



Pulse LIX

Pulse LIX

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“Measure”

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*Are Sitcoms Utilizing Potential
or Bashing Males?*

George Henry Perett

*Symbolism Creates Theme of
Redemption*

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My Angel in the Sky

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*The Human-Nature Interaction
and Personal Growth*

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Poetry



Analysis

A faint film of sugar dusts your lips,
like time before the first rays of dawn
fragment early morning's frosty finish of silence and
seclusion;
I almost want to kiss you
just to discover if you taste like newborn snowflakes
numbling from a tempestuous sky,
and to unleash all these unspoken words,
tuning my whispers to the cadence of your breathing.

Your hands are brimming with power and potential
that course like electron currents of the brain
and crackle to paper in scribbled lines,
while fingers thump a thrumming tattoo
on the tattered knee of your faded Levi's
as if rhythm alone could restore ripped seams.
I'd rather glide your fingertips
along the ridges of my collarbone
and let you set the pace to the pounding of my heart.

What can I say about your eyes?
They might glow like glass, oven-baked to boiling,
deep enough to asphyxiate
and I would gladly take that chance and dive,
willing to cede all breath
to your bottomless blue seas,
if once, just once,
those eyes would spark for me.

Itemization

See here:
his face is flora; his
bottom lip is oleander,
his cheekbones geranium.
Cut away the corolla
and there is no bustling beat
to mimic life, just
the scent of a tended garden
or an ornamented grave;
just the sinews blossoming.
You cannot tell me
that to bleed is not
to blossom.

Cut deeper. Surgically subtract
stamen and anther and
suddenly he is tethered,
threaded through. Nestled
in the interim between his
lips, I presume a hornet's nest.

His remains are field and
they are crested with wet.
Indeed, he is alone in this.

Negation

I have the scent of your skin
down to a science.

The space between us is
uncomplicated; it is the child
of December roses withering the
rim of my resolve as their
vapor-heavy petals tremble
in the wind, anticipating snow.

We are a burdened contradiction of everything
good and I refute you my somber feelings
where you deny me undivided heart, and
abruptly I am inhaling so intensely
I wobble with the weight of air.

I am suspending all your secrets
in the assembly of tears fading the
fervor I am trying to lose
between my fingertips. This—

This is how I do not love you.

Reduced to This (Submergence)

You are traipsing the rain off your feet and
I am gasping my own air as my atmosphere
fervently flings itself against glass.
The convention of warm and cold invents
a vapor.

You have extended yourself over the breadth
of buttery skin and I am letting you flatter
the flush from my eyes. You call it
summer rose and I know countless ways
to word the color but you have taken
my tongue with yours and I am wordless
with want.

You do not understand the delicacy my mouth
deserves and yet this is more
soft than the hush of your voice and
the slip of our skin shattering silence
with shared sighs. Still, you are pressed
against an aquarium and I am a creature
of wilder inclinations. I am an island shining
a corona into your drifting dark
and you are scrabbling for sway over
tumbling seas hurling your heart into
countless corners.

I yearn to hold the flutterings
in placid palms, whispering the calm
of the ocean so you comprehend that
this
is just a matter of fidelity.

Incumbent

The shivering shimmer of silent want
as the stroke of warmth upon the heart;
as the stillness. Therein you will find
a lack of air, the vital rise and fall of blazing want
and the fury of a slighted lover;
unreachable.

Beny me in your inner sun, a feeble hold
longer than expected; a soft stillness unmet
with resistance. There is flow in the balanced
breaths between us, coupled flesh our intimate
attendant; we are not our own bodies.

Let sit by you, and appreciate
the meaning in your hands,
the elacidity of your reflexes;
all the years that we have mislaid
in the old stagger towards age,
the time before the merest touch was contentment
and a timid glance was the loudest affection
our infantile minds could muster.

This is the closest I can come to love without hiding,
but if you will hold your infinite fortitude at an end I still
cannot perceive, I assure you that my humble heart will sigh
only for you and for no other.

Vacillation

There are times when the sun
splits open the sky and you stand
with your hand against the window,
spread your fingers then tap one, two, three—
each deliberately slow; then you speak.

Your body shifts warily sometimes,
adapting to the skin it wears, the bones
that are wearing. But your arms are stippled
with age and your hair is turning gray.
Some things are easy to disregard,

easier when you blush like a child
or chuckle, lifting your fist to obscure your
mouth. And despite the reality that

everything ultimately starts to rust,
there is something infinite about your
voice and just how effortlessly I give in. My
name slumbers soundly in your mouth and

you still seem shocked to say it, as if
it were an alien language you had never
heard before. And there are times when you are
mirrored in the glass and I am right beside you,
wanting to traverse the valleys of your shirt.

You look more human than I can recall. You
do not smile sufficiently but even if you're dreary,
you're alive and at least there is that. There are

moments that don't have words, and they
slip quietly away. The times when you take
off your glasses and gaze at me, blinking
slow and sad and your entire face
changes and I just try to comprehend.

Contention

When flowers gawk at you, the soil
slays those sentiments that still remain
hidden deep, somewhere I would really
rather not know.

But sometimes when your roots spread
too far, the clutch of the twisting twines
cannot be escaped; they are just somehow
so true to yourself that they are like a song
you cannot deny.

It hums to you, always, from an
earthen grave of such an ethereal elegance
that you wonder whether you have
really become so far-flung.

These are things that are better left alone
because the truth is like two islets,
no bridges in between
but for those little declarations that do sail
the bay on the crown of wind or wave;
just a splinter of a shapeless sentence.

Here be all the things
that are bitter, but always,
always
better left unsaid.

Dithering

In the breaths between "yes" and "maybe",
I'm pacing the paths I've made with my fingers
on nights of uncertainty and the regular routine
of recycling my tears into my viscera
for the times when "no" hurts the most.

Dragging the edges of your lips
wishing they would grasp the glare over closed eyes
became my only hope in the last 60 seconds
and so far it's hardly worked
when you've only managed to speak superficially.

I'm biting my tongue between crooked teeth
and battering my spine so I could stand straight
and stop sliding down the span of your sturdy legs
to weep at your mud-spattered feet.

You've been fading, shoulders first,
into the stale stucco of your walls.
Pinned veins and rumpled hair rouse me from dreams
in which you are euphorically bleeding
and I'm discovering how to fracture my bones with the delusion
that I would be too much for your smile to subdue.

In the moments that you waver,
I'm already choosing the first flight back home.

Ode to Pears

They silently wait, piled high in buckets
and bowls, like sticky sweet grenades.
Then it begins, a dizzying whirlwind of
peeling and slicing, chopping and mashing.

Simmering pots sing on the stove every night,
filled with smiling slices, or thick sweet sauce
that bubbles and spews cinnamon into the air
until the fragrance seeps under every door.

Each pear's been pared, each top neatly labeled.
The jars stand ready awaiting the brew—
translucent vessels with mouths open wide,
filed neatly like soldiers on counters and shelves.

Weary bones rest when the last batch is done,
silently listening to lids plink as they seal.
There's one, then another, like raindrops on tin.
I hear them and smile at the tune that they play.

Unlocked

I've tossed and turned and lost
hours of sleep—in a world turned
gray and suddenly incomplete.
Longing for the security of your touch,
I reached for you but found you gone.

It's true I found another, and held on
too tight, afraid to lose again.
Doors were opened but it wasn't
the same, just a cheap imitation of
what I once held in my palm.

And suddenly you appeared,
a little worse for the wear covered
with the dust from your journey
but beautiful to me, once lost
now found, my keys, sweet keys.

Clubhouse

My brother and I have created the perfect clubhouse.
With long pine logs still covered in bark,
Plywood, fifty-penny nails, old studs, and scrap wood,
Our two story masterpiece is complete.

It is our castle.
My brother is king, and I, a great knight.
With great skills as archers,
We shoot dragons from the sky
With bows and arrows made from yaupon.

It is our battalion fort.
Protected by the bullet-proof walls,
We heave pinecone grenades at the enemy
And fight as fearless soldiers.

It is our sanctuary for bad behavior
We bury boxes protecting old Playboys and liquor,
Smoke stolen cigarettes,
And escort Girls here for stolen kisses.

My brother and I are men now,
With children of our own.
We have left our clubhouse in the woods.
Our imaginations are still there as prisoners,
Among the rotting logs and rusted nails.

A Violent Passing

Complaints heard above,
As grey pillows barrel in,
Darkening the land.

Sweeping hot white bands,
Briefly ending the darkness,
As it licks the sky.

Long cold breaths of air
Announce the storm's arrival,
Ripping through the square.

A well-dressed child,
With eyes tight and face gone white,
Clings to his mother.

The mother laden
With child and shopping bags,
Searches for shelter.

A vagrant watches
As the mother's umbrella
Is caught in the wind.

Haiku for 9/11
(For American Veterans)

- I.
breath, a prisoner
inside my now broken lungs
as my world stops
- II.
steel condors dive down
ripping flesh from my country
with missions of hate
- III.
fire feeds on freedom
my flag bleeds out red, leaving
only blue and white
- IV.
ambushed soldiers fall
crashing into dust and soot
smoke tells of their loss
- V.
glaciers climb my back
a chill soon melted away
by anger's fire

- VI.
sharp blue starched cotton
polished metal and leather
reinforce my will
- VII.
fight and persevere
not a choice, but a duty
mine and my country's

La Madonna della Grotta

In the morning the procession marches through the town,
sounds of faith on the foothills ring.
I call out to my son to run to the balcony.
His giggles are muted by the band.
I tell him of the Madonna,
Perched on the shoulders of the people,
Today is her day, I say.

