



YR THE ONES TO BLAME

a voiceHOUSE Production

NARRATIVE ARC

Consider this a warning.

What you are about to read is not meant to be enjoyable, or entertaining.

If you've come to expect annual vacations in Florida, if you were escorted to the mall to pick out new shoes at the beginning of each school year, if you've played on a travel basketball team, if you've been assessed fairly by the judicial system, if you've grown up with both parents- if you hail from comfortable environs both economic and social, if you've been insulated from the chaos of poverty or violence or mental illness, abandonment or abuse or addiction- then you've undoubtedly had plenty of cozy pillows to fluff about yourself.

You've had your fair share.

Coddled. Cosseted. Pampered.

Your wellbeing is not my concern.

What I aspire to do is launch an attack on your basic premises, your lifestyle and your livelihood, on your general outlook upon the world and your place in it. This isn't about making you comfortable. This isn't about making you feel alright.

You've been afforded luxuries simply because of where you've been inserted into the machine- thanks to your parents, thanks to your education, thanks be to God. Thanks to your acceptance. Your acquiescence. You've unflinchingly accepted the program, and by doing so, you've chosen to believe in its narratives. And that's how a world is created and maintained- by narratives.

I'm here to challenge your stories.

Our society does not operate based on ideologies, political systems, social theories, financial rules, statistics or selfish genes- each of these elements are byproducts. The construction of our world is rooted in narrative. Stories we tell ourselves, tell each other- why we're the ones at the window ordering a cheeseburger, not the ones inside the kitchen cooking it. Narratives about what is right and wrong, who is right and wrong, why they are right or wrong. Narratives which create gods. Narratives which establish hierarchy. Narratives which maintain power. Narratives that perpetuate an imbalance, an accepted inequality.

We grew up listening to our parents spin their versions. It steeped into our bones. So in a way, we are products. Produced. Manufactured by narratives. Narratives reflected by cultural norms, by laws, customs, by the media and by the government.

Of course you cannot be held responsible for your upbringing, for your environment- but you can be held accountable for continuing to propagate those same conditions which created you. Herein lies your guilt- if you continue believing the narratives, you are complicit in their perpetuation, and subsequently accountable for the injustices those narratives create through mechanisms of 'social order.'

Words. Ideas. Stories.

Words are the building blocks of ideas. Ideas are lenses which determine how we feel and experience reality. Stories allow us to build an ecosystem of ideas, to fix the lenses a certain way, in a certain order, so we can establish a continuity between ourselves, across time and space, interpreting the world in a similar way, acting as guardians for that interpretation and ensuring it is passed on to our children.

Fixing the ideas.

Protecting the words.

Language is the separator between man and animal, beast and angel. Language is the essence of our existence- it not only impacts how we perceive the world and how we interact with it, it is the substrate which holds reality together.

Our words matter.

Our ideas matter.

Our stories matter.

You might be reading this, thinking, "I'm a good person. I work hard, try my best. I only take what I earn. I don't discriminate. I don't engage in any kind of injustice. It's not my fault if other people don't work hard, who want a handout. It's not my fault I worked hard for my life and I love my family, my work, who I am. I earned it."

"You're only making excuses for the failures," you might say.

Maybe you have three children, a house on a cul de sac, a career in advertising, a Lexus and a GMC Yukon, church on Sunday, restaurants and take-out three times a week.

You consider yourself a success.

I used to be one of you- affectionately described as callow, easily riled, and devoid of critical perspective. My self-image was preserved by believing that I could be a 'good' person while at the same time being a person who obsesses over his savings account, complains about the temperature of his food, hires a lawyer to expunge a potential DUI charge, and fills his closet with new clothes. I was comfortable, and uninformed- what else for a banal apparatus to the machine. Instead of understanding my 'true' position in the world, instead of being grateful and taking some responsibility, I was insolent, petty, self-absorbed, and quite frankly, evil.

At best, I was in a state of somnambulance.

Just like you.

