

## **USSA 2012: Wellness Center**

Confessional Poetry Night

Wednesday

6pm

12<sup>th</sup> floor

What does it mean that Joe has been alive in my dreams? ⇒ Very alive ⇒ I feel like he is visiting me ⇒ I know it sounds crazy ⇒ but it's like he followed Mom here to watch out for her ⇒ Like he's helping me take care of her ⇒ I need to see someone ⇒ a shrink ⇒ But I want it to burn ⇒ let it into my work ⇒ I don't know if it will be good art ⇒ It's just my reality and that's all I can draw on ⇒ I hate confessional poetry ⇒ writing or reading it ⇒ I especially hate my own ⇒ Other people's confessions can be interesting ⇒ but for me at least, art is a way to escape my own head ⇒ sticking your interiority into an something else (that sounds like a crass metaphor for sex) ⇒ letting it meet the world ⇒ know the world ⇒ but I am loathe to seek help with coming to grips with Joe's death and Mom's illness ⇒ It's an Irish thing ⇒ a Mick thing (as my aunt MJ would say) ⇒ a perverse conception of self-reliance ⇒ I want to get well ⇒ but seeking helps feels like a betrayal ⇒ besides it is not something I have control over ⇒ external events do what they do and I am affected by them ⇒ it's no mystery why it hurts ⇒ It hurts ⇒ I don't care if it isn't fashionable or contemporary ⇒ I want to make [art]work that's true even if I end up telling all sorts of lies in the process (and offending people) ⇒ It's all lies anyways ⇒ and lies get a bad rap (generally

speaking) ⇒ Joe Wilson, the idiotic racist congressman who yelled at Obama ⇒ “You lie” ⇒ What if the president replied, “Yeah, so” ⇒ “What’s your point?” ⇒ that all human communication shares kinship with the lie, the fabrication, seems plain enough ⇒ the problem is: how does the lie make others feel? Like shit? Proud? Deceived? Loved? ⇒ are your feelings really just another set of lies you tell yourself? ⇒ Like this sad confessional poem I’m spilling out ⇒ It’s not poetry if its confessional ⇒ Really it is therapy ⇒ Therapy is not art ⇒ So the common wisdom goes ⇒ But what does common wisdom know about art anyways ⇒ if art is haughty (as those would claim that want to press art into service for the “Common Man”-- whoever that maybe) then common wisdom does not apply ⇒ Three cheers for the snobbery that recognizes therapy as a form of art!!! Perhaps it’s not the highest form, but it is a form nonetheless ⇒ and what is more, it is a form that resists hierarchies ⇒ ipso facto ⇒ therapy is the highest form of art. Take that revolutionary elitists! Dumb Ass! The common man is dead! Long live common man that reads Robert Lowell and Shakespeare’s Sonnets!!

A question then arises ⇒ Where will I be when all is said and done? ⇒ The problem ⇒ To be successful does one need to be an asshole? ⇒ (Often appears that way) ⇒ but at the end of the day, life on this planet amounts to a single question ⇒ Was I an asshole? ⇒ How did I treat others as I made my way through this life? ⇒ Success is no Success ⇒ Success is something else ⇒ Dad said: You can’t control what other people think ⇒ True ⇒ But that’s not what I am talking about ⇒ What I am talking about are those times when you are alone and the

