only time then, in a sense, that I'm not engaged is when I'm sleeping.

In dreams of course we all lose ourselves in dreams. I think dreams are the place that we visit in order to get lost, that's the place where we.. even the most controlling of us use it every night so ? (laughs)

You know, older times people were really clear that the imagination was a sense organ and not a.. not a faculty of invention. And it was ? this perception, you and I are looking at each other and you go back to all those ideas that like there's some substance coming out of here, and some substance coming out of there, and they're mingling in here and then... as if, well, I look at you, you look at me, we're something closer to what two snails might do, you know, there's a.... And that invisible but not immaterial, it's a subtle material would have imagined to be, that's imagination even though it's in this perception. So, it is just.. it is your imagination, it's just we shouldn't use that.. we usually we use the word imagination in that kind of sense, it's in company with the just. It's "just" your imagination, you know, as if that meant..

as opposed to “it was real” as... which is not the case. It was.. it is.. your imagination is the sense organ that’s performing that.

Do we have kind of an inherent aura? There’s something to that. There’s something to that, and I think it’s very ephemeral and it has a lot to do with face, mainly face and facial structure, and eyes. And, you know, we talk about like the twinkle somebody has in their eyes, or just their... their physical gestures, how they move their mouth, or how they scratch, or how they move their hands. And I think a lot of that has to do with what we’re... what we’ve been brought up with. Whatever our culture is, whatever our family is, whatever our class is, that there are some people that we instinctively feel are familiar because they have some of those same things em... I mean a lot of it is.. is just about identity, and sort of the.. the mundane aspect of what we call narcissism in a more inflated case.

I definitely identify with people a lot, or kind of.. with different people, you know, become different ways, and it is kind of confusing when there’s more than.. when there’s several people because you’re.. you know, you’re that person with that person, and another person with another person. And I think.. I think I particularly do that, you know. I think we all do, but I know I do it probably a little bit more than other people. And it is, it can be very complicated. And then ? kind of a typical situation when you have friends who.. and you’re different with different friends, and maybe those two friends are people, or it could be family, they despise each other. And maybe you can sympathise with them, with their hating the other person a little bit when you’re talking to the one of them, but, you know, then you have this other friendship with this other person. And when they’re together it’s hard because I totally understand why that person despises the other person, but I don’t despise that person, and I.. and also I don’t want them to be hurt, the other person. So that would be like a difficult situation because, you know, I sort of want to despise them a little bit to help that person... you know... so that would be the kind of situation where yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why would they despise each other?

I think it's that they're really alike, that's what I found. That I always think I want everyone to be friends, kind of thing, but I realise that I like certain types of people and they're all similar in some ways. And so therefore they're too similar to each other, and it causes competition and clashing, and em.. I've seen it go on among my friends and I only recently acknowledged that, you know, maybe they were vying for my friendship, you know, in a competitive kind of way. And maybe they ? so they wouldn't. And I just also, if you have crazy friends, you know, then they act on it a little bit more. You know, people who are neurotic or something, they'll really, they'll show that they hate each other, or they'll show that competition. So that is... it's really hard.

I think I'm like everyone else in many ways, and the ways that we.. I do them differently. I have.. I don't feel outsider so much really, and that's.. you know, I guess maybe at times you've said, "Look at you and your life and all this stuff, it's not like somebody else's life and you've got to remember that and all that stuff..." Em... I don't see it like that, you know, and it's a good thing and it's a bad thing. It's a good thing because I actually then relate – like they're no different, people are no different – and I relate that way, and I think that actually breaks down a lot of barriers because there is that... I mean I... I seem to be able to relate really well – it doesn't matter to whom.

I don't think.. I don't think most people don't go out of their head at all. Most people don't look around in their head, let alone imagine what's going on in anybody else's head. I think we're already talking about the few people that do that and it would be better if everybody did that because presumably it's a lot harder to just, say, shoot somebody or cut them up in traffic if you really know this really that they are a whole interior universe just like you are rather than just this obstacle in front of you, whatever. But I would say even those of us who do view.. see that the world is made up of all of these little, you know, universes walking around with a whole interior just like I got a whole interior, and not just a ? , they would still more likely, I assume, approach it more warily and potentially hostilely the way I do - ? view to these is a potential,

well it's a sort of danger but it is in funny way, as I described to you, it's like there's some kind of pollution.

