

What is '4 M Ah'?

'4 M Ah' is a feeling. A sense of loss, so primordial, so beneath thought that it feels wrong to try and make it tangible; and attempting to do so definitely brings no kind of consolation. But you asked, so I must try; it's the grief that surrounds the loss of connection. This does not depend on a certain event or situation- the souring of friendship, the break up of romance.

'Connection' is a term diaphanous its definitive penumbra, but, as has been suggested, that is the condition of any embodiment of my theodicy. View 'connection' rather as a space or a plane, that is part of your being, just as you might mind, body and soul. You can have your own variation of what you attribute to 'connection', but roughly it will come to feeling weighted*, and that other people are weighted; that you are really there. And from that bedrock you can proceed to things like friendship, love, hate. It is most likely that you won't even be aware of your feeling 'weighted' around other people, that you are present. Good. I think that becoming aware of it is perhaps a symptom of the slow, slipping away from 'connection', until you end up losing it completely and all you can see behind you is grief and loss stretched across time.

Return? Claw it back? How? You don't even realise what's happened. You have no choice. Maybe it's your mind, maybe it's your body, whatever you partition it to, your reaction is a rejection of time. So, this is how you will surmount it. You will still be able to say whether it is noon or evening, but you can now walk into yesterday. That place you left something, something you lost. And you can no longer lose anything as time is now circular, not linear. You have no time.

I don't enjoy paraphrasing pop culture as it strikes me as lack of thought and laziness, which is why I've put so little time into correctly phrasing/syntaxing this paragraph. but it seems to me that some people need short phrases to digest complicated ideas, if only to peacock them around as cultural currency (still not really understanding them). Then again, they do bring genuine understanding to some, so here's one for you. In a derogatory remark towards religion, much more well known than anything that prick Richard Dawkins has written (damn something else wormed its way into a separate PCR), John Lennon once said 'God is a concept, by which we measure our pain'. As a man of belief I find the attitude of disgust and apathy towards religion triumphed by this line heinous. For my far nobler use, I turn Lennon's phrase around and say '*Time* is a concept by which we measure our pain'.

Please be honest, or as honest as you can with yourself. At this point, your sweetest wish, and what will be your ultimate victory over time, is death. Everything you do is with the promise of this at the end. I have to note here that this, along with that 'I am the last', is something that kept calling out to me, ringing in my head. I digress back to my narrative flow... But don't you see, carrying all of history around on your back you will never make over the mountain?

Is that a mixed metaphor? Yes... No... The purgatorial image is just badly sequenced.

Well, long before you ever come close to doing whatever it is your saintliness believes you need to do before you're allowed to die, you will seriously consider the possibility of death. Actually, you will probably do so a lot, even if sometimes indirectly. In your bountiful pondering, you will come to realise that in choosing time as your nemesis, you got it wrong. That sounds too simple and doesn't reflect the

reality you face to arrive at that. Let me say it another way; after repeatedly banging your head against a wall, wasting years of your life and eventually grinding yourself down to the bone until you are little more than dust, you will have no barriers to the ecstatic epiphany that you have been wrong. You do not reject time; that is not the reason for your sadness, though it is going to be a part of the way you exist from this point on. Only at this late point in your misery do you come to realise that you desire 'connection'. Talking about it at the start was misleading.

Let's leave aside any unsociable, unattractive, grating behaviour you've possessed since grief struck you, first of all mankind. Also the huge amount of time (ha!) you've literally spent removed from almost everyone and your life. The only way you can walk the tightrope towards even a chance of connection, of actually finding what I think is substantial love for people, of possessing life, is to be there. To be present, to be weighted. Reject time, not because it consoles your explanation of suffering, but because it holds it. I recognise, the difference is subtle to the point of being ungraspable to anyone who hasn't experienced it.

I have many words that I have tried to explain this action with, and it is a single action, not a process (that's life and that happens around it), but the best is transubstantiate. There is no yesterday, not even tomorrow. There is now. Love the earth, love the air, love the body. How could you carry of all time and still be able have a real conversation? Let it all go. Yes, you will for the first time in a lifetime feel real loneliness, but that is where you must start from. Who knows the sweetness of water better than the man who's spent forty days and nights in the desert?

Another foreshadowing metaphor (all the best stories have foreshadowing)! You are an island and eventually you will be overcome and swallowed by the sea. You cannot 'win' or achieve any finality with this action, so do not term it as enlightenment. It is likely that this motion will fail at various stages, it may even fail so that you cannot recover. But that is not the point and never a reason to withdraw. Another, hopefully the last, metaphor... You are not here to govern the weather of the world, only to make sure that the land is fertile for future generations. You can only 'win', you can only succeed, you can only do, *enough* to find 'connection'. That is what I believe. So what is '4 M Ah'? It is another act of transubstantiation; a droplet to my ocean. All of this feeling, all of this process, I have made touchable, so that I may let it go, cut it off. Though it's always going to be there, coming up my shore, ready for the moments I relent, I have at least made the effort to try and close the process which has dominated by existence to such detriment.

That all, well interesting doesn't really cover it... it seems like you'll benefit from getting that off your chest, you definitely planned to say it, whatever questions I asked, but what is it? What is '4 M Ah' Is it art? Music? What?

That stuff... '4 M Ah' is my recording of the first half of the Bon Iver's first album 'For Emma, Forever Ago'. Not only is that the best album of the millennium and the album and artist responsible for almost a the whole genre of what's tepidly being called folk/alternative, if not in its genesis then definitely it's popularity and especially so amongst other musicians. Moreover it has the feeling of loss, which actually only doubles and continues to grow as it itself becomes an article of the past. That makes it rather obvious why I chose this; it's the best explanation of where I have been, whilst it's also an indication of what will come and where I'm going.