You refuse to question the narratives. You refuse to accept alternative perspectives. You are sleepwalking. Oblivious to the fact that you are the embodiment of blind pursuit, you are the physical manifestation of implacable hunger. You lust after stuff, shimmering but hollow, meaningless- more, more and more. You cannot be satiated. Your hunger grows. You venerate narcissists who accumulate more wealth than what could be spent in a thousand lifetimes. You represent the most provided for faction in the whole of human history, the most technologically advanced, the most well off- yet you are the most wasteful, angry, anxious, and disconnected from the true nature of the cosmos. More and more and more. You haven't had enough.

Thusly, I fix my bayonet.

Consider yourself warned.

Here are the roots of your narrative tree, from what I can tell, based on your comment earlier:

- Material concerns represent the primacy in any hierarchy of concerns
- Hard work begets material wealth
- People who have not succeeded economically have not succeeded in life
- Material wealth equates to security, and happiness, and fulfillment

It is a useful narrative invented by those who neither lack nor want, those who own, those in power. Reassuring. Simple. Hard work brought them to that position, and if other people worked as hard then they would inherit the same benefits. Success is directly proportional to effort. A Puritan narrative of American disparity. A myth which has served as the bedrock of countless biases and discriminations.

There is no moral scruple when you make four times the amount of the average working-class family in this country- it's because you deserve it. A CEO awarded a fourteen-million-dollar bonus works a million times harder than the guy at a fast-food drive-thru making fourteen dollars an hour. You made better choices. You were smarter. You went to a good college. You got the grades. You interviewed for the job and secured it. Then you did the job. You did it well. You are being rewarded, justly, for your effort. It's all in the rules.

Take a moment now to imagine a child, born into a lower class, who never had access to books or resources at a young age, who never learned to read because of a failing school system, whose parents couldn't put food on the table, who grew up with peers who glorified money via illegal activities, who saw women objectified and disrespected. This child, now an adult, is incarcerated for life because of a "three strike" policy enacted by individuals who shared no similarities as the adult. Do you contend if that child would have worked harder things could have been different? A little sweat and elbow grease? Is it possible the underlying assumptions of the Puritan myth of American disparity simply do not compute?

Let's focus in on a more 'human level' and continue to challenge other aspects of the narrative.
Another case study.

Randy was sexually abused by a camp counselor when he should have been enjoying a summer of archery and swimming, a nine-year-old boy. Randy never felt safe around anybody but his mother, since his father was prone to overdrinking and handing Randy a thorough beating every weekend from the ages of three to fourteen. Randy's best friend in high school was killed in a car accident- two weeks later Randy tried prescription opiates for the first time as a way to hide the pain and remorse of being responsible for that friend's death. Addiction runs in Randy's family, with his aforementioned father as well as several uncles and cousins being killed or dying young directly as a result of substance abuse. Now Randy is grown up, unemployable, bouncing between drug rehabilitation centers and the streets. What responsibility does he have for his current predicament?

How should we attempt to understand his life?

The truth is, you consider Randy a wasted tract of land, bankrupt of intrinsic worth, a failure, a loser, a useless nobody nothing who deserves little more than a final death and good riddance, to be thrown out with the plastic wrappers and cardboard boxes, another bit of detritus from our direct-ship lifestyles. You fail completely in respecting the sanctity of the human person, or human soul, that is Randy. You have no time to ask simple questions.

Who is truly broken?

If we define brokenness as a loss of essential elements of our humanity, elements which revolve around connection and community, then you have been fractured beyond repair. To see people as objects and outcomes, to pass judgement on the decision maker rather than the factors that led to the decision- you have severed yourselves from humanity.

You enrolled in college prep high schools, graduated from AP WORLD AND NEWS REPORT TOP 25 UNIVERSITIES, your parents read to you at night because neither of them worked the graveyard shift of a second job to make sure food landed on the table.

If only more people went to good colleges.

If only more people worked hard.

Beware the deserving. Beware those who need no help, who never needed help.

You are sleepwalking thanks to the soothing tones of your narrative.