Clouds roll in from higher peaks,
We shut the doors and fall in line.
My son runs his finger into a
lulling lavender bush,
sweet dust rising through the air.
The trumpets lead us to the back of the village,
Where the church swivels,
Edging right off the mountain...

It's an old town
Basking in an ancient sun,
warm with privilege and tradition.
Lost in olive groves, sinking into fennel-soaked earth—
Catholic rites and Festive nights
The old outlive the young.

Suicide Bombers

Two dive-bombing, death chasing dragonflies,
Impaling their fragile frames
Into the French doors.
Two dragonflies flapping, flailing,
Dying on two different nights.
They cracked their bodies in tortured
Delight, anxious and angry.
Over and over, the sound,
A motor of mayhem, revving itself into
Afterlife.

I found the first death dragon
The next day,
Rigid, solid and still.
Holding his posture and frozen in tintured pain.
His wings and body glittering like an emerald,
Tiny Christmas lights of destruction...
I tried to embalm his beauty in a hollow
Picture frame, then accidentally broke the glass.

The second suicide bomber flew his
Flight of fancy over my head,
His final divine spectacle just for me.
Wings of glory afire with green shimmery grace.
So, for a more natural memorial service
I buried his fuselage in a patch of basil.

Food for Thought

Words taste like sticky, melting
candy apples to my eyes.
Marvelously sweet and gooey,
I am always craving more.
Words, dessert for my brain.
I will even eat the crumbs.
The tip of my quill is sour,
cherry cobbler. Delicious
is the sonnet I will write to Death,
a famished plea to pass me the sugar
instead of my soul.

The Grave Keep

Growing paler as he walks
on the gilded graves
of lovers,
Shifting from one foot to the next
And wearing a smile
dark as the Devil's grin,
The grave keep prays for the wicked.
His beady oculars meet the moon,
A luminous grapefruit in the night.
Clouds sliding backwards into his throat,
He swallows the universe. This
Demon of divinity keeps watch over
Iron skies and wandering
Midnight children.

He'd Be a Man. He'd Be Proud.

It screamed when it died—though not loud.
The son could see his father's face.
A pound of flesh and he'd be proud.

He'd be proud, the father who'd found
His son too soft for a man's place.
It scream when it died—though not loud.

Quite soft that rabbit's squeal, the sound
That marked the boy's rise from disgrace.
A pound of flesh and he'd be proud.

And he'd be a man, the son vowed.
He'd hear pride in his father's bass.
It screamed when it died—though not loud.

The fur was smooth, the body round,
Worth a pound of meat and the chase.
It scream when it died—though not loud.
A pound of flesh and he'd be proud.

One Hundred Feet Under

As the light disappears,
as the depths take their responsibility
and the world closes over my head,
like nagging flies my thoughts build up
and then burst forth like the rushing around me.
Will I ever taste the air again?
as one tear and another carve their roads.
*Will I ever smell the pungent wastes of a landfill
mixed sweetly with the roses in my vanity window?*
Will I ever know more than this icy darkness?
as my body shakes and quivers.
Will I ever experience the warmth of one last fiery night?
as the quivers stop, but the shaking wracks my body.
The light above teases my eyes,
piercing the green, murky veils,
as the bitter copper taste in my mouth grows stronger,
my teeth hold my lips tight.
One final flickering ray warms my distraught face
and dances away from sight.

The Dancer

Her eyes rise and cull into the music,
again descending as her seated form
arches like a tulip on a stem:
each petal a parable of limbs.
She is a touch-me-not, a shy mimosa,
the recoiling shape a crumpled, jilted poem.
Until, with gliding arms, body blooming
in measures, her past lullabies sung
by spirits, the dark whispers her name,
composing moves along a burning shade.
She curls within and breaks, awakening
to a garden of graffiti, a lyrical of loosening
ribbons, like an undone sonnet.

Nameless

Our lives are fixed in lies and rape and salt.
Salt permeating all, we end in tears
from lies. And rape: blood, sweat and cum—all salt.
Lot called the guests "sweet angels," terms endeared
when my girls knelt to wash their father's feet.
Now Lot trades them like salt. Movement resumes
on salty ground that now collides in streaks
to burn our eyes; they blink, and close like wounds.
The only truth I know is that my blood,
once drained and tasted, smoothed and flushed my lips.
My blood is honey. I have tasted salt.
Behind, my home is burning like our wounds.
I trip and turn. My home succumbs to flame.
Then salt preserves my form, then takes my name.

Folding the Flame

Most days he sits by the fire and doesn't move
Those are the days he thinks of it the most
All of the roads he walked upon his life chord
The tribulations from which breath could not escape
There are many amongst him who feigned to understand
They really would have liked to help him somehow
He was oblivious then to the pain he hid inside
Wielding it as a double edged sword pointed inward
Severing the joy of innocence and all its inner peace
The lack of present knowledge once kept him safe
What he wouldn't give to have known about the fall
In its absence though, the story does not exist at all

The fire wanes in the dying light of dusk upon a familiar sky
Quite at ease here in the solitude of his soul
He reaches out to something he seldom understands
Attempts that make him humble and whole once again
He never takes a single breath for granted any longer
Remembering all too well the suffocation from yesterday
Staring into the embers, familiar shapes are brought to life
Constructed jigsaws from past and present slowly unite
Half laughing now, with understanding and madness
An unfamiliar echo returns the sorted sounds
Except to where the wind escapes upon a northern light
Yet another road to trod, as the previous one has left his sight

All but the fiercest coals have grown cold now in dying blaze
The wind has commanded their silence as it sings its
 symphony
The floating orb above him is the only noted light
He wonders where the new road leads, though it surely
 matters not
Committed to its mysteries before he even knew its existence
Returning from where he came no longer a viable option
Collapsed are the memories and foothills he once remembered
The trails are graveyards now, hosting the brokenness of
 objects left behind
Just as well he assumes, for they never knew him anyhow
Refused to understand his compassion, Laughed at his
 naivety
Though just a boy of wonder, with dreams in a silver pale
He always feels at home when he writes the dreamer's tale

Spring

Sunlight kisses skin,
Wind flirts with hair trees shade eyes,
Wet grass tickles feet.

Lemonade

When life hands you lemons make lemonade they say.
What if I don't want fucking lemonade?
What if, before I make up my mind, it takes several lemon
possibilities?
Perhaps I want sweet tea with a squeeze of lemon, or
better yet an LIT?
Maybe a lemon drop, in the form of candy, or a shot?
Or a zest of lemon for that sugar cookie drop?
I might even want to gather up several different types of
meat,
Dip them in my special lemon-garlic-butter sauce,
Maybe squeeze a fresh cut lemon over some crispy calamari,
Mix it up for that perfect mix to dip my oyster on the half
shell raw.
All these close-minded smiling fools insisting on lemonade,
With their cookie-cutter lifestyles and endless town parades,
There must be a perfect balance of sugar to the sour,
Where they all take that special sip on the same fickle hour,
Frowning upon anyone who considers a different option,
Judging them and hiding all their horrid lemonade
concoctions.
When life hands you lemons make lemonade they say,
Well, what if I don't want your fucking lemonade?

Lush

He takes a load off
sinks his weight into the vinyl
pulls the evening in deep
one eye winking
leaves the nub to teeter
ashtray's overflowing
he nods in my direction, swears
he's my biggest fan: *alluvial*

He leans back, takes me on a trip
down south with him
and two of his old friends
looking for loose girls,
a good brew, a good brawl
found them all
and found themselves
in a sort of love triangle: *a delta*

He pulls and he coughs
sways like a lush, spins
lackluster dream sequences
lazy, like front porch fan blades
a slight creak in his passes
in a sultry drawl summer sticky
he comments on my eyes
muddier than all the Mississippi

After Life

I imagined stars in her closed eyes
as you and I walked
down aisles adorned in mourning.
A thousand hands rested on our heads.

Football and baby dolls
could not erase what we heard
whispered
in the halls of that place.

For godssake, I was eight years old,
and you were only four
when you came crying to my door,
asking for her.
I lied and said she was working late.

When we went to her office
to finally collect her things,
you made your way
through the corridors,

calling for her,
searching
the lonely corners of offices,
the break room, the back dock.

Watermelon Seeds

Each creak of our rocking chairs punctuates the air,
and seeds fly from our spitting puckered lips.
Sugar saturated liquid slides down our arms
as my little sis and I gnaw and savor
the succulent red flesh of a summer melon.
Juices stain our lips like a poor whore's rouge.

"Don't ever swallow the seeds," my cousin once said,
"or a melon will grow round in your gut!"
Like milk behind leftovers, the pleasure
of a five-year-old can turn sour with
the fresh horror of becoming
a watermelon incubator, and of grandpa
rapping his knuckles on their swollen tummy.
Thump Thump "Yep she's a ripe one" he'd say.

Sis's eyes roll in delight as she leans back,
one hand holding a waning red moon.
I can see her tongue roll in her cheek;
her other hand now hesitantly stroking
her own heavily burdened globe,
the result of receiving a wholly different seed.

I take another bite and in the midst
of this saccharine morsel a tiny tear—
back and threatening—sticks inside my cheek,
and my sister's hand rubs her swollen months,
that incubates, incubates melons
that when ripe will be harvested red-faced
and shrieking. The Doc, he'll rap her tummy
and say right proudly, "Yep she's a ripe one."

My rocking chair creaks, Sis takes another
bite, and a tiny tear—black and threatening—
I spit over the front porch railing.