Well I think that I always had within myself an idea of who I was, and em.. and recognising that I was very different. For many years I thought that I was adopted because I felt so different from my parents. They liked classical music which em.. they never played. I liked lots of foods that they didn't eat. But of course I'm not adopted, I know that, but I felt no different that I thought that I must be from another family. Em.. But I think that, I recognise that I have these tastes that are different than other people, and that's just.. that's the way it was. But I didn't necessarily adopt other people's ideas or... I mean I think I stayed true to myself, em.. but didn't find it necessary to em.. necessarily always express myself to people who were very different from myself. So I would seek out people who had similar ideas about things.

Why do we have the resonance we have with them? Is this a good thing or bad thing? Well it happens because we're social creatures, you know, biologically. We're.. we're not individual units ultimately. We're, you know, little clusters of genes working with other clusters of genes and to survive we have to be aware of how there's a feeling in behaving and acting. The question of why is that? The why of it seems sort of relatively simple to me. The how of it is fascinating.. I mean like all the many ways that we somehow assess people. And to me the thing that's most fascinating is the way that our minds work as problem solvers, people.. decision-makers, we narrow down our range of options. We're constantly refining problems into binary, either/or, good/bad, over-simplifying, because survival ultimately depends on that – making the choice, yes or no, stop/go, and the world is never ever that simple. So it's.. in this regard what I find fascinating is the way that we do immediately pigeonhole people that we see in public, and assign an identity to them in some way. And how fascinating it is that they.. that we do that so much based on mere appearance – what they're wearing, are they clean-cut or shaggy, are they dirty, are they fat, are they whatever? And yet all of us in this society at

different times are out mingling amongst society in completely different uniforms and costumes.

I think I may have a compulsion to watch when I see people engaged in... and probably if they're engaged in a... in an uncomfortable way or in a way that.. where there's conflict or the way.. in some way that seems exciting, it isn't kind of normal. I think I would be compelled to watch, because if people were arguing. I suppose actually if people are kissing, this would then fall into your vicarious – my suggestion of a vicarious thrill watching – Tom ? in his case it would be er.. if they were necking or, you know, kissing or being affectionate, I might want to watch that. And I guess with that, why would that be? Just knowing what that's like maybe, and em.. wanting to share it in some kind of distant way.

With photographs, when I find work that's really compelling and I look at it over a period of time which could be days, weeks, months, years, you know. I may look at something and not look at it again for a long time, come back to it. I find myself being caught up in it and thinking about it and I can't even – a lot of times – remember when I first saw it. I mean, I'll remember sort of the general circumstances, oh, you know, it might have been March of this year, but I don't have that same kind of em.. er... being rooted to a particular moment because... and that's part of what I find so compelling about photographs is that as soon as you start to look at them, for me, it's like you've lost a sense of time em... your... you might be.. I don't know that you actually enter the photograph, but I think you sort of enter another er... dimension of experience in your own mind... em.. looking at this part and that part and em.. thinking about their relationships.

I think it depends on the nature of the form I might be working with. Ideally... I guess I'm becoming more interested in how... and balance at this point than following a creative obsession. I'm not saying it's right for everybody, it's just for me, because I've been so involved with creative obsessions for so long that now I need to listen to myself differently and rest when I'm tired and eat when I'm hungry instead of foregoing – that was my last ?

I can be quite passionate about things, and often I like to get into an exchange and what motivates that I'm not sure. I do.. I think I'm accepting, you know. I certainly have a belief structure, and if... if someone is in opposition to it, you know, em... you know.... I don't know. I accept. I accept em... Life's fascinating. People are fascinating. Everybody deserves equal respect. Em.. Can I disagree passionately with people – absolutely, you know. And do I find myself in environments that sort of support a discourse of er.. exchange and.. and em... and em.. questioning and challenge, yes. Sometimes it's really fruitful, fulfilling, and em... but em... I like to think I'm pretty tolerant.

A handicap is just a limitation is all I think of it in the broader sense, and we've all got those. So your imagination can be both a limitation, or it can be positive – it can allow you to read a poem or story, or look at an object and take it somewhere else. So I necessarily think of handicap as a bad thing. It has bad connotations unless you're talking about golf. Paranoia is imagination, extreme paranoia – people won't leave their homes because they're sure when they walk out the door something horrible is going to happen. Well they had to have imagined what that could possibly be to be that way, so it comes from the same place that.. that more positive forms do.

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