

MY PERSONAL EPIC

An Honors Thesis

by

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PREFACE

C D said we come from protoplasm
found on the floor of the ocean

TSE said we poured spirituality out of a glass
and let it dry up in the sun

WBY said we are spiraling, spiraling
only to repeat what we have done

JPS said we live in an absurd world
void of meaning . . . let's run

Let us run from the realm of real
and write poetry and songs
and write novels
and direct expressionist films
and let us paint passion
with strokes of meaning
or sculpt sublime statues
dedicated to our noble species
and let us raise grand eternal architecture
--like Ozymandias

Art is eternally ephemeral to me
hiding behind words and inside poetry

A wretched man's catharsis
purging the pain after the death of innocence

But sagacious reader--

I offer no profound philosophy
no twig of truth to grasp
as you fall from the precipice--
a mythic steeply crag
crumbling at the foot of the
Abysmal Endless End.

I only offer pieces of dreams
thoughts found in the cracks in sidewalks
about how to soothe and salve us downtrodden
and hope the End is not what it seems

Driving along a grand highway my mind reached that stage, that

melancholy mood of introspection and pseudo-philosophical analysis of life to which my mind always seems to wander when I spend any length of time alone. The kind of thought process where you start with just thinking about what you have to do the next day and before you know it you're ten miles down the road, having no recollection whatsoever of those last ten miles, only remembering that you have been occupied with pondering the lack of empirical evidence to prove the existence of life after death or how anyone might prevent nuclear annihilation.

On my way I inevitably reached this point of consciousness. I think the impetus that ushered me into this mood was my version of how one's imagination half-creates visual images, that when you sense something, whether it be through sight, smell, sound, taste, or touch, you are likely to associate that sensual experience with a previous similar experience that evokes a memory. This evocation of an embedded pattern colors the image with emotion. In my case it was the visceral image of the amorphous clouds soaking up the crimson, tangerine, and violet that crept up from the golden sun half buried in the ground. I cannot be sure what emotion it brought to the surface, but it overwhelmed me with a strong, peaceful, spiritual feeling, a tingling in my back and head, causing my eyes to well up-- but I held back the tears.

This can be an almost religious experience. As the cloud-- a condensed body of water vapor adhered to dirt and salt particles-- becomes a pillow of wind, a dream aloft, or a kindred spirit that might lift you up and away from this world and into

another where the soft love of the upper atmosphere would envelope you and imbue your spirit with the essence of the soft colored clouds of dusk, you feel a certain spiritual affectation, like a cold, dull body lying on the floor in the fetal position, being warmed by dusty rays of sunlight through a bedroom window. This feeling, this vision of the soft indigo glow of the setting sun casting its dying energy upon the tree tops soon became a sleeping dragon snoring out the orange and purple fire of dusk.

Yet, as I took my tired eyes off the yellow line in the road, the sky grew dark and it began to rain. I saw no more sign of the sleeping dragon or his soft, peaceful fire in the sky. The road pierced the horizon like a shining wet steel sword jutting out of a dull gray shroud, and I thought of the story of Tithonus, who must be up there withering away while lying beside Dawn, wishing he had the opportunity to die. The rainwater dotted my windshield and the rhythmic RUHR-REE-RHUR-REE of my wipers lured and coaxed and seduced me to rest my tired eyes.

"Come on. Stay awake," I said to myself as I slapped myself lightly in the face. "Next exit I gotta get a coke." I closed my eyes tightly and then opened them wide. My eyelids seemed to fight back. They grew heavy as lead weights. Seconds later (or hours later), I realized I had nodded off. I was petrified. "I could've gone off the road and killed myself! Oh God! I am just plain stupid!" The adrenalin was pumping through my brain, my heart struggled wildly to pound its way out of my chest. I tried to calm myself, but I realized I just had to wait and let my body recover. The nervousness eventually subsided. A warm fuzz

slowly slid and oozed down from the base of my skull to the small of my back.

I was calm, then dead calm. The exhaustion was back. But I could beat my tired eyes this time. It would be a struggle, but I would end up awake if it killed me. I rolled down both windows all the way and I turned up the radio as loud as it would go. Then the rain, the prurient rain, the sensuous rain, pelted my face hardsoft. And the radio, the loud-muffled-eupho-caco radio played a sweet song so loud I couldn't hear it. The gray sky melted into the shiny wet road, swallowing up a yellow line. The trees along the side danced and sang in a Shaman frenzy. The woods jolted, and jerked and spasmed in a paroxysm quite agreeable to the hungry mish-moshed sky-road. A large Oak spewed forth shards of chewy bark and crunchy glass. And he stabbed limbs, puncturing limbs, and metal and plastic into flesh and spraying, spitting, splatting red which washed down slowly, coursing out from within and obscuring the shattered panorama of darkling wood. The wipers screeched broken glass across the spider-webbed windshield, and as the rubber blades squeeged and threw ram-spattered blood to either side, they left behind a rose-colored yet cracked image of the trees off the side of the road.

