

The PhD Club

At some point
in the exhausting
path to your degree,
did you ever think
the endless parade of PDFs
handed out by your
mustachioed professor was
some kind of stodgy gag?

Because at eighteen,
I knew the lyrics to
Justin Timberlake singles,
how to type on a touchtone
phone faster than a keyboard,
and how to build the perfect
Chipotle burrito.
I sure as hell didn't know
words like
axiomatic
fecund and
diaspora.

I can just imagine a club of PhD-wielding
super scholars, sitting
around a crackling hearth,
their eyebrows cocked in
a permanent Maggie Smith stare,
saying things like
milieu and vis-à-vis?

Listen to them laughing as they
raise a glass to Kafka,
rubbing elbow patches
with one another, smirking because
of the havoc they've created
in assigning an article called
"The Coruscating Equipoise of
Antediluvian Sentiment"
amidst the backdrop of
confident whispers...
...Freudian...
...Postmodern...

...Bourgeois.

Clark Kent

Back when I was still wearing Velcro sneakers
and Spiderman underwear, I was scorned
for reading comics. Because in the 90s, the
psychedelic kaleidoscope of
slap-wrist bracelets,
Lisa Frank unicorns,
and the endless train of technicolor cartoons
made Clark Ken and Bruce Wayne
stale in the minds of the tie-dyed everykid.

Superman snuck beneath the pages of Holt Mcdougal,
Batman buried behind a stack of *Goosebumps*.
The Flash hid from the eyes of
Hilfiger clad peers.
I created my own secret identity:
a *Melrose Place*-watching, Chicago Bulls fan.

But now that I've grown beyond the polychromed past
and the twilight glow of nostalgic night brites,
the looming opinions of peers
that once hung like bomb threats from the Joker,
are about as important to me as
the latest Spice Girls' album.

So The Man of Steel can once again
fly faster than judging eyes,
The Dark Knight can terrorize
the onslaught of disapproving opinions,
and The Flash can outrun all the
knifing glances of yesteryear,
except, of course,
the rolling eyes of my loving wife.

Social Media and Grandmas

Your grandmother
has probably made a Facebook status
about how Time flows like a river,
passing in the blink of an eye,
alluding to the aging
of her children's children.

But it's more shocking and
sudden
than that. Like a bomb,
or that time your grandmother said
shit.

At first, you watch
a small creature,
gumming cheerios into a slimy paste,
then a labored, toothy chew
of rubbery vegetables,
chomping off and on,
like the blinker of
your grandmother's Buick.

Then, in life's cruelest finger snap,
the cheerio chomper
is hopping into a dusty, paint-chipped Chevy.
One that can only be driven by
a high school baseball player named Jimmy or Chet
with a stupid, skunky haircut.

Now,
she's ordering quinoa,
mixed with polysyllabic vegetables
that certainly didn't exist
when you were eighteen.

And as you post a collage of pictures
of this odd vegetarian
you used to hold in the crook of your elbow
on some waning social media site,
you understand, perfectly,
what your grandmother meant.

Clichés

I want to write the truest sentence
but scribble things like
“One Dark and Stormy Night,”
“When it's all said and done,”
Or
“Falling on deaf ears.”

My poetry is the Chili's of literature:
charred tone, stale syntax, and bland diction.
People avoid it like the plague.
Why can't it be the *divey* burger joint,
cool as a cucumber, Using
buffalo meat, hatch peppers, and the word
"artisan" in its menu? The best thing
since sliced bread.

But give me the benefit of the doubt.
I'm a chef with a stocked pantry:
eyes, ears, and a must for every poet:
a healthy arsenal of dashes—

So the quest continues for the right recipe of
Images, sounds, and dashes-----
to sharpen the flavor of my frozen-food poetry,
so they're worthy of a Parisian culinary tour,
avoiding mediocrity and cliché's kiss of death,
leaving no stone unturned,
so they can sell like hot cakes.

Pearls before Swine

Pearls before swine, one after the other,
swallowed into the bellies of my GPA gluttons,
gnawing and chewing till they can belch
names and dates, similes and metaphors,
like they were executing some literary autopsy.

"They're old, dead men with old, dusty ideas,"
they say, filling volumes of composition notebooks,
scribbling down the legacies of the past,
so they can hold their grades high,
like trophies—
a collection of scalps.

But sometimes,
in the inky silence of twilight bedrooms,
Jay Gatsby tampers with the hollow dreams
of a self-centered linebacker,
Atticus Finch devastates
the small world of a JV cheerleader,
and Holden Caulfield will calm the quaking
in the quiet Outcast, folded away
in the shadows of forgotten hallways.

So pearls will be cast,
one after the other,
again
and again
and again.