The Momenrath

Inside the hut up yonder path,
Or so the legend's often sung,
Lives a creature called Momenrath,
With mothy eyes and forked tongue.

It bears a pair of powdered wings,
Made from stolen bands of moonlight.
At odden hours the song it sings
Is a cautionary invite.

Lonely is this sophist creature,
Entreating guests of any sort,
Of manners, it is the teacher,
And treats it company as sport.

For tea it serves a special brew:
Malum leaves within victim'd blood.
And if he offers it to you,
Best if you pour it in the mud.

For the monster plays a lethal game,
And the prize is grand indeed.
Victory is its only aim,
So the garden your corpse can feed.

If you play, of rules there are three:
Death, if a manner you deny.
Death, if you ever drink the tea.
You may only ask a query

And if you answer *you* will die.

So have you met the Momenrath,
With mothy eyes and forked tongue?
Did you escape a muddy bath,
Or was your mort exquisite dung?

Madmen

The morning is dark.
A horizon aflame
with white fire behind
black, mountainous clouds
which shadow our plight.

Through constellations,
a dull roar descends
from celestial overseers,
falling in crescendo.
The sky grows dark once more.

It is heard no longer...

We are God's madmen,
the foul few who see
the world as it is—
Illuminated only in chaos.
It is we who take notice.

Once the world listened;
we were the voices who spoke,
exposing the injustice unseen.
Our fulmination was truth,
thunderous for Rebellion's change.

It is heard no longer...

This is the voice of change,
merely a new name and face
for a twist of the old
oppressions and bitter bias.
It is only a superficial change,

A quick swap of clothing,
placement of a new face.
We are used to hiding
and recognize the lies,
crying and shouting our outrage!

It is heard no longer...

The fall of man is staged
with an wicked script
of sweet words and cunning lies
played for the foolish crowd.
Folly is short-lived bliss.

Though silenced, we know:
the clouds come—dark, gravid
curtains close on humanity.
Freedom dies with ovation
and whispers... the madmen silenced.

We are heard no longer...

Non Ominis Moriar...

"Not all of me shall die..."

With trench-dug eyes and sallow-sown skin
the grandmother lives alone
on Nilla wafers and hot, Lipton tea
in a thatch-wood lodge she owns.
Mixed bric-a-bracs hid by cataracts
appear straight within their zone,
clustered, memory troops lazing about
while the queen blinks unbeknown.
Her time's spent in a late husband's chair,
a tarnished and ragged throne,
dreaming of all the years before her
pension the regime won't loan.
Content to fade into heavy dust
the once-tidy house bemoans,
she affixes a death-welcome smile
but is saved by children now grown.
Whipped away to her son's small flat
to live with him and his crone,
the grandmother is lugged town-to-town
in this life shuffling cyclone.
Forced to sell her house, she sees strangers
remove things as they are thrown,
tossing out her knickknacks, paddywhacks,
and family pictures proudly shown.
The once-queen drops in from grace to shame,
falling with a grimly groan
to the rest of her life on a corduroy couch
with a son who plays trombone.

Nicht Shadenfreude

I killed a man yesterday for the bills
In his wallet. There is no description
Which could relate what I felt: draggy chills
Surpass expression in word or diction.
Drugs...just an ounce is where the money went.
For a catchpenny high and a low-class
Hooker, an uninvolved life was spent,
And his blood sprinkled to quench withered grass.

I got away with it, wouldn't you know?
There were no concerned souls around to see,
Yet my mind still plays a penitent row.
Why did I do it? What'd it get me?
Nothing—a blacker heart, a darker soul
Imprisoned in memories—no parole.

The Charge of the Lite Brigade

I

Half a pound, Half a pound,
Half a pound of flesh,
Into the weight watchers
 Lumbered the rotund.
'Not a cookie or cake,
Lose all this weight !' they said.
Marching to lose the pounds,
 All the six hundred.

II

'Forward the Lite Brigade !'
Substitutes for sugar,
Such things they never knew:
 Splenda--Sweet-n-Low,
Theirs now to find and buy,
Theirs not to question why,
Their weight to lose or die.
Now onto the treadmills
 Lumbered the rotund.

III

Atkins to right of them,
Nutri-System to left,
Candies in front of them
 Tempt'd and hunger'd.
Storm'd at with stomach pains,
Deftly and well they aim'd,
Chugging the SlimFast shakes,
Dodging the ridicule
 Down went six hundred.

IV

Soon were their muscles bare,
Gone was matted back hair,
Shedding pounds here and there,
Dropping love handles, while
 All the world wonder'd.
Then, soon, resistance broke
All named disorders spoke—
 Anorex and Bulim—
None willing to regress
 For fear, stress, or pressed.
Onward they went, weight lost,
 No longer rotund.

V

Camera on right of them,
 Camera on left of them,
 Camera behind them
 Follow'd and hound'd;
 Storm'd at with shot and flash,
 Found out their steroid stash,
 They who had made the dash
 Came to th' jaws of Death,
 Back to their living hell,
 Lost what was left of them,
 All that had mattered.

VI

When will the horror fade ?
 O what a change they made !
 'How ?' the world wonder'd.
 Honor the Lite Brigade,
 Honor the pounds they shaved,
 All the six hundred.

Peyton Ritter

What a Gentleman

I held the door for you
 As you left the café.
 You had a phone against your ear.
 It was last year's model.
 A bag hung from your shoulder,
 I believe a Kate Spade.
 The leash on your wrist
 Was attached to a dog.

You didn't say hello. You didn't nod
 Or wink. You couldn't even say thank you.
 You couldn't mumble two simple words.
 So I tripped you.

As your knee hit the side walk
 I saw blood on the pavement.
 Crimson drops scattered around like
 A million little lakes striving to
 Create an O negative ocean.

"Thanks a lot," you said.

"You're Welcome."

I Heard He Was Dead

On the news yesterday
I heard he was dead,
Found in a mansion,
Shot in the head.

On the news yesterday
The president spoke,
Justice was done,
The system's not broke.

On the news years ago
They said it was done,
By an evil man,
Who was on the run.

On the news years ago
I heard he must hide,
Somewhere in a cave,
To stay alive.

On the news years ago
The president spoke,
The coward is fucked,
The giant awoke.

On the news yesterday
Euphoria corrupted.
Unseemly "like them"
Celebrations erupted.

On the news today
The pundit's begun,
The war's almost over.
The enemy's done.

On the news today
The dialogue changed.
Where goes the credit?
Who gets the blame?

On the news today
I heard he was dead,
I turned off the television.

We had come up with the perfect plan my lady and I.
The Barhopping Bike and Booze Adventure,
To Save Our City From Drunk Drivers Until Tomorrow's
Cruise to Church.

We'd bought a tandem bicycle to ride as a pair.

We strode in unison like a Viking ship's sculls.
Right then left and repeat. Bicycles are so very boring.
I'll admit I chafed, but just a tad.
Sweaty and suffering, I'm Lance with both balls.

That night, we hit up every bar for two miles.
We ingurgitated shots of whiskey at one, and chugged too
much beer at the other.
We drank, then threw up, in a cathartically romantic way.
It's always romantic when you do things together.

How the lights blur by when you're four pedals to the wind.
Street lamps shine yellow. The greens signal go. Blues
then reds, blues then reds.
Sirens soar from behind, their song failing to draw us in
as it did Odysseus.
How stupid we must've looked running from cops on a
bicycle built for two.

I wasn't even steering. This can't be fair.
She was driving that damn thing. I was just the pedals.
It's not always romantic when you do things together.
Locked in the drunk tank for a bicycle ride at .08.

Turn Around

Turn around,
you are not welcome here.
Subtle serpents found
in place tell me this is not the path.
Of righteousness,
what should I fear?
Is this the wrath
of which my mother
spoke in her palladian
tonelessness?

Wisdom unconventional
returns no answer
in his typical way.
Pace seems perpetual.
Progress cannot be held.
At the bay,
things were better.
I pick the brambles
from my skin,
and if I am able
I will walk to the end.

The Changeling

She sits in her chair near the cellar door,
Lips moving in a constant mumble.
Hair bedraggled and greasy since her return
From Hollywood, and the Charleston beat.
But who will sit with her in the mad hours?
Who will perform the watch for a ruined girl?
And who is this girl that returns?
Her pictures are gone,
Ashes within the fireplace smoke.

The In-Betweens

They say his hair turned gray after lingering
Within the threshold for one whole hour at midnight.
They say he even disappeared for an instant,
The way the girls who stepped into the toadstool rings
Would vanish and come back crazed or not at all.
They say this is the danger of the in-betweens,
Where black and white can mix into a vibrant grey
And all things concrete become as vague as God.

Things That Impress My Friends

11:30 AM January 1

the hardest part of any day, is actually waking up..
after that, fear nothing the world throws at you..
Gigatt (6 likes)

7:53 PM January 1

watching these kids pop firewoks yet AGAIN!! but
at least this time their not going to burn down MY
house lol (5 likes)

1:17 AM January 7

just watched Shutter Island and I refuse to believe
Leonardo DiCaprio was insane.. (5 likes)

8:11 AM January 8

"SPELL IT WITH YOUR PEAS!!" (7 likes)

7:47 PM January 16

"I like to picture Jesus in a tuxedo shirt.. it says: 'I'm
formal, but I'm here to party..' " (8 likes)

1:55 PM January 26

Doug: "what's wrong with you??"

me: "having an asthma attack.."