questions/voices/doubts/demons come calling and there is no one to answer to but the night-watchman of your own soul ⇒ Who has seen all that you have done⇒ Recorded all of your thoughts⇒ What will he say? ⇒ Where will the verdict fall? ⇒ Are we all assholes in our own mind? ⇒ if not, should we be? ⇒ That is, if your not, have you clearly discerned your own complicity with the evils that animate our world? ⇒ the cheetah that eats the gazelle ⇒ maybe the cheetah is not evil ⇒ maybe it is cruel ⇒ there is a difference ⇒ Still, it has something to do with the asshole doesn't it? ⇒ The cycle of life revolves around the asshole ⇒ Food and Shit ⇒ Life is cruel ⇒ But where is compassion ? ⇒ Can we be compassionate? ⇒ What does it cost us to be compassionate? Can we think outside of a cost benefit analysis? ⇒ Can we ever be truly selfless? ⇒ Don't we always act in self-interest? ⇒ Looking after Mom is selfish isn't it? ⇒ She is my Mom, not yours ⇒ I am writing my way out of it ⇒ the guilt & sadness ⇒ and looking for help ⇒ Looking for art to make some sense of it all⇒ Something of larger cultural import to redeem the banality of depression⇒ My stepping into art with my mother feels exploitive ⇒ But she put me up to it from an early age ⇒ encouraged me to be an artist ⇒ But my brother isn't appealing to an audience to help him understand his pain ⇒ Share his pain with strangers ⇒ It's more real ⇒ he's taking care of the finances ⇒ I am just muddling things up ⇒ But honestly I could give a fuck what you think ⇒ I am just trying to get through this process⇒ This journey ⇒ I believe is the euphemism the healthcare industry uses⇒ Old age, sickness, death ⇒ get through it without totally losing it ⇒ which I am sure

sounds like hyperbole to you ⇒ but if I were honest ⇒ and that's what is being attempted here ⇒ Then guess what ⇒ I am right fucking there ⇒ On the edge ⇒ Close to completely coming unglued ⇒ I mean I am seeing dead people and not only when I sleep ⇒ but when I am awake ⇒ I am not hallucinating ⇒ I want to see them ⇒ Kitty said that my séance performances had to do with my desire to hold on to my parents ⇒ She is right ⇒ that revelation rocked me ⇒ the obvious stuff always does ⇒ The séances started as a kind of joke ⇒ and now it all feels real ⇒ not kind of real ⇒ REAL ⇒ like the feel of a sweater real ⇒ the warmth of skin real ⇒ and it scares me ⇒ What if what you thought was a "just a joke" ⇒ Was actually fucking real ⇒ But maybe that is the only way to approach death ⇒ Through the joke ⇒ a game ⇒ Day of the dead ⇒ Dia de los Muertos ⇒ I don't know ⇒ Is all art something like this? ⇒ A glorified coping mechanism ⇒ But everybody finds coping strategies ⇒ not just artists ⇒ So art isn't just a coping device ⇒ Just like everything else coping is used used to analogize art ⇒ Art is always a "something else" ⇒ We have coping + something else ⇒ Something else + Love ⇒ something else + Hate ⇒ something else + Politics ⇒ something else + Expression ⇒ Something else + etc. ⇒ But maybe it's not always about surplus with art ⇒ Maybe art takes something away ⇒ a minus ⇒ Art takes the life out of life ⇒ Makes it more manageable ⇒ maybe it adds and subtracts simultaneously ⇒ Maybe life ⇒ whatever that maybe ⇒ needs both addition and subtraction? ⇒ dial it up a little ⇒ dial it down ⇒ But do you even care? ⇒ This is just me in pain

⇒ but here's the thing ⇒ this pain is coming for you too ⇒ and nothing I say or write can prepare you for what's coming down the pike ⇒ It will just destroy you ⇒ and like me you will hunt for ways to keep it together ⇒ You will feel vain, stupid, and ill-equipped when it washes over you ⇒ and the waves of sorrow will pummel you to pieces ⇒ they will keep coming ⇒ and you will write and write or do whatever it is that you do ⇒ But it won't be enough ⇒ art will fail ⇒ it will just keep coming ⇒ all I can say is that I love you ⇒ whoever you are that is reading this now ⇒ whether you are living or dead ⇒ I love you and want it to stop for a second ⇒ Just so you can catch your breath ⇒ I don't know for how long ⇒ it is possible ⇒ I love you ⇒ hold on ⇒

*~ for Meredith & Tal*