When you catch sight of a woman walking through a parking lot with her son in tow, a toddler wearing a backpack and holding a blanket and a stuffed animal, long after midnight, you don't see a victim fleeing

domestic abuse. You don't feel empathy. You can't understand the trauma. You notice the dilapidated motel, you take note of the time, you stare out your windshield from the interior of a luxury automobile and you criticize, you might even poke fun. "What sort of a mother takes her boy into a dingy, disgusting motel? At this hour? What a nice family vacation!"

Everything starts with a joke. We're a funny species.

But the joke is on us.

You believe in the narrative, you ascribe to the dominant culture, you consider yourself a winner and you harbor your secret judgments as you call the kids in for dinner. You've earned it. You're happy.

But you're not happy.

You don't feel like a winner.

Yours is an emptiness which can never be filled. It cannot be satisfied. It is a bottomless emptiness which no material possession or sensory matrix can conquer. You are consumed by your own pettiness and jealousies. You are insecure. You are afraid. You click and snap and buy and try it on in front of the mirror, only to be plagued by the same cravings, the same feelings of inadequacy. You know there isn't a way out, and you're trapped.

The same was true for me.

Products. Produced. Manufactured. Programmed.

The narrative is so large, so pervasive, so powerful and ingrained it is almost beyond opposition. We are essentially hopeless. We don't ask the right questions. We don't challenge the norms. We observe byproducts of the narrative all around us, the bodies in the street, the homeless shelters- but we continue to play along. We are afraid- if we stop, all the comforts will end. And we don't want to lose our precious comforts.

The fleeting comforts which protect us from the fear, the inadequacy, the emptiness.

What else can I say?

Stop playing dumb.

Stop pretending like this can work.

It can't.

It won't.

Start feeling uncomfortable.

Start asking better questions.

You can.

You should.

And if you don't- watch out. Folks can only take a beating for so long. And when it comes to a dog fight, I always bet on the hungrier dog.

threat

Stranded without
directions, or course
-unable to end this dark vision-
alone in a wood, modernity
convenient
confronted
by an inescapable thought:
nothing can get better
so long as we remain.
The we of me and you reading this,
of those not originally from here
the marauders
the landlords
in this our coveted home, a
money-making scheme-ridden mini-mall
America, and beyond.
As long as we're here.
Nothing can get better.

As long as we breathe,
everything else dies.

This final conclusion finds me,
and so with the gravity absorbed,
before me are two logical options
to move forward:
strike fire, cast light upon the dark
OR
relax?
Take it easy, man. It's okay.
You're trying your best.
Recycle.
Try not to use as much plastic.
Keep trying.
Relax...
lifetimes spent relaxing in bourgeois leisure anaesthetized
in front of televisions

in front of computers
in front of cellphones
on borrowed time not borrowed but stolen by our forefathers
taken without warning from rightful inheritors, the true ancestors of this earth.

I can't relax.
I can't waste any more precious energy, life.
I have to end it.
Our demise is the only path to justice.
Accept it
Coals glow
Die, smolder into midnight suffocating with courage
Own up to the crimes
Pay, dearly

You son of a new moon rapist
you thief, grandson to a slave master,
great-grandson of a robber baron
father to an appendage whose (his) purpose
will be dictated by an insatiable apparatus, an apparatus of greed
wanton excess and profligacy and evil.

Examine the painful truth
acknowledge the undercurrents of this your legacy.

Dawn the robes, play the judge you were born to play.
Make a guilty ruling.
End the line.

How else could it be right?
How else could you do good?
How else could the universal laws be interpreted?

Every meal you ate
each pair of new shoes
family vacations
school textbooks
bicycles
a warm bedroom
opportunity, opportunities stolen
like everything else- you and yours, you took them
from the children of others
asphyxiating their helpless fathers and mothers

in the name of righteousness,
having never performed a righteous act.