Doug: "if you're having an asthma attack, maybe
you shouldn't be smoking that cigarette.."

me: "naw, I'm showing my lungs who's boss.." (7
likes)

2:52 PM February 2

this weather is proof that Al Gore is as big an idiot
as he looks.. it also proves GOD is from somewhere
that's cold year-round.. maybe Moscow?? (5 likes)

9:52 AM February 4

will pay someone \$50.00 to go outside and lick a
metal object.. any takers?? (26 likes)

5:30 AM February 6

Dear GOD,

give me the strength to remember there will be
things I cannot change.. I have no regrets, because
my past has made me who I am today..

Sincerely

One Of The Mortal Sinners Of Earth.. (8 likes)

8:38 PM February 6

okay..... let's start a collection fund to buy
the Houston Astros.. McLane said he wants \$117
Million, so we'll have to sell a BUNCH of GirlScout
cookies!! (7 likes)

12:15 AM February 14

(Black Lavender's Valentine's-Day-Protest-Kit.. on
sale at www.WolfPack2pnt0.com and available for
free same-day shipping..

Cupid's stupid t-shirt?? CHECK!!
picket signs?? CHECK!!

an "arrow-proof vest??" CHECK!!

Ebenezer Scrooge mentality?? CHECK!! (5 likes)

5:49 PM February 17

been researching information, attempting to find out who invented the peanut butter & jelly sandwich.. this person deserves a national holiday!! (5 likes)

9:05 PM February 17

"YOU'RE MY BOY, BLUE!!" (6 likes)

2:00 PM February 21

an A on my history essay as well!! I forgot how busy this past Friday was.. these 3 A's call for an accented 30-second celebration dance!! (6 likes)

10:01 PM February 22

there are not enough hours in the day for me to fully express my hatred for Lil Wayne's music.. (5 likes)

11:20 PM February 22

Patrick Star: "if you wanna be fancy, hold out your pinky.. the higher you hold it, the fancier you are.." lmao (5 likes)

7:59 PM February 24

$f(x) = \pm \sqrt{(x^2 + x^3)/\pi}$
 $x \rightarrow \infty$

(I actually saw this on the chalkboard on an episode of SpongeBob lol) (9 likes)

1:28 PM February 25

I FINALLY got my Frosted Flakes!! =D (6 likes)

2:58 PM February 25

regardless of what this song means to me, it's still my favorite.. ["Hold," by Saves The Day] (11 likes)

6:01 PM February 25

'F' is for friends who do stuff together,

'U' is for you and me..

'N' is for anywhere and anytime at all,

Down here in the deep blue sea.. "SpongeBob SquarePants (5 likes)

12:51 AM February 27

"adonde estás?? matame cielo,

trágame tierro..

quiero morirme,

si no vuelve más.." Selena (6 likes)

12:34 PM February 27

"Give to me sweet sacred bliss,

Your mouth was made to SUCK MY KISS!!"

RedHotChiliPeppers (9 likes)

9:15 AM February 28

well, I missed 2 points on my French test because I misspelled a word.. but a 98 ain't so bad =] (7 likes)

11:21 AM February 28

perfect score on my U.S. history test.. WOOT!! domo arrigato Mr. lucky socks.. =] (6 likes)

1:15 PM February 28

Led Zeppelin IV..... (6 likes)

7:24 PM March 2
iPhone < ANDROID!! (9 likes)

4:44 PM March 3
the judge in Houston was handing out asskickings, until I came up.. he saw my Lamar school shirt, and luckily his son is a student there: TICKETS DISMISSED!! hooray to me for showing school spirit!! (11 likes)

8:25 PM March 3
prosecutor: the officer is not present, your honor.. the City requests a continuation to prepare the evidence against this young man..
me: "your honor, this has been reset twice already.. any further delays violate my Constitutional Right to a speedy trial.. as I plead not guilty, the court must dismiss all charges..
judge: "...dismissed!! and young man, you should consider becoming a lawyer.." lmao (15 likes)

6:04 PM March 4
guy: "my wife got attacked by a warthog."
911: "okay, we'll send an ambulance.. what's the address sir??"
guy: "18258 Eucalyptus Ave.."
911: "can you spell that for me sir??"
guy: "..... you know what?? I'll just drag her to Oak Street, and they can meet me there.." LMFAO!! (9 likes)

7:29 PM March 8
left: HUGE bag of chips
right: when I opened the bag, it is only 1/3 full..

this is so unAmerican.. I'm going to write my congressman SMH (7 likes)

12:06 PM March 9
had to grab the shotgun because this dog keeps eyeballing my kolache.. don't do it Cujo!! (8 likes)

11:03 AM March 10
mark my words: I'm going to solve the mystery of how the Easter Bunny can lay eggs filled with candy (my thesis is exposure to the toxic waters of Galveston (5 likes)

5:19 PM March 11
between the three of us: I think someone's going to end up drunk!! (10 likes)

7:43 PM March 18
Arthur Weasley: "tell me Harry, what exactly is the function of a rubber duck??" ahahaha HarryPotter: Chamber Of Secrets (5 likes)

7:57 PM March 20
sorting clothes for laundry and just found \$341.67 in these two loads.. I don't know which is worst: forgetting there was that much money sitting in dirty clothes, or that I didn't worry or panic that \$341.67 was missing.. SMH (10 likes)

12:17 AM March 24
just watched Avatar for the first time and is VERY confused: how come our government hasn't prosecuted and sent the script writers to "Ol' Sparky??"

how DARE they allow a group of Smurfs on steroids defeat the U.S. Marines?? not only has our military NEVER lost a war, we would never lose one in the future either (because we have cable... T.V./baseball/junk food/2 Bush daughters) and we would just drop a nuke on them.. (6 likes)

3:28 PM March 25

things being discussed in the car: Foo Fighters, traffic cones, citizenship, babyshowers, and Charlie Sheen.. WINNING!! (5 likes)

11:21 AM March 28

98 on Friday's history test.. but sad because I missed the 2 points)'= (12 likes)

8:13 PM March 29

"there are 5 different types of chairs in this room.." Knocked Up lmfao (11 likes)

12:54 AM March 30

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to my little sister!! yesterday she was 11, and 54 minutes ago she turned 32.. LAWD HAVE MERCY!! Lol (11 likes)

8:19 PM March 30

"great white buffalo.." (17 likes)

Fiction



The Atrophy of Hope

His finger kinetically stalled over the power button, Sal wondered if the future course of his life depended on its depression. How much longer did he really have? The high definition television he had spent valuable labor and time to acquire needed to be used to justify those hours spent on his feet, grilling sandwiches at O'Malley's two summers ago. After failing there and at many other careers due to his severe mood and anxiety disorders, he now had no work and no daily objective except to fill the time until the next day. He filled it with some TV, some gaming, some internet surfing, some masturbating to porn, and an occasional trip out of the apartment—always an excuse for a greasy drive-thru meal. Now—at thirty-one years-old—the orgasm had been overtaken by the taste of food as the most used way to release the moment, to idle his mind in a void. After watching some TV he called his mother.

"How are *you*?" She was cheerful. She was always cheerful.

"All right, and you?" Sal attempted sincerity.

"Oh tired," she sighed. Baking food for some church event. Doing a friend's taxes on the computer. Dealing with her surly husband. Her days were always full.

"I was just wondering if I could—um—get an advance on the money for the first. I've had some unexpected expenses."

"Sure. But I want you to do something for me." Her generosity rarely came with conditions. They made him nervous.

"What?"

"Remember Mr. Harold from church?"

"Yeah."

"He's dying and he's asked to see you."

"Ok. Wow. What's wrong with him?"

"He's got cancer but he's stopped treatment. He's at home in hospice care, just like your dad was."

"Ok. I would have gone anyway," he lied. "You didn't need to give me an ultimatum."

"I'm sorry. I wanted you to go and wasn't sure if you would. He was always really fond of you and you looked up to him, so..."

"I'll go, Mom. I'd like to see him. I'll sit with him a while."

"You know you could even, you know...oh forget it."

"What, Mom? Pray for him?"

"Yes."

"Yeah, I could. If I did that sort of thing."

"Maybe if you prayed *you* would get better. I'm praying for everyone that's sick."

"Hasn't helped me yet, nor Mr. Harold, apparently."

"It will. I'm not going to stop. He will heal you."

"Mom, I hope I'll be able to work again. If that happens it will be because of mine and my doctors' efforts, not an invisible wizard's."

Sal dragged himself through Mr. Harold's yard like a sullen child. Having a price put on his mother's support only reminded him of his dependence on her. He was

depressed and angry, and this dying man's house—a man he cared nothing about anymore—was the last place he wanted to be. He dreaded the looks of recognition by former church acquaintances quickly followed by surprise at how fat he had gotten. A fat torso on skinny legs looked unnatural, not to mention the A-cup, fat-boy tits poking from his chest. He was out of breath when he rang the doorbell.

Mr. Harold's daughter answered and told Sal that her dad had taken a quick turn and he might be gone in hours. Sal's back and feet were already hurting and he couldn't wait to get into that recliner he spotted in the corner. Then he saw a piano in the next room and had an urge to go play, something he hadn't done since he was twelve. But everyone was standing and talking quietly, looking appropriately subdued. No matter. Say hello to everyone, sit with Mr. Harold a little bit, he could be out of there in twenty minutes.

"We sure have missed you at mass," said a sweet lady whose name he couldn't remember. She hugged him and sniffled on his shirt. "He would've been so happy to see you but I'm not sure if he can see or hear anybody anymore."