They have stopped their dance. They were still, waiting for that hour, the hour of the Dance Macabre. The rosy-cracked images started to whisper, it was time to start the ritual dance. So there, in a forest of emerald and azure, I left the world of animal pleasure-pain. The elder Elms and mossy Oaks slowly

danced and sang the dirge. . . and the earth was annointed.

The fruit it rots to expose the seed
the seed that finds a hole to sink
to sink and sprout and grow up tall
up tall so high it reaches -GOD
GOD, GOd, God, god, a god
a god-like figure, tarnished and old

but
the seed falls on infertile ground
and a hungry bird finds it beneath
the cold snow
and dies
of
starvation

Sainted street lights with holy halos peer down upon the wounded Oak. In frozen moments the pavement coagulates and the yellow lines turn Titian, pale tangerine. The automobile had struck the mighty Oak. The spent shell of a man lay prostrate, half out of the windshield on the now shortened hood. His peaceful face was drowned in blood, while about the scene lay carnage on the soft fertile ground. Drawing back, the twisted wreckage of the man, the wounded wood, and the dead car are but silhouettes against Orion's belt.

I want a place

among the stars

WORMS

not among the

The wind blew hard, curving, chaotic, sweeping with it the flowers placed there by the bereaved. An Elm tree cast a looming shadow over the grave site. Drops rolled off the edge of her many outreached boughs and wept down upon the coffin as the ominous gray clouds began to precipitate. Pouring forth with the rain, the sullen, morbid melancholy slapped and stung the pallid-faced mourners. But, in the background a young boy stands, pondering the meaning of this dirgeful destiny. He wonders if the man in the coffin might throw open the lid and climb out, or if there is nothing left of the man but an empty body to be food to the earthworm and the well-cut grass. He feels the mortal

clinging to life in his heart. He hopes that there is much more
to the plan than life, lament, and lonely, lonely death.

Obscuring my vision of violet,
and wispy winds on fire,
is dank discontent.
The flaming damasked horizon
surrenders to a soul half empty or half full.
The ephemeral indigo glow
gives way to soliloquoy: suicide, life surreal.
Tangerine twilight rules the day no more
and the sackcloth night yields lunacy to this land.
These hazy hues are mere veils of illusion.
The dusk is an incubus upon the beautiful burning sky.
The union of the colors of life
is decayed black.
When the pigments on the pallet have run out
and the sky fades to black
my pale skin and sullen eyes
will return to the soil.
I am in love with the colors of life.

So, hear me artist, if you exist.
Paint my soul among the tints of blue azure
and the shades of emerald green.
To sail on a pillow of winds
among the soft love of the air.
To burn in the fire of the sensuous sun.
To feel the colors of the world
caress my soul softly.
Hear me great painter,
color my essence with flakes of snowy white
and glitters of gleaming gold.
To float on clouds of whispering grey
to ride the ripple of the silver raindrops
off the end of the forest green leaves
to transcend euphoric ecstasy
to a quintessence of color
If it is true that the heart lives on
after the body is gone,
brush my blood upon your canvas.
For never at peace, unless among the beauty of color
unless liberated from worldly darkness
I never shall be free

A young man, his mind floating among amorphous thoughts, is

thinking back to a funeral he attended as a child. The deceased had fallen asleep at the wheel and had gone off the road, and smashed into a tree. His melancholy reflections manifested themselves in a pensive expression. He stared at the doorway without seeing that his mother had just entered.

"Hello in there," she said with a smile, waving her hand in front of the young man's face. "Remember me? I'm your mother."

"Oh, hello Mom. I guess I was daydreaming as usual."

"Your whole life is a daydream. Just sometimes you take a break and your minds wanders off to face reality."

"Yeah, I know. I guess that's why I can't sleep very well. I think I spend the whole night between sleep and consciousness, dreaming."

"Oh, you sleep all right. You just blurt out fragments of incoherent babble. Last night I heard you mutter something about a bunch of colors."

"Did I?" he said with a quick chuckle. "Well, how are you feeling anyway?"

" 'bout the same. My whole left side is pretty much paralyzed. But, I can get around. I just lean on the walls to get down the hallway. I don't fall much. I just can't stand to lie in bed." As she painfully made her way down the hall her words echoed, "It is the quality of life. If it gets worse, I don't want to live anymore."

The young man thought about his mother's final utterance. Then, his mind left for that place it was most comfortable in.

Life is kind- mother -life is kind

your father drank
 and hit
 and hurt

He gave you a childhood of fear and pain

Life is kind- mother -life is kind

you got married
 a husband
 a home

He burned your home to the ground

Life is kind- mother -life is kind

starting again
 then you
 fell ill

He gave you a disease

and pain

and suffering

a prisoner of a short-circuiting shell
 of deadness
 debility
 disbelief

days and nights and weeks and years
 of pain

like his hand held the nerve
and rubbed it on a rock
like his hand held your heart
and squeezed, and laughed, and mocked

He gave you a life without the chance to live

so now, perfunctory
your skin walks to the kitchen
to get a drink
you put the glass to your lips
and you gets a drop
a bitter drop- to let you know
what it is that you cannot--HAVE

What kind is life- mother -what kind is life?