Stolen in my name- by my father before me-
I am his justification as I have
justified my own undertakings -for my son come after-

Hypocrite
Murderer
Thief

A crooked thing,
crooked things,
I am a son of them, us, we, the
prophecies of darkness
who arrived on ships like cottonmouths
drawing fangs and passing disease
brought death,
saw the world as a display case full of objects and
killed myth, symbol, meaning
-separated-
-hypnotized-
viewed people as objects,
viewed animals as objects,
viewed the earth from a plexiglass window
-monetize-
-commodify-
brought more death,
bringing more death.

Fear.
Lacking creativity.
Fearful.

Now, as I stand at the end of my name, my line,
a cursed line that can only be cured
once it is cast into the stone circle-
I strike the flint.
Into the flames,
the heat,
cleansing smoke
burns and subsumes the sin of generations.

Accept the dancers, welcome
a transformation-
the ashen figure I become
will be more beautiful
than my living skin ever was.
Red, charred into blisters
cracked like clay,
returned to the land.
Author a new creation story,
this is my last hope to participate
to contribute
to a sacred whole.

Hope.

Say a prayer for us, your enemy.

white gore

white gore-
like stern
warnings from daddy
at the top of the stairs
ready to dismember us
for our infidelities

please, i won't do it again...

please, i promise...

white gore-
like homework and drama club,
van rides to practice,
home-cooked meals, spaghetti,
secretly i hate
you mother, you don't understand

please, another minute...

please, leave me alone...

white gore-
like errands to the mall,
trash bins full of plastic,
newspaper headlines read
on a breath of single-malt
scotch, cigars

please, i want it...

please, just one more...

white gore-
white privilege
white power
white christmas

in a photo album forgotten
shelved in grandma's
antique bureau

a legacy of doom

das capital aka EMPTINESS

Lifetimes spent in automobile cabins, cellphones tatoo'd onto our palms, televisions destroying our vision, eating indiscriminate fried food, wired by our loins, buying shit.

Buying more and more shit.

There can never be enough shit.

Instantly delivered shit.

Shit on credit.

Shit to keep all of our shit organized.

Expensive shit.

Cheap shit.

Dumb shit.

Smart shit.

More shit, right now.

Imperialists, the inheritors of a rapacious greed runaway- take at all cost- no matter the cost.

Blind. Selfish. Ruthless wolves in sheep costumes with lamprey brains. Reptilian. Savage.

Those who no longer dream. Spoiled. Stupid, rich evil. Self-perpetuating, circuitous, engendering laziness and waste. This land is your land- nonsense.

Plastic fingers touch everything like Midas, cursed.

Goodbye. So long to the pristine, the sacred.

We are worse than any Aztec sacrifice holiday.

Ironic in our obsessions with life with our lives with keeping alive, with our important egocentric existence clinging and hung up so concerned to live, to avoid death and chemicals and carcinogens- for what? So we can keep complaining so we can worry so we can keep buying shit, accumulated?

Then what? Who cares.

Charge it.

Burn it.

Poison it.

Poisoned by culture. Redolent with insecurity. Blind, fearful, wardrobes full of clothes but naked in the face of it all.

Unable to think critically. Unable to find sentimentality. Unable to produce genuine emotion.

Dictated by internet search results. Advertisements. Buying. More. Shit.

Unconcerned- who cares.

The future? Who cares.

The earth? Who cares.

Google will deliver us this day our daily answers.

And we criticize the believers, the religious? We criticize the ancients? We, disciples of science. Disciples of nothing.

Scared. Empty. Stupid. Haughty. Without wisdom, stuffed to our gills with useless facts, with stuff. More shit.