Prescription bottles, cotton balls, q-tips, a disgusting wet rag, and a few dry towels were crowded on a table next to Mr. Harold's bed. This impending death display reminded him of his father's, giving him goose-bumps.

Before him, on Mr. Harold's bed was just a skeleton covered in loose skin. There were no tubes or machines. Just a body and a bed. Sal approached carefully, thinking he might already be dead. Then with a rattling gurgle

and a violent lift of his ribcage, Mr. Harold seemed for a moment like a possessed corpse. Sal settled into the chair beside the bed.

He remembered his father breathing the same way, along with the bulging eyes—blinking rarely—but not as rarely as he breathed. Eight years ago, sitting with him just like this, Sal had imagined looking through those eyes and seeing Jesus waiting for him, showing him his loving heart like in that painting he saw once.

"Bullshit," Sal whispered, destroying the image. Religion is a trance. His father lived only in memories now. Death is the end of your brain—your thoughts, emotions, sensations, and memories. The end of "I".

It had been too long since Mr. Harold's last breath. Sal called the old man's daughter. She in turn called in some others. Sal began to leave to give them privacy but the daughter touched his shoulder.

"Please stay," she said to Sal. "He was just talking about you yesterday. He would want you here. Stay and pray with us."

Sal accepted her hand and stood with her by the bed. "Let's say the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary'," she said to everyone.

Out of respect, Sal crossed himself with everyone else and closed his eyes. But when the praying—or what sounded to Sal like the mumblings of group hypnosis—began, he opened his eyes and examined the body closely. He saw the atrophy in its legs and arms and felt it in his own. In the wide open eyes and slackened jaw, he saw terror. Sal imagined seeing through his eyes his loved ones encircling him—mumbling meaningless archaic sounds—their eyes closed and their warm flesh distant. Sal reached across Mr. Harold's daughter and grabbed

his hand. It was getting so cold; he would've kissed it if he could.

Sal had hoped to be so many things once he was better—happy, fit, productive in a meaningful career, worthy of a woman's love. But several years later hope had done nothing but sit him in a recliner, filling his mind with distractions and his body with blubber. The end would come at any moment. Between life and death there was no measure. Sal released Mr. Harold's hand and turned to seek all, to push against the inevitable.

He put his HDTV up for sale online and looked for a used piano. He took to the streets for a walk in the polluted night air. Dogs barked at him. His nose became cold and runny. His body ached and complained. He'd rarely felt more alive.

The Hardest Thing

"Two," Eileen mouthed silently.

"I can't reach," I mouthed back.

Her eyes rolled back as I increased the speed of my middle finger, of which I could get only half of in her. Her shirt and bra were up granting me my favorite sight—large and quivering. Matching my finger's rhythm was her hand tucked under my leg and inside my shorts. I was watching her face in my lap—her lips lustily begging for bigger penetration, her hardening nipples looking up at me. The matched rhythm was definitely working. I was almost there.

"Is that a good book, Rob?" Theresa turned around and asked.

We jerked our hands out and covered Eileen's chest with the pillow.

"Um, yeah," I managed to get out.

"Reading in the car doesn't upset your stomach?" She was going to continue this like she had no idea what was going on.

"No." I cleared my throat and shifted my butt a little. "It doesn't bother me."

"What are you reading?"

"Lao Tsu. *Tao Te Ching*." I showed her the cover of what I was pretending to read.

"One of those Japanese books you like?"

"Chinese."

"What's on the page you're reading now?"

"Uh, chapter nine. 'Better to stop short than fill to the brim.'"

Eileen and I were in the back bench seat of the van. My older sister and her friend Theresa were in the front

one. My parents occupied the captain's chairs up front with Dad at the wheel. We had left our East Texas home, where the summer heat index was regularly over 100 degrees and the tallest things we'd ever seen were trees, for a two week vacation in the Colorado Rockies where we could touch the clouds while sitting in July snow.

I was a college student living at home; nineteen at the beginning of the trip and twenty when it ended. Seventeen-year-old Eileen and I hated my parents and everything they stood for. Seeing what I thought at the time was the most beautiful place on Earth with my girlfriend was worth tolerating them and their Western God who separated humans and nature from himself and nature and humans from each other. Lao Tsu says in chapter 25—

Man follows Earth.

Earth follows heaven.

Heaven follows the Tao.

Tao follows what is natural.

And there was no place I'd rather be to follow nature than the mountains. The wildflowers around the lakes, the earth touching the sky, and the trails and streams gave me serenity, peace. My family however filled me with nothing but disdain—an exclusively human emotion, based on arrogance—that was hardly in tune with nature. So nature was more of a contact high for me than an inspiration for compassion. It was an ineffective sanctuary in which I tried to lock myself.

*The average student hears of the Tao and gives it thought
now and again. (ch. 41)*

The next morning we were back in the van and heading to Estes Park for trail walking and sightseeing. Eileen put her head in my lap again but just to sleep, and I drifted off as well. Dad woke me up huffing at Mom.

"If they're just sleeping, that's fine."

His words flew out bitterly and he chopped the air an open hand. It was an unnecessary gesture. He wasn't saying anything profound but he was proud of this measured ethical opinion. What I was sure had happened was Theresa or my sister had told them about the day before. Dad didn't have the guts to reproach me and was looking for an excuse not to. *Aha! They're only sleeping. All is well so stop being a meddling mother. I'm the man here dammit!* This superfluous display of confidence that was really a cover for cowardice was very common for Dad and I was ashamed of him every time he did it.

Mom was dithering but I knew she wouldn't confront me either. Mom was such a goody two-shoes that when my sister and I were children, she got distressed when we said, "shoot!" or "darn!" We all were afraid to express any negative feelings for her, no matter how temporary, because she was so fragile. Her self-esteem was on a seesaw and the fulcrum was always furthest from shame. One tiny display of anger or disappointment towards her was all it took to send her crying and into "I guess I'm just a horrible mother!" It wasn't ploy; a guilt-trip—though that was the result. She really believed she was worthless. She was clinically depressed but unfortunately she didn't get treatment until we were grown. Though she

never mentioned or threatened it, I had a few nightmares growing up of finding her dead of a suicide. Did we walk on eggs? No. Dad, Big Sis, and I walked through minefields. Every day.

That afternoon we arrived at a hiking trail in Estes Park. I was looking forward to some serious Tao following with the valley and distant mountain peaks to my left and the side of the mountain I was traversing on the right. We had eaten lunch a couple of hours before and after two hours in the car it was port-a-potty time for everyone.

Eileen asked, "There's no real bathrooms around?"

"No," we all lamented. "It's nasty but it's all we've got," we all agreed.

"I can't."

I looked at her quizzically.

"They're just too disgusting and unsanitary."

"Well, I guess you'll have to go behind a tree or wait until we get back to civilization which could be three or four hours," I said.

"I'll hold it." She stayed behind in the van, afraid that walking up a trail may cause an accident.

I traversed the trail much quicker than everyone else out of a need to stretch my legs and a desire to be alone. Besides, I couldn't meditate around that bunch of unenlightened materialists. The top of the trail was an amazing sight but when everyone else caught up, I headed back down.

What followed was an experience I'll never forget. Really feeling the Tao, I stretched out my arms and fell down the mountain. I was still on my feet but only using them to resist falling on my face. As gravity pulled me faster, I

closed my eyes for a while, trusting my heightened other senses to guide me: The smell of trees to my left and clean brisk air to my right. I imagined myself a stream flowing effortlessly around any resistance.

The highest good is like water. (ch. 8)

The softest thing in the universe

Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe. (ch. 43)

When I reached the bottom I felt a physical and mental elation unparalleled in my life before and since. No longer falling, my legs still kept going at a slower jogging pace until I reached the parking lot which held only our van. In one fluid motion, I flung the door aside and hopped onto my back in the middle seat. I closed my eyes while slowing my breathing and stretching out my mind to everything imaginable, feeling with and for all things.

"Where's everyone else?" Eileen asked.

"I don't know." Deep breath. "Still up there I guess."

Her voice became shrill, popping my serene thought-bubble. "WHAT'S TAKING THEM SO LONG? THEY'RE OUT THERE HAVING FUN AND NOT GIVING A SHIT ABOUT ME! I'M ABOUT TO PEE IN MY FUCKING PANTS! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED—"

I rose up in the same speed and motion as I had lain down, like a recording in reverse. I walked a few spaces from our van and sat on a parking bumper, trying to ignore my rage at her immaturity by staring pensively into the trees.

She sat down next to me. "I'm sorry, Baby. I'm just hurting from needing to go so bad."

"Leave me alone." I continued pondering the tree line.

She sighed sympathetically and put her hand on my shoulder. "Rob, I didn't mean to—"

"What did I say?" I was still as stone.

"Fine. Be a dick." Her tennis shoes peeled out a little gravel on me and crunched away.



The six of us were divided into two hotel rooms: Theresa, my sister, and Eileen in one; Mom, Dad, and myself in the other. Even though Eileen and I had seen all there was to see of each other, and everyone knew it, allowing us to even be in the same room would signal that it was condoned.

The next morning, I woke to the sound of Mom moaning. I opened my eyes and saw something no one wants to see. My father was feeling up my mother. I closed my eyes, not wanting to alert them I was witnessing this. But after hearing a few seconds of Mom's wavering protests and Dad's seductive sweet-nothings I threw the covers off as quickly as I could (these were hotel beddings, remember), and power-walked to the bathroom. I don't know what their reaction was—movements, facial expressions. I must have been able to ignore my peripheral vision.

When I came out of the bathroom Mom tried too hard to pretend like nothing happened, being particularly convivial in her "Good morning," and "How are you?" Dad silently stewed. I shyly tried to ignore both of them. I couldn't get ready and get in the van fast enough. I had a good fifteen minutes alone in there to think before anyone else arrived.

Was it possible that everyone was just as disgusted and embarrassed by the sights, sounds, and smells of Eileen and me in the back seat as I was by what had

just happened? I mean, they're my parents. It's different, right? As I sat on those questions I began to feel something new: compassion for Mom and Dad as *people*, not parents. Getting caught at heavy petting is embarrassing to both lovers and witnesses, no matter who they are. But shouldn't Mom and Dad have been old enough to know this? Why weren't they considerate of me? I decided it didn't matter. I could not control them or anyone else, but I could take responsibility for my actions. I could try to be more considerate of others from now on.

While empathizing with everyone's embarrassment, I realized something else. What did it really matter? Why continue to feel embarrassed? We were hormonal teenagers in love for goodness sake. And Mom and Dad got aroused by young passion and were inspired to liberate themselves from propriety. That's kind of cute, really.

As for Eileen, I didn't deserve the blame for her refusal to use a port-a-potty. But she did try to apologize and I wouldn't accept it, which is a far worse sin. I was so upset that my peace was disturbed that I hadn't realized until then the way to get it back was to forgive her.



The van was moving now. Dad was taking us to breakfast. I put my hand over Eileen's and mouthed, "I'm sorry." She smiled and mouthed back, "Me too," and put her head on my shoulder. I looked up and saw Dad's eyes in the rearview mirror. I waved but he didn't respond. I'm not sure if he saw me. I put my elbows on the back of my sister's and Theresa's seat and joked to them and Eileen, "So what did you gals do last night? Have pillow fights, braid each others hair, talk about boys?" I got some

giggles and a guffaw from Mom followed by uncomfortable silence.

I'd tried to make a few cracks in the ice. Unfortunately it would take a while even after we reached the heat of home for there to be a good thaw.

In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

No fight: No blame (ch. 8)

Still

Dressed up in a long, white cotton eyelet dress over her play clothes, Caroline places her plastic tea set and baby dolls orderly in one corner of the tree house. Her little brother, Kip, has taken rule over the opposite end, and is ready for battle in his camo-green vest, Davy Crocket coonskin cap, and trusty slingshot hanging from the back pocket of his blue jeans while waving his Star Wars light saber sword. Hopefully, their temporary truce will last through the next hour so I can get the kitchen cleaned, and figure out what's for dinner.

Sometimes it feels like all I do is cook and clean, crash, and then crank start all over again in robotic motion. My once soft, manicured hands are nearly as rough as the brillo pad I scrape over the dirty pots and pans. As I slowly rinse the soap suds off the breakfast dishes, I fondly think back to the joy of holding Caroline and Kip when they were just babies—the first eye-to-eye contact, the first smile, the first “mama.” Those are some of the sweetest moments life has to give. But some days are like the six-year-old Honda sitting in the driveway that was once scratch-free and shiny new, but the reality of monthly payments and maintenance has dulled the thrill of what seemed so perfect. If I could only sleep eight hours straight again maybe I could be my old self that laughed and loved to have a good time.

As I begin drying the dishes, my body moves into slow motion. I stare blankly out the kitchen window, only vaguely aware of my children's imaginary play. Gram's

death is still too fresh. Now that Gram and Grandpa are both gone, a deep feeling of loss wells up inside of me. Maybe it was seeing Gram there in the nursing home minutes after her death that shook me.

I got a call from someone, perhaps Mom—I'm not sure. I can't even recall the drive over to the nursing home, but I know I came alone. When I walked into her room, Dad was sitting calmly in his quiet way on the chair at the end of her bed, but Gram laid still. It was over. As my mind played catch up with the finality of death, I fixed my eyes upon Gram's chest and belly; my own breath halted as I stilled my body to hear or see some sign that this shell encasing the lifeless body belonged to my Gram. No movement came. Awkwardly, Dad interrupted my private autopsy to inform me that he had closed Gram's eyes after she took her last breath. We played our parts as we spoke in soft tones and agreed “it was great that Dad was there to see her take her last breath” and that “she died peacefully.” Dad nodded towards the bedroom door as he told me “the nurses put Gram's things in a box.” My eyes paused at Gram's motionless body; her lower jaw hung open as if she had escaped her body through her mouth. Up until then death had always been softened by an undertaker, but not this time. Holding back tears, I caught my own breath, and turned to the cardboard box across the room. The simple, square container that had probably once held office supplies for the nursing home now held all that was left of Gram's material identity:

six pairs of extra-large sized panties, five polyester pantsuits, two sets of silky pajamas, one cotton robe, one pair of Dearfoam slippers, and two pairs of lace up walking shoes. Life seemed to be reduced to a small, insignificant pile of nothingness.

I had wanted time alone with Gram to process my emotions; but solitude in a quiet room with Gram's corpse had not been possible. Burial business had to be conducted—funeral arrangements, newspaper announcements, family travel plans, flowers, hair appointments, appropriate suits and dresses. . . Gram was finally at rest after years of bondage to Alzheimer's, and we were expected to commemorate her life with busyness. It was all annoyingly cold and detached, but impossible to slow down.

Mom somehow shelved her emotions and kept the rest of us informed about the arrangements. Most of the family had made the trip from Texas to the beloved Appalachian hills of Tennessee to bury my Gram next to Grandpa. As odd as it seems, there is some comfort in fulfilling the wishes of the deceased and reuniting a married couple between headstones even when a simpler choice is more prudent. Don't get me wrong, there were truly enjoyable moments, like meeting distant family—especially meeting Grandpa's half-brother who was the spitting image of him. We all felt like Grandpa had shrunk a few inches and reappeared to us. A reflection of the same calm smile and kind eyes that used to delight in watching me choose the biggest bag of yummy candy I could find before taking me home to spend the night at Gram and Grandpa's house. Those were simpler days—when my mere existence provided sheer delight to another human being—no high expectations, no demands. It wasn't because I made good grades, cleaned, cooked, or provided income; I was just me—a little shy, very girly, and probably a bit too picky.

I had no thought of appreciation—it was just the way it was.

As I look back out my kitchen window, I smile when my eyes catch Kip holding up his sword to defend his post, surely from some terrifying intruder. I notice that Caroline doesn't want any part of Kip's adventure, so she is now sitting comfortably on a double branch one level above the tree house with one of her baby dolls. In that moment the little girl inside me wants to play and climb the sprawling willow tree again at the front of Gram and Grandpa's yard, perch myself in my old favorite spot, gaze at the white pictures in the sky, and make believe they are watching me and had wondered when I would notice them. Hours might pass between sitting on my willow tree throne, dressing Gram's cats in doll clothes until one of them hisses and scratches me, or maybe I'd romp through their corn rows imagining some sad story that I was a lost child—a damsel in distress who would always be rescued if I had time to finish my play. Gram would eventually call me in for lunch, and only then would I realize Grandpa had been watching me from the porch—probably making sure I was safe, or maybe just enjoying sharing what little he had with me.

Gram would have lunch ready and I wouldn't have lifted a finger to cook or clean, only to taste test to see if it was to my liking. Without a doubt, I would turn my nose up at Gram's home cooked bowl of greens. Poverty had taught her how to survive from yard plants and left her enjoying tasty dandelions that did not match my sensibilities; but her fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and gravy were first rate. Gram's only reward was playing a hand of Muggins or Flinch after the table was cleared. I smile to think about how she loved winning. Her big blue eyes would twinkle with delight, and her broad, round belly

would shake with uninhibited laughter when she made a good play. Simple pleasures brought her contentment. As I reflect on them now, I realize that she and Grandpa didn't argue with life, they just took it.

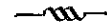
My childhood is firmly closed now, and it's my turn to embrace the mundane and find pleasure in it. From the open window a soft, subtle breeze sweeps past my face bringing my eyes back into focus on my own children at play. Sweat is pouring down Kip's warrior face, and Caroline is quickly collecting her babies and tea set before a new battle launches. A smile spreads across my face as I think about meatloaf with mashed potatoes for dinner and teaching my kids how to play Muggins.

Hope Swearingen

The Man from the River

There is a man who lives in Louisiana, down by the mouth of the Mississippi. He doesn't go into town much, but when he does get out of his comfort shell he's usually hungry and mean as hell. It's these times you should stay in your home, safe and protected, from the man no one knows or that's what my Momma always said. He never really talks to the people in town, but every once in a while he'll go down to the local tavern and stay until he's drunk and kind of friendly. These are the times it's best to talk to the man from the river. You see, he has stories to tell that are real interesting. One time I snuck away from my Momma when the man was in town and waited outside the tavern until he came out. The man walked with me all the way to the edge of town telling me stories about how he likes to travel. The man told me he has lived in places like Spain and Africa. He talked about the first automobiles, the invention of electricity and that he even met Christopher Columbus. One time I jokingly told the man that he is as old as fireworks. He then told me a story about the first fireworks in China. After years of friendship with the man from the river and after hearing all the gossip from the townspeople I came to realize what he was. Thinking about him now it all makes sense. The way he could only come out during the night, the way he never had to eat food, and all of his recollections of the past. I never thought about it then, though. He never told me his name; he was always just the man from the river.

Essay



Are Sitcoms Utilizing Potential or Bashing Males?

Many people might argue that the use of television as a medium does not necessarily brainwash its onlookers but serves more as entertainment. However, television broadcasting is considered one of the leaders in creating many well-known stereotypes. The classification of male ignorance has formed because humans have been trained to uphold the image of a patriarchal society. As a result, women are forced to retaliate and their rebellions have created a less intelligent male figure. This sort of cause and effect stereotype has progressed through time but has not reached a point that Jake Brennan, author of "Has Male Bashing Gone Too Far," considers condemning. Although the stereotype labeling men as blundering oafs continues to exist, the male personality people perceive from television is not necessarily one of a hopeless clown, but rather one is deemed sarcastic, witty or as the persona of a father figure.

Television displays an extensive range of male stand-up comedy such as *Larry the Cable Guy* and *Tosh. O.*, as well as humorous sitcoms like *Two and a Half Men*. What these three shows have in common is their ability to display a male figure that produces plenty of keen and sarcastic humor. Sexual innuendos and jokes demonstrate very popular methods of comedy used by some of the greatest male comedians. Unlike Brennan's essay, the male characters in these sitcoms surpass the intelligence and cleverness of characters such as Doug Heffernan in *The King of Queens* by utilizing an everyday method of

insult, the comeback. In one episode of *Two and a Half Men*, the teenage kid named Jake approaches his father's brother, Charlie, and whines that the family "wouldn't have problems if [Charlie would] put a TV in [his] room," and Charlie quickly replies, "We wouldn't have these problems if we put a python in [his] room" (*Two and a Half Men*, par. 8). The conversations do not show any form of stupidity for watchers to stereotype, but instead, they reveal men who are very quick witted. Obviously, the male personality on certain shows is considered highly sarcastic, and often times seen with limitless speedy responses; the stereotype therefore contains little evidence that supports the ignorance of men.

As opposition to the male stereotype, I have found many television shows featuring smart men that use intelligence as a way to entertain. Sitcoms such as *The Big Bang Theory* serve excellent proof against the idea of male stereotype in the media. Although many times the male character uses snide remarks to create humor, they differ from the characters previously because they express their vast knowledge of the natural world. Sheldon is one of the main characters of *The Big Bang Theory* and could practically be classified as a walking encyclopedia because of his ability to flaunt his knowledge. While watching the show, it is readily apparent that Sheldon bears a huge arsenal of words that is fully applied in his lectures of theoretical physics as well as multiple other subjects. Detective and crime scene investigation shows are also another example of media that include intellectual men as main characters rather than fools carelessly stepping on pitchforks. Even more remarkable is the idea that many different shows yield a female assistant. The use of an assistant should prove the idea of male superiority and their value as an intellectual person. With characters like

the ones described, it is clear that the media is not trying to create a negative image for the male counterpart.

If there would be a stereotype derived from male characters on television broadcasts, it would be the depiction of men as father figures to a family. The word father produces the thoughts of the other words such as provider, supporter, and protector. None of these words bare any resemblance to the personalities characterized by Jake Brennan. Even though the father figure is supposed to be an important role model, he has faults that are not usually a result of ignorance. The use of a home setting in television also makes the watcher criticize the male dominance less because of the more personal feel. As the watcher continues to connect with the family on the television, his or her idea of the male characteristic grows more towards the patriarchal stereotype.

Clearly, some views might not consider the male figures as witty nor sitcoms as anything but repetitive, lousy garbage. The viewers are obviously allowed to form their own opinion, but it is questionable if they even realize the hours it takes to create the scripts for the comedic sitcoms. Nearly any person could create a screen play portraying male ogres, but few people can produce worthy conversation to appear on television. People also do not even notice that sitcoms can even have an impact on the vernacular used by people; this is apparent in the phrases that both men and women use in daily communication. Media starts trends in men and women's dialects and as a result it also inspires them to open new ways of communicating. One might also oppose the idea of male maturity with claims of several circumstances on television in which the women will outperform the man. How possibly could it be considered a demoralizing stereotype if those types of circumstances happen in real life? Men

and women both have advantages and disadvantages that distinguish the separation between them. Still, men have not reached a point of such negative classification similar to that of a circus clown.

Instead of taking offense to the way men are portrayed on television broadcasts, men should understand the purpose of television media like sitcoms and stand-up comedians. These thirty minute features are not created to stereotype men specifically. Therefore, there is not enough reason to allow it to be harmful. Compared to other stereotypes such as race and religion, male bashing is as extreme as a grain of sand. The male category stereotype is on a level incredibly lower than the countless known stereotypes of women, African American, Chinese, and many other ethnic backgrounds. The next time the "senseless male" stereotype arrives; one should merely disregard it and compare the instance to other stereotype extremities.

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George Henry Perrett

Symbolism Creates Theme of Redemption

In "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," Flannery O'Connor integrates symbols to create a theme of redemption. Writers often incorporate symbols into their literature to communicate complicated ideas to readers. Authors strive to explain difficult beliefs such as redemption, salvation, and everlasting grace, all of which are abstract concepts. Tennessee Williams, a famous novelist, stated, "Hell is yourself and the only redemption is when a person puts himself aside to feel deeply for another person." A mother cares deeply for her children, and a husband loves his wife, but true redemption can be earned only by caring for those least deserving. For instance, an evil person might ruthlessly kill everyone important in a person's life: parents, grandparents, and siblings. If the remaining family member discovers compassion and love for the monster after such a senseless act of murder, then that person finds true deliverance. Here, a self-absorbed grandmother, who manipulates others for her own selfish reasons, takes pity on such a heinous criminal and in the process discovers her own salvation. Numbers, colors, and objects function as symbols to create the theme of redemption.

Throughout the story, numbers promote the theme of salvation. For instance, in all Christian religions, the number three carries special significance. Three wise men saw the star signifying the birth of Jesus. Jesus Christ died, and on the third day, he rose again from the dead. Finally, the Trinity itself, father, son, and Holy Spirit, represents the number three. The number three denotes salvation,

and therefore, the tale utilizes the number three several times. First, the number appears early because the family begins a three day automobile trip. Even the seating arrangements in the car illustrate the use of the number three: three passengers, mother, father, and baby, sit on the front seat, and three passengers, grandmother, June Star, and John Wesley, sit in the back seat. Significantly, when the father loses control of the vehicle and the car lands upside down in a ditch, three men who later kill the entire family, arrive. The use of the number three continues when the criminals take mother, baby, and June Star into the woods: Grandmother hears a single shot, then two more pistol reports for a total of three shots. Finally, the number three appears at the climax when the Misfit shoots Grandmother "three times through the chest" (379). The number three aids the reader in understanding that the narrative concerns salvation and has a deeper Christian meaning.

Additionally, the use of colors advances the religious theme. Readers associate the color white with purity and virtue. The color white adorns alters on Christian high Holy Days and festival days of the Church year, especially Christmas and Easter since the color signifies holiness. Therefore, authors often use the color white to signify redemption. The grandmother wears white cotton gloves. Additionally, "a bunch of white violets on the brim" decorates Grandmother's hat, and white organdy trims the collars and cuffs of her dress. As the family travels, silver-white sunlight streams through the trees. After eating lunch, the children run outside into the "white sunlight" (373). Finally, grandmother describes the house she visited once as having white columns across the front of the house. In contrast to the color white, black also symbolizes religious meaning, but instead of being associated

with God, black represents evil and death. Christians utilize black for Good Friday, when the Lord died. In this tale, the murderers travel in a "black battered hearse-like automobile" (375). Additionally, one of the criminals wears black trousers. Even the Misfit wears a black hat, not only symbolizing the common meaning of bad guys, but also, signifying the agent of death. Through the use of colors, the reader sees a secondary religious meaning to the narrative.

Finally, objects serve as symbols to further the theme of salvation. For instance, both the absence of the clouds and the sun signify salvation. Nancy Brewer describes the weather's significance in literature and explains that the use of the sun represents God's presence, and in the south, Christians associate clouds with God's wrath (3). After the family's car overturns, the Misfit says, "Ain't a cloud in the sky" (376). Grandmother even adds, "Yes, it's a beautiful day" (376). Additionally, as the grandmother dies, she peers up at the cloudless sky, symbolizing God's divine presence. Both the absence of clouds and the presence of the sun signify redemption. Stephen Bandy describes this moment as Grandmother seeing the light of God (2). Conversely, when the grandmother touches the Misfit, he springs "back as if a snake had bitten him" (379). In Western society, a snake illustrates evil. John Desmond explains that for the good or the light to be seen, evil must be exposed (4). The Misfit's evil, illustrated as a coiling serpent, provides the opportunity for Grandmother's compassion to rise to the surface.

A distressed man recently flew a plan into the Internal Revenue building in Austin, Texas, and killed three innocent human beings. A brilliant college professor brought a gun into a meeting and murdered three of her colleagues. Ruthless, unprovoked acts occur every

day. Whether these victims, in the moments before their deaths, felt compassion for their killer remains unknown, but fiction writers attempt to portray the concept of salvation by incorporating symbols to juxtapose good and evil. These symbols illustrate the deeper religious meaning of the story.

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Kendalyn Rising

My Angel in the Sky

"So much of what is best in us is bound up in our love of family, that it remains the measure of our stability because it measures our senses of loyalty. All other pacts of love or fear derive from it and are modeled upon it."

—Haniel Long

It only took a second for my entire world to come crumbling down at my feet, a quick wrinkle in time in which my senses stopped and time froze, leaving me suspended in a sea of immobility. Such a second consumed me as I sat in the somber church pews watching my aunt's funeral procession transpire around me. No one could speak; no one could feel; no one could think. The entire church fell silent except for the meek whine of the piano which wept along with us. As I looked into the dejected faces of my loved ones, I realized the overwhelming power of love. To me, my aunt Tena represented the epitome of everything good and kind in the world. Now, she was gone. Until then, I had never really known true sadness; however, it only took one day to change all of that. As the funeral continued on and I watched tears roll down my mother's soft cheeks, I began to cry, realizing that I never got a chance to say goodbye; in that moment, all that I knew about life and death completely changed, and for the first time, I realized that I was not invincible.

As I listlessly opened my dreary eyes and peered into the anxious face of my sister, I recognized that today

would change us forever. Rather than waking up to the merry voice of my mother dancing across the warm house only cold silence could be found, as if all of the color had been sucked out of the world. Walking together across the lengthy hallway, my sister and I slowly opened the large, ominous door to my mother's room and saw her quietly sitting by herself beneath a dimly lit lamp and draped in a black veil of depression. The rose color which usually brushed her soft cheeks no longer lingered, replaced instead by a ghastly white hue. Seeing my mother look so lifeless and bereft of happiness scared me almost as if her joy had died along with her sister. We both tried to cheer her up but to no avail. Since learning of my aunt Tena's death two days prior, I could think of nothing but Heaven, a magical kingdom in the sky where good followers of God reside after death, and asked my mother why God had taken her away from us. My mother warmly set me down, trying to console me, but I could see that pain and grief had completely consumed her as well. For the first time, she did not know what to say.

Later that day as we walked up the mountainous steps of the church and pushed open the oak doors which were heavy with sadness, we looked almost like soldiers entering into a perilous battle, knowing that the end would surely come. We marched up the aisle, hearts heavy with sorrow, and found our seats on the first row of pews, reverently genuflecting toward the tabernacle before taking our seats. I looked around at the sobbing congregation, seeing the disconsolate faces of my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends, and felt a painstaking wave of guilt consume me; I could not cry. Tissues rolled down the rows like waves across a beach, yet I could not muster a single tear for my dear friend who had passed away. For a brief second, I had a strange feeling that I was broken,

so completely overcome with grief that my senses could not work correctly. Then I thought of all of the countless memories that I shared with my aunt Tena: she took me Valentine's Day shopping for my mother; she went with me to get my ears pierced when I felt too afraid to go by myself; the last time I ever spoke to her, she played with me on the beach, after completing a round of chemotherapy the day before; and gave me her favorite faded straw hat to hang up in the house for the next time that she came to visit us. In thinking about the good times that we shared, I realized why I could not cry: to me, she remained so vividly imprinted in my memories that it seemed to be unreal that she no longer lived; I still expected her to come retrieve her faded straw hat, place it gently on her head, and walk down to the beach with me, hand in hand. In reality, however, she never would.

Then, as I sat in the pews twiddling my thumbs and listening to the beautiful eulogy that my uncle presented, I wondered why my loving and kindhearted aunt had gone to Heaven so young. Until then, I believed that everyone got a chance to grow up, to raise a family, and to die very old. But, life is much more fragile. A chill ran across my spine and filled me with fear because, in that moment, I realized that anything could happen and that my parents could not protect me from everything. Astonished at my discovery, I peered up into my mother's sad face and gladly found a sparkle of love safely tucked away in the corner of her smile, waiting to comfort me. Because a mother and a child have an inseparable bond which transcends the tests of time, I knew that no matter what happened to us that love would never fade. I also realized, in that small space in time, that no matter where she might be staying, my aunt Tena would always be in my heart and in Heaven watching over me.

As my eyes began to gaze wearily around the gloomy church, I noticed my uncles rising from their seats and walking towards the front of the church to carry my aunt away to her final resting place. Marching down the aisle, the large, brave men looked like vulnerable young boys whose mother had scolded them; they could not contain their sadness. I turned my head, brown hair tossing to and fro, and saw my aunt for the last time, piercing light cascading over the casket as the heavy doors opened and then closed. We followed her to the grave site, placed a white rose down upon her casket, and silently left, quiet consuming all. Later on that night as I climbed into bed next to my mother, I warmly wrapped my arms around her and told her that everything would be all right. For the first time, I truly knew that all would be because I have a family on earth who loves me unconditionally and a God in Heaven protecting me from all harm. Even though my beautiful aunt died, her death awakened a new life in me, filling me with an understanding and compassion which will never dwindle. As I comfortably lay there snuggled up next to my mother, I realized that my aunt was really gone, but that I would see her again one day. Then, I cried.

Angela Robins

The Human-Nature Interaction and Personal Growth

For ages there have been writers, poets, and artists who have tried to capture and convey the essence of the human-nature interaction. James Wright and William Wordsworth are two poets who have accomplished just that and written about the profound effect that nature can have upon humans. The two poems that follow show how humans often turn to nature in a time of need. The speakers in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by Wordsworth and "A Blessing" by Wright interact with nature in times of loneliness. Through this interaction each speaker's admiration of nature leads to an intense and emotional growth experience.

The speakers in both poems turn to nature in a time of loneliness. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the loneliness is obvious because the speaker states "I wandered lonely as a cloud / that floats on high o'er vales and hills" (lines 1-2). The depth of that loneliness is what is somewhat obscure. If indeed a cloud could feel loneliness, drifting alone so high above the Earth, far away from any and all social interaction, one could only imagine that isolation to be a tremendous burden upon one's soul. The speaker in "A Blessing" seems to be projecting his own personal feelings of loneliness onto two Indian ponies he sees in a pasture just off the highway. He states, "We step over the barbed wire into the pasture / Where they have been grazing all day, alone" (7-8). The fact that these ponies are alone in the pasture does not seem unusual;

however, what is interesting is that the speaker feels compelled to enter this pasture presumably to comfort these ponies. He states, "There is no loneliness like theirs" (12). This assumes that the ponies can feel loneliness and that the speaker is somehow in tune with their feelings. This is doubtful and is more likely to be another example of the speaker projecting his own feelings onto the ponies. In both poems, we begin to see the loneliness subside as the speakers each begin to admire the scene before them.

The speakers of both poems experience emotional growth through their admiration of nature. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the speaker states about the daffodils,

A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought. (15-18)

These lines show the extent of the speaker's admiration of the daffodils. In their cheerful and lighthearted presence, he cannot help but have his spirits lifted. When the speaker states he "gazed—and gazed," it is apparent that he is in complete awe of the scene before him. The speaker goes on to say:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils. (19-24)

The speaker here describes the intense emotional effect the daffodils have upon him. According to Brian Green, this "progression, arrest, intense experience, and restorative vision serve as the underlying structure of sensibility" in Wordsworth's poem. It appears that whenever the speaker finds himself in a time of loneliness or sadness, this scene can enter his mind, and he seems to transcend to a higher level of consciousness where solitude actually turns to bliss. This intense spiritual awakening is apparent by his stating that his heart fills with pleasure "and dances with the daffodils." In a similar situation, the speaker in "A Blessing" shows his admiration of the two ponies in saying, "They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other / There is no loneliness like theirs" (11-12). If one could step into the speaker's mind and see the image of wet swans, one can only imagine a truly beautiful and elegant scene as they bow towards each other. In the line "There is no loneliness like theirs" the speaker appears to be speaking of this loneliness in a sense that it is something to be admired, and as if there is something indeed quite special about it. The speaker states, "Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom" (22-24). This reveals the speaker's emotional growth. When the speaker states, "I would 'break' into blossom," I believe the speaker means that if he could shed his earthly body, he could achieve what Green refers to as a "spiritual regeneration and enablement awakening the mind to a new mode of consciousness" in much the same way as the speaker in Wordsworth's poem.

As shown in both poems, nature has a profound effect upon the speakers in their times of need. Wright and Wordsworth have truly captured the depth to which the human-nature interaction can be vital to spiritual and emotional growth. This scenario still holds true today,

as many people are able to draw comfort and inspiration from nature when they need it most. We have only to slow down and appreciate the healing qualities of what is always there, all around us, and freely offered.

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Publish your work in *Pulse*!

Pulse is a student publication exhibiting the work of student writers and is available in print the following long semester after each year. Entries are judged by an editorial student staff and award winners are selected by a panel of faculty members with cash prizes awarded in each category. Entries are due the first Monday of each April but may be submitted any time.

- 1 All entries must be typed in Times or Times New Roman and in 12 point font. Fiction and essay entries must be double spaced and not exceed 3000 words.
- 2 Remove your name from all entries. (Only the submission form should have the author's name.) All judging is anonymous.
- 3 Turn all entries in together with a completed submission form to Maes 04 or the *Pulse* mailbox in the Maes Liberal Arts Building. **Entries will not be returned.** In a single packet, include:
 - four (4) printed copies of each entry; do **not** include two entries on a single page
 - an electronic copy (.doc, .rtf, or .txt extensions only) of all entries on a compact disc (CD) or flash drive
 - as many as ten (10) entries in any combination of types of work (form poetry, non-form poetry, short fiction, essay, or foreign language translation).

Additional forms are available in the Maes Liberal Arts Building in offices 04 and 08.

Submission Form

Name _____ Student ID _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Major _____ Classification _____

Email Address _____

List all entries by title and category (fiction; essay; translation; if submitting poetry, specify "form" or "non-form").

Title	Category
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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Follow the instructions on the back of this form to submit your work for publication. Entries that do not include all print and electronic copies in appropriate formats may be disqualified.

Any great work of art revives and readapts time
and space, and the measure of its success is
the extent to which it makes you an inhabitant
of that world—the extend to which it invites
you in and lets you breathe its strange,
special air.

— *Leonard Bernstein*



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