That's foreboding... So it's music. Why would you choose to try and put something so personal, or individual out through someone else's work?

Everything I've ever written has come from a place I call terminal. *I'm sorry, I use a lot of words more as symbols than anything, which clearly have their own purpose to me; which is in turn is universal. So actually I'm not sorry, as all writers or anyone who creates anything does the same and people have to puzzle it out, so I'm entitled to do so as well.

And why have you changed the name to phonetics?

That's actually fairly boring. Partly, just on the slight off chance of some kind copyright infringement. And partly it's a nod to how the artist has described writing the album, in that he would sing the melodies without words, just sounds.

And 'terminal'?

It's been my urge to turn away from people. To mourn the passage of time. And all of that leads to the outcome of death if pursued to the end- hence, 'terminal'. I mean a lot of artists seem to use that vein of, of, I don't know what medium it would be, but they use it as a colour or a texture to add to themselves and it's not really there for them. Those who fully embrace, bathe in it, are not here anymore.

I'm not sure that's true. Everyone has there own experience of mental health problems.

Really? I don't think so. The truth is there's only really one story.

So it's a cover, or a celebration? Is there any importance as to why you chose to do it now?

Well, it's 'now' because this year is the 10 year anniversary of when 'For Emma...' was released and originally I actually wanted to record it more fully than I actually did, with a full band. But if I had done it then I don't think I would have done it with the purpose I have now. I would have touted it as an adoring tribute and it would have been a secret only known to me. Probably not even that, I don't think I'd fully grasped what it was at that time. It's serendipitous as well, I would have got anniversary wrong as I thought it came out in 2007.

What was it like to make?

That seems like a silly question at this stage; I haven't thought about this as an art school essay. But actually I just want to say that if you think of it as only a 'cover' then you really haven't understood anything I've been saying.

Oh please, you are totally the kind of divinely narcissistic person who would have constructed this as something you'd read on art exhibition plaques.

Damn you, fine... First of all I'm a *profound* narcissist. The literal recording of this was done over a long period of time, alone in my bedroom with nothing but a single mic, a guitar, drum sticks and a single tom and broken crash cymbal. I think that a bit like the original, that '4 M Ah' has it's own sound; it exists in its own space, though mine if more sandpaper than velvet. I imagine other musicians might listen to it and hear slight imperfections, bordering on mistakes and on one hand I hear them too. When I was looking over the finished audio I began doing editing and they were becoming smoother, tighter. But this was counter to the feeling and the point. It is meant to be an encasement of a feeling and a time. Everything that is there, is there because it *was* there- with an exception to the very obvious reverb's on the second track, because there is no other way for me to achieve that sound. The sensation? Clawing. At the time I think I really was in the worst of it and trying to claw for life. So you can add that to what I'm doing with '4 M Ah'.

When did you record it?

This is where I'm frightened.

Why?

One reason I consider myself an acolyte of Bon Iver, aside from spending five years listening to the album nearly every day and being in that space for all that time, is because it seems like his work really effects his life and relationships and interactions. I'm scared of what this work could say to those who I've been around, and those I haven't. What shame, what sociopathic secrecy I must feel and possess to do something like this. I am afraid. I hope that they can acknowledge what the making of it and what this releasing of it is. I have absolutely no idea to what degree they might feel I have robbed and cheated them of their kindness. It's actually why it has taken me so long to initiate this talking about it. But I always come back to that this is something I need to do and something I need to say. I even half believe that.

As a part of closing your 'process'.

Yes.

I'm not trying to put a downer on your release but how are you going to get this out to people? You're just going to put it up online, so what, your friends and family can see it?

That was quite a downer... Well, I'm doing this interview for one thing, which is more than doing no publicity, kind of... I am planning to do a live performance of it from start to finish.

Where?

Ticking off the five 'Ws' aren't you? From the only place possible. The fiery chasm whence it was made.

What?

Never mind. That's only in the film version as well. It really hasn't been anywhere, so to transport outside of the space it's live and breathed, well, it would suffocate. And coming back to your last thing, that's the people I most want it to reach. That's probably the people it could mean the most to. Of course it's up to them to give it the time of day, to give me the time of day, but I can't control that.

Just to wheedle that out in writing; you're doing a live performance of the '4 M Ah' from start to finish, from your bedroom, I presume live streaming somehow?

Correct.

You should feel quite privileged, you're the only other person who knows this exists at all. Though you're not the first person I asked to do this with, just so you know.

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I thought it would be better if this was actually done with someone other than myself. It's a lot less insane and would hide the fact that I actually have a dialogue with myself as part of my reality, as if I am an separate, objective observer, without even making the effort to. However, a benefit is that I don't expose myself to the chance that I have to deal with the kind of transparent, empty, vapid salesman veneer that persists in anyone who works in the 'arts' almost as much as in business- I don't think this is a particularly good time for me to have to filter through that bullshit. I'm not levelling this at the first person I asked, I ended up not meeting them, it's just a generalisation.

It might be better to start airing out all of this stuff. It's pouring out. Even in the small instances where there are seamless integrations of references, to yourself or some weird cultural/aesthetic thing it becomes quite obvious that it's there.

This isn't even my first written dialogue either.

I don't think you or anyone else is quite ready for that yet.

You know, I've been very much in the same place since I was 17, and I'm now 23. No sex, no drugs, no life, no love and many more nothings besides. I find drugs abhorrent by the way. And despite all of that, another reason I've taken so long to come to this dialogue, is because I am afraid of letting go. Even if I'm never as far along as I think or want, this is a definite checkpoint, from which I cannot turn back. There is nothing anyone can tell me that I don't know about myself and there's nothing I cannot do if I wish. But this is really everything. '4 M Ah' has and is everything I have and have been; and for what I intend, I'm giving it away.

And you're finished.