Buying more.
Shit.

an observation

separation from land
leads
to separation from heart;
land bridges men
to their hearts,
to their women,
and hearts bridge man
from the earth
to the universe,
cosmic.

the best stories are
ones you hear
before you had ears
to listen

we belong to the earth,
we are hers

despite our worst efforts

ERROR message

compatibility issues
the earth's truth
ours
signal disruption
eyes out a
window
tormented inside
phony barriers, separation
solidify
dream sublime
make believe lifetimes
full
of incessant drama
worried that it might
end
prematurely
harvested for food
plucked
necklaces, bones
everything is destroyed
nothing is gone
at least
Her life will
outlast
our own
scented by
petrichor
christened with spindrift

routines

Check the email
Open up the browser
Close a window
Respond to a post
Like a picture
Log out of the account
Change the password
Transfer the money
Complete an order
Open a window
Click on a link
Enter a selection
Log in to the account
Add a comment
Read a message
React to a message
Zoom in
Update an address
Select a preference
Pause the video
Play the song
Check a receipt status
Record a memo
Check the weather
Create an alarm
Cancel a reminder
Save a favorite
Check the email
Close a window

Closing windows
Mindless
Shut ins
Shut out
No time to breathe, appreciate
-birdsong
-echoes
-breeze

-eye color

Do you even know if you have your mother's eyes?

Who has the time...

Cy(cles)

Cycles
We are recycled
We lose touch
New ones find it
We are cut off
We are connected
New ones form
Cycles
We are born
We retreat from time
New ones enter
We forget truth
We remember truth
New homes are built
Cycles
Circles mysterious without centers
Metaphors beyond fact or fiction
Forces behind life
Forces like life
Cycles
Don't lose the message in the symbol
Don't worry about it
You're here for a little while
You're here forever
Cycles
We kill the divine
We erect new temples
Nothing changes
Spins
Circles
Cycles

progress(ion)

bought a lie
(proud owners)
we ate it up bucketful
(ravenous)
hated our daddies for reasons we never explained
hated our mommies for withholding their love
(children)
then became him, her
(adults)
we saved up, played it safe
found a partner, then a bank
(eureka)
peddled in bland khaki dross
(believers)
taught our kids make believe lessons when they misbehaved
lost a god
(injuries)
gained a buck
borrowed more
(successful)
television sets and beer cans, prescriptions and newspaper columns
(frightened inside)
screaming blind
standing naked
(tormented)
never knowing who we are
never thinking about where we could have gone
never considered where we'd come from
or how to get home
forgot we were lost
(hopeless)
blinded by artificial lights headed to quick mosquito death
checking credit scores, emails, updates, digital feeds, fed like animals
(distracted)
soulless meat
ashes to ashes
(dead)

lynch mob

we killed their brothers, hung
them up on trees
tore them open
as a warning:

we're scared enough to do just about anything to protect the status quo
keep our daughters clean
keep money in our boy's pockets
keep you down and disenfranchised,
 keep things the way they are and have been because the good Christian white God of forever
 and ever made it so thank you Jesus amen

We are culpable.

You are culpable- you.

Guilty, motherfucker.

It makes me sick the karma that waits.

STATE OF THE UNION

clever shit,
nothing but
word choice
symbolism
dimension
post-modern
relevant
edgy
marketable
sexy
unique characters
topical subjects

clever shit,
written by graduates
of clever programs,
winners of clever prizes,
distributed by houses
of clever publishers,
members
of cleverness clubs

clever shit,
ready for the big screen
picked up by the studio
anime enhanced
fantasy romance

hyperspace flying
slight of hand
make their jaws drop
serial installments
one after another

clever shit
that was unearned
that isn't art
that caters to the public
that sells well
that confuses like noises from a large city,
that offers no guidance or help or suggestion
but merely stands alone,
aloof in a corner
looking smart
drinking a neat cocktail.

all i see is clever shit,
everywhere.

what a nightmare, stuck with
know-it-alls.

a funny story

i prayed for him-
he was only
a few years old,
leukemia,
sick in the hospital.
i said my prayers
i lit candles
i wrote church
secretaries
to put his name
on lists of intention
i knelt and
supplicated our
blessed virgin.
he was sick, a
little boy.

not on my account,
probably,
he improved.
the cancer
went into remission,
his eyes brightened
as treatments worked.
he was better.
he grew up.
i met him a couple
years later, he had
started kindergarten
he was living
he was alive
and when i reached down
to shake hands
with a living
miracle, he kicked
me in the shin, hard.

if that ain't perfect
satori,
i dont know what
is.

nursery rhyme

be sure to play in yards with fences, simple right and nice
so the kiddies grow up tall and proud, smiling full of life
eating up their vitamins
taking plenty rest

keep them locked in houses, draw within the lines
helmets while they bicycle, always home on time
wash behind their ears
buckle up their belts

march them into church to kneel and say 'amen'
do it once a week, again again and again
teach them all the rules
make them learn the songs

send them off to school to learn to read and write
teach them perfect manners, so they will be polite
raise their hand in class
don't speak out of turn

keep the kiddies safe and well
so they grow up like you
keep the kiddies safe and well
so they have kiddies too

the apparatus needs its wheels
its gears and grease and lead,
the kiddies are no good to it
if the kiddies are all dead

haiku-esque

winter is a poem
of simple breathing,
quiet survival

creator(s)

some things
speak for themselves
sometimes
something needs to be said
some things
need other things to speak for them
sometimes
nothing can be heard
some things
sometimes mean nothing
sometimes
something means everything
you can give
you can say
you can love...
so do what you can
with whatever you have.
because sometimes
you have something,
even when you don't
think you have anything.
you are everything,
because nothing
can happen without
you doing it,
born from you,
everything.

A Blue Moon Halloween Haunted by a Future Love Poem

moonbeams tap on my finger
my daughter's first kiss
for me
she's in her mother
she's always been there
she always will be
alive inside my heart
a chamber undiscovered, until today
excavated from ruin

i think about her hair color,
her eyes, her pudgy fingers,
her first steps-
then i stop, reminded to be present
to forget the world of time,
a world that makes me hate
it so much sometimes i don't know what i'd do-
if i didn't have the hope of her

haiku #7

clouds like mesas, distant
thirty-six
thousand feet

simple exercise

count up the people
alive in your head
then imagine all the places you reside, take residence
those minds you occupy
a denizen in astral worlds
of friends, of relatives, of coworkers,
of enemies, of drive through cashiers,
of phone center assistants,
of passengers in nearby cars,
of faces passed by-
for a moment, only a moment-
lifetimes alive these figures go on
impossible to displace
or change
birthed from a seed so tiny

failure

We never learn from the memories of our ghosts.
They sigh hunched over, crapulous, cobwebs in our barstool hearts,
pockets full of magic rings, alone
until our final birthday when the mystery disappears
and we are unborn, untethered from fate.
Left to dry up.
Left to watch screens.
Left to repeat.
Left to die cold.
Look back at what you wasted, before the temptress' call.
Shamed inside,
you know what you chose to leave.
We'll walk out into black nights of a city that killed all her stars.
We'll walk out in tears, alone, our demons gowned by fresh names
to haunt us on
to hold their grip
to keep us down
to smile so wide
as we go searching for truth
that's stuffed in our pockets.
We're searching all over
even though it's right here.
Searching and searching
forgetting we already touch it.
Looking all over
lost in unending despair.

TUESDAY lunch

spread thin
rotten with boredom

ROTTING

putrid
guts
strychnine

how much more can you half-heart
can you fake

CHEWING

cud
gastric acid
gulp

useless gadgets,
mechanized, dead battery

SWALLOWING

breathless
hungry
more

machine police gutted you in the river
laughed at your bones

you read all about it,
an expert

battered across a charred
rye face in a sterile kitchen
that sound
knife blade, crust, dried up

you laughed, then turned up the volume
delicious

hugs and a kiss

“What an asshole!
What is his problem?”
Same as everybody.
He is hurt.
A scared, hurt child.
Hopeless, helpless,
infatuated
by the idea of himself being a self
being a separate individual
keeping up the character
playing the part
important, leading man hubris
like charades
like Halloween
like a big Kabuki theater
like a bunch of scared, hurt children.

Nobody knows anything.

It's ok.

NEW YORK

Goodbye you savage monster
Taken for a ride, sure
You left flower petals on tetanus stairwells
You fed me sunlight in the cold
Stung me, hurt me
Kissed me, loved me
You betrayed me, lonely
You convinced me I'm worthless
Friends made
Money spent
I wanted to be like everyone
I wanted them to love me
I wanted you to love me

Did you?

restless

it is a cold night
alone in bed
next to one you've known for years
but tonight a stranger
a fetid, sleepless night
listening to a breath
unfamiliar,
startling

moonshadows fall
most perfectly
on the snow

Hope(ful)

that's where the buildings went up
that's where things changed
that's where the past became a sparrow
that's where mothers die
and leave fathers to raise their daughters
brewing coffee and telling bad jokes

Color of Blood

We don't tell stories anymore-
we don't talk about great-great-grandpa John
who crossed the Irish Sea to Liverpool with his father
great-great-great-grandpa Tom.

We're too busy clicking,
prattling interminable,
concerned about sports teams or coupons,
we forget what's important.

They left Mayo, Ireland to find work-
run out of food
run out of money
mouths to feed
things to buy-
a family of seven in rocky fields
mama singing songs while she washes clothes in a creek
feet covered in dirt.
Nineteenth century poverty,
but probably some happiness too.

So the men of the house departed
with thousands of others as
labor for hire, back breaking work
shovels and rocks
-John was a ditch digger most his life-
but wasn't yet a teenager when he boarded a crowded steamer.

Who knows what John felt-
if his father told him to be strong
if his mother kissed his cheek at the roadside
if he was scared
the details weren't preserved
I have only a general notion.

In Liverpool, at some point not long after their arrival
John's father, Tom, fell dead from a heart attack.
Maybe it was the drink, maybe a brawl with an Englishman,
maybe the version I heard was changed from the original
either way a young man in a foreign country
was stranded, on his own, no family or money,

with a corpse and a responsibility.

Who knows what John felt-
if he panicked
if he cried
if he prayed-
but I know what he did.

He found a way to bring his father's body home
back to the rocky fields
to tell his mother
to clear a hole with a rusted spade
to bury the past
to board another steamer, this time for America.

Stories remind you of what's in your veins
what your blood is made of.
Blood is funny because you only see it when you're in trouble,
when you're cut or when something has gone wrong inside-
it's good to see it besides in a time of crisis.
And that's what stories do
stories give you a portal into the blood
stories tell you about where you fit in the world
where you came from
where you ought to point-
but since nobody tells anymore stories
nobody understands what's pumping through their heart
no direction
no sense of purpose
no obligation to continue the journey of those who have gone before.
When story telling is lost, there's
nothing an internet search engine can illuminate
to fill the void.

We're losing our stories.
We're losing ourselves.

more on stories

We're lost in the present
We've lost the past

My grandmother
is nothing more than a memory
a headstone, manicured grass clippings
some flowers on her birthday-
in heaven? Do I really believe it?
If I go to church and...
then I'll see her again?

Whatever paradigm
which might have kept her connected to me
I lost, I lost the faith.
So I lost her.
She's not in the trees, in the land-
though once I spoke to a new age
healer who advised me to think of a bird
and I thought of a cardinal,
then I thought of my grandmother
(I was speaking to this healer
not long after we buried her,
though I was being healed for other reasons)
only to find a cardinal
in the backyard
on my return home.

My last encounter with my Grandma's spirit,
I wish I remembered more.

I wish I could feel her again.
Heaven is a long way off.

She was the last old person I loved
who died
so now my mother will be the next,
if the circle cycles naturally.
It terrifies me.
Losing my mother.

At least I'm the oldest,

older than my brothers
and sister, older than my wife
and most of my friends-
so I'll get the jump on them.
I'll disappear completely
before they can. An Irish
goodbye.

At least they won't go looking for me
in heaven.

Maybe I'll dip back in as a highway-side
redtail hawk, riding heat convection.

I won't make it to heaven, but still,
very, very high.