I don't understand why you wish you would die.

A middle aged man sat in his office chair, His eyes fixed on the panoramic view of the skyscrapers visible outside his window. His mind existed in that place of abstract shadows where he felt safe and protected from the world. In this state he pondered the strange beast that had arisen from the primordial ooze and had at some point starting changing its environment rather than letting the environment change it. When this happened, he thought, the creature that came from the ooze, the creature that came from the fish that decided to flop out of the water and walk on land experienced an explosive proliferation of brain cells and it acquired a capacity for retaining a memory of previous experiences. As grey matter increased, this warm blooded mammal could reason and deal with abstractions and intangibles.

The middle-aged man wondered how this same mammal now has the knowledge and the ability to destroy the earth from which it sprang. He also thought about how he, being one of these mammals, should deal with the conflict inherent in his species-- the fight within his brain and spinal cord between the stronger and more powerful drives and desires and the relatively weaker reasoning faculties. They are in constant strife, one trying to repress the other. Reason tells us it is wrong to injure another but the desire for revenge or the emotion of incensed rage could cause one to deal blow after blow. If these desires and drives are repressed by reason they build and then explode in rabid dog violence or paranoid schizophrenia. If they are not repressed our animal spirits are unleashed and we are no longer women and men, but are a pack of wolves or a cold slithering snake ready to

devour another's unborn child.

By cold cords and wires he is bound
to the pole on the corner of the street.

His digits numb, arms spread--
silicon circuits driven into his feet

The hot wind sears, driving aching
pulsating pressure, want of mammal flesh

to beat-crush-on top-better
pressure pushing hard against his chest

Then- Apollo and Dionysus
cast lots to win his coat

And on the third day he fell
and we all searched for a note

A civil war within his brain
-the cause of death, the coroner claimed

So it against itself cannot stand
the grand edifice is built-
on slowly shifting, crumbling sand

The old man sat reclining in his "Lazy Boy." Long since retired, he is aged and weak in the last leg of his life. He still daydreams, though, not as much as he used to when he was younger. Today he stares into a television, the program is a game show. But he doesn't notice the show at all, he just peers blankly at the screen and has programs of another sort going on in his mind. When he was a boy he thought he was immortal, that he would never die. Now that he is older, he is well aware of his own ephemeral existence that will soon be shut off just like the little blink of light that fades to black on his television screen. He wants so much to have something to believe in, some

small glint of hope that death is not the endless end. Yet his convictions about the world and the origin of his species won't allow him to believe in any god or afterlife. His only respite from such dark thoughts is the possibility that his knowledge of life is minute that the relatively feeble human brain fails to comprehend the obfuscated truth hidden from a infinitesimal, myopic perception.

Many times, the aged man would recline his chair back with his eyes transfixed on the ceiling. But hte ceiling was never blank-- it was always colored with dreams, and textured with emotion. Often they were visions of escaping his ancient shell, to a place where the skin was shed to expose an amorphous floating consciousness where the world of dreams is reality. Sometimes though, when his mind was in that melancholy state, he would think of his mortality-- how he would end up a small handful of organic chemicals that would serve only to nurture those life forms that haven't yet met their end. Such dreams were pain, nightmares of mortal clinging-- to think that someday his inner-consciousness will be non-existent, leaving so many questions unanswered.

Of course, that day came for his sad heart to loosen its tight, mortal grip. It had only been a week since his wife had died, and she was his last bit of happiness, the only thing in reality that kept him from giving into the dream world forever. Before his wife died he told her that he would meet her in another place outside of time where they could be together

forever. He hoped he had not lied to her. . .

I looked up and saw that I was lying on the crumpled hood of my car merging with a large oak tree. I looked through my blood-stained eyes to see an image of people yelling impatiently. They carefully pulled me off the hood and set me on the ground. They worked over me frantically as I lay on a thick wooden board. They put needles in and ripped my clothes off. Faces, many faces, loomed over, large and grotesque. The visage of these faces, the distorted, freakish faces, soon diminished as if light was gradually leaving my eyes. As my mind faded to black heard from far off, like an echoing voice in the distance, "flatline! we've got a fla-

I ran from pain and mortality
and found shelter in a dream.
A sanctuary-
for those who feel life too intensely.
But there he found me,
I could not hide within.
My life flashed before my eyes-
my final dream.
But there Dawn's rosy fingers did not warm the chill,
Bright-eyed Athena never came to help,
and God was absent as well.
There, huddled in a corner,
crouched and confused,
came the endless end of dreams,
and my personal epic was-
fla-----