

Parenthood

Parenthood is the condition of being a parent. This condition can include both fatherhood and motherhood but attempts to name the common denominator between the two. Is there in fact such a middle ground? Is there a condition of being a parent in the abstract? Or is the condition of being a parent always unique to this or that specific set of circumstances?

I stand looking at a sixty five year old photo of myself in my back yard, holding my first child, my first son. We are both squinting in the full sun, hardly archetypes of anything but stiff smiles and white skin. Can I say I am proud to be performing this archetypal act? Can I say I read this sharp visual through the lens of time, shame, joy, adventure, mutual lenses of pity? I can and must say all of this now, as I write these words on my laptop, many decades later. I am, yes, still sensitive to the pride and fulfillment I felt, with that new other me in my arms, with that ever growing awareness I have of how much too little I have done to be part of the best of that white squinting piece of protein that filled my arms. I can still visit him in the neighboring town, still return that impish smile I once saw on an armful of squallin protein in a New Haven backyard.

The condition of parenthood? The photo nailed it. That, what I was in the picture, was the very presence of parenthood, confident and confused at the same time, committed but exactly to what?, on a one way train to a destiny I was not in a position to interpret. What did you say parenthood is?