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In a Day

ROBERT FRANCISCO NIETO

English 100 (Composition) & Honors 101 (Introduction to Research and Creative Work at UH Mānoa)

Mentor: Dr. Amanda Christie

Artist Statement

“In a Day” is my first serious attempt at writing poetry. Throughout my life I have read countless poems that served as an influence for my first poem. I will analyze major points of the poem and share how I came up with certain ideas and themes that eventually transformed into my poem.

At first glance, this poem seems like a simple and short story of possible life events that may occur in anyone’s life. However, it is much more than a simple story. Early in my academic career, I started reading poems by Edgar Allan Poe, an author and poet whom has been a positive influence for me to this day. One poem that really had an impact on me was “Annabel Lee.” “Annabel Lee” has a lot of symbolism such as the Kingdom, Annabel Lee, and the sepulcher. It also lyrically implies a lot of passion and has this hidden theme of agape love. Agape is a Greek word that means a never-ending love not one of sexual attraction or brotherly love. It is the highest form of love that illustrates the qualities of faithfulness, commitment, and devotion. In many religions around the world, a God-like being is mentioned to display this type of love to their chosen people. “Annabel Lee” for Poe symbolizes his deceased wife, but in many ways, Annabel can also be seen as a type of God in some aspects. I wanted to incorporate this theme in my poem, which I did in the love section of the poem. Originally I wanted a wedding scene set up with church bells, a priest, and such, but I ended up not doing it because I loved the simplicity and the subtlety of nature and the union of two people coming together. Overall, Poe inspired me to include sensory details, a love interest, and the themes of silence and life and death.

The stylistic influence of my poem is from Emily Dickinson, whom is considered the “mother” of free verse. Free verse poetry is basically a poem that follows no rules and has no rhyme or rhythm, yet still has an artistic expression. For me, reading Dickinson’s poems such as “I’m Nobody! Who are you?”, and “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” were so beautiful and yet so personal at the same time. I immediately felt connected with Dickinson and her style of writing won me over. Throughout Dickinson’s life, she only published ten poems, most of them without her consent because she was a very private person, which I instantly related to. Due to this I decided to first use her unique and beautiful style of poetry, and also open up and have it be a little personal as well.

Silence is a concept that I intentionally mentioned three times in the poem; the speaker’s birth, the birth of their daughter, and death. What is the significance of placing this word in these specific



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places? Well, silence surprisingly does not exist in our universe. Our universe itself, that big, dark space full of fire and stars is bustling with sound; silence is irrelevant and nonexistent. The closest thing we can ever get to silence happens in two distinct parts of our lives. When we are forming in the womb (our bodies are not mature to have the chance to see or remember) and when we die. We as humans do not know what happens when we die. Whether we just see darkness forever or whether we enter through this “bright light,” but one thing is for certain: silence. I decided to put the word “silence” again in the poem during the birth of the protagonist’s child because it is a reference to the protagonist’s own birth and suggests almost a return to complete innocence and dependence on others.

Specific scenes were carefully chosen to be featured in this poem. Birth, first day of school, a typical day in college, falling in love by the stream, a first child, absence of the child, and death, were chosen for many reasons, some which I consider personal. I am almost 21 years old. I have lived and experienced quite a bit from birth to a typical day at college. I chose those specific topics because they are the ones that I believe are the most important to me. Finally, the moments that I have yet to experience. Finding my soulmate, having a child, watching them grow up, and death. I chose these moments because I believe they will be the happiest and most memorable moments that I want to treasure. Death is something that I accept and honestly feel comfortable with because it is a natural part of life. That’s why birth and death are included in this; it provides a universal truth that makes us humans.

Finally, I want to address time in this poem, and why I titled “In a Day.” I mentioned specific times ranging from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. The events all occurred in one day. Yet I didn’t mention a time for birth. I did this because we, as babies, and even toddlers, do not have to worry about time. Children do not realize that they live in a world that runs on the time of day. They live in their own adorable and innocent fantasy. This is the only stanza in the poem where 6 a.m. is not mentioned. The ending of “In a Day” is a rather dramatic one. The reason behind this is to add gravitas to the moment in which we will move on from this Earth to the afterlife.

IN A DAY

Darkness.

Stillness.

Silence.

The comfort of the womb is unlike any other. No disturbances. No problems.

Silence.

Suddenly you start to feel a pull, a pull that moves you slowly down.

At last you come out into a bright light, a scream in the background and a clamor of nurses and doctors. You begin to cry and shake uncontrollably from the noise and the light. The nurse takes you to a bed next to a window. You look outside as you see the sun rise from the east like a balloon flying up to the atmosphere.

It’s 8 a.m. You enter the big yellow bus. As you walk inside, a loud resounding noise from all the children envelopes every inch of the bus. You take a seat and look out into the countryside as you imagine and create fantastical events to cure your boredom. You feel the bus vibrate from the noise of the kids and the movement of the vehicle as it pounds on the road.

Your ears catch the sound of the obnoxious jingle from your phone. 10 a.m. Time for class! You anxiously and quickly roll out of the absurd twin size bed. You quickly grab some clothes that you prepared the night before. You put them on and leave the dormitory in a running fashion. You hear your heart beating similar to that of a clock as it's counting down before the year ends... tick, tock, tick, tock. Sweat starts to pour down your head as you zoom into Kennedy Hall. You look at your phone and realize that you have 15 seconds 'til class starts. You spot the door of the classroom and charge towards the entrance. Your heart beats again, tick, tock, tick, tock. As you open the door, the bell blasts across the campus and in the room. You take a seat right next to a friend, and he replies, "Just in the nick of time."

Noon.

You walk by a quiet stream as you contemplate life and examine your conscience as water gushes from the falls miles away. And then from the corner of your eye, you see her. She approaches you and you notice that she walks with such grace and beauty. You become mesmerized and focus on her. She hugs you and as she speaks, your mind becomes at ease. She speaks as though she is reciting a beautiful poem. You look at her and see the universe and the future in her eyes. The wind softly brushes her hair and makes her appearