

Musician George Clarke on slowing down



January 30, 2017 - George Clarke is the singer of the band Deafheaven. The below is part of a larger discussion that took place in Los Angeles between Clarke, Brandon Stosuy, and Bobby Krlic (The Haxan Cloak).

As told to Brandon Stosuy, 1065 words.

Tags: [Music](#), [Inspiration](#).

I just finished rereading Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and have been revisiting a lot of that Lost Generation 1920s and '30s writing. I like that *The Sun Also Rises* is separated into three books. Really, in the first book, nothing even happens. It's interesting, but it's simple and very slowed down. That got me thinking about how there's a need for that part of life to be enhanced and focused on today. Things move so fast.

Technology at the tips of your fingers has made it admirable to just slow down and think about the way things smell, think about the way your feet feel when you're walking, to observe people when they don't think that you're looking at them, and to just really take it all in. Absorbing life. It's important to appreciate your feelings, because things happen so rapidly.

I'm also thinking about media—the curation of media and the overall curation of misery and how that's really jammed down people's throats everywhere you turn. That's maybe a part of why, these days, fantasy is so popular with people. People connect with the fantastical because it's this need for something greater than the media experience around you.

I've become more immersed in the fantastical. Everything I've been writing recently is, outside of the band. Short poems, most of which have a fantastical aspect to them. I like to imagine the characters that I write about being uplifted or torn down by the distorted reality around them. And I need to have no references to any current media or political climate. For me, writing is partially an escape from those things. While I think it's important to be informed, I often come out the other end of reading political issues and opinions with a heavy malaise.

Things move so fast: you have a tragedy that's forgotten in five days because it's replaced by another tragedy. You don't have time to process the idea of how horrific something was. There are a million articles written about a tragedy within the first 24 hours, but to really sit down with it and... Say, you were writing about it for a publication, to really sit down with these families and really soak up how terrible it is, you're unable to because, again, things move so fast. A lot of time, you end up with these shallow takes on things. Motivations, misinformation, misunderstandings. But if it's not reported on immediately, you lose viewership. Everything is immediate because social media, etc, requires that it is.

And we allow it because a part of us loves it. People are attracted to horror. I don't watch a lot of TV, but I'd been watching the conventions and because of that, MSNBC or whatever was left on afterward in the background and I noticed all this misery repeated and repeated... and it wore me down. It wears me out. I feel like my psyche is drained, so I need to go outside. I need to sit in the park. I need to look at the colors of flowers. There are all these little things.

I was glad I reread that book. It's written as if it was a simpler time, yet it wasn't. People were still going through all the same things. There was tragedy everywhere, but he slows down and focuses on four or five relationships he has and he dissects them, understands them, and understands people better. I really need that.

I was reading how Hemingway was 27 when this got published. Me, being 27, I was like... There are so many correlations between that book and things I feel in my life, this sort of listlessness, in a sense. There's so much feeling going on in the book: it's post-war, no one wants to care about anything. Relationships are fragile and no one is committed to anyone. Maybe that's the negative part of feeling overwhelmed by media and the world around you in general. The eventual want of detachment in all aspects of life?

Regardless, I can incorporate all of this into creativity. For me, it's important to be creative with the idea of slowness in mind because a lot of what I write is focused on details in situations, descriptive emotions from myself and others. But that's only because that's the kind of writing I like to read. It's important for me to read about the dissection of emotions to hopefully get a clearer view on whatever situation is presented.

No matter what, you can always find moments of pause. It helps that I live alone. When I'm home, I spend a lot of time alone. I guess that allows me to be contemplative. I find those moments on tour, too. In either situation, when I have the opportunity, there's something to be said about appreciating nature and its necessity for contemplation. Whether this is hikes alone or drives through rural areas, it possesses the stillness to allow reflection.

I've never really written about nature necessarily. That's never been my thing. I've always been more into people, but I think that the idea of isolation can be very important to art. That's something that black metal pushed that I always liked. I think that was an agenda they pushed because they came from a place of hate and contempt for the world, which I don't have, but I do like the idea of isolation. I do like the idea of being alone with your thoughts, and being pensive, mulling ideas over.

For me, it's just going on walks by myself. I've been doing this lately, I go on a walk or I'll walk my dog and leave my phone at home. And it's been really weird! Because I look around and find that I'm like everyone else. I'm always staring at a screen. I'm part of the problem, you know?

George Clarke recommends:

Bluets - Maggie Nelson

Reality Sandwiches - Allen Ginsberg

Harlem Voices from the Soul of Black America (short story collection) - Edited by John Henrik Clarke

Illness as Metaphor - Susan Sontag

Poems of Andre Breton: A Bilingual Anthology - Translated and Edited by Jean-Pierre Cauvin and Mary Ann Caws

Name

George Clarke

Vocation

Musician, Songwriter

Fact

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Photo: Ebru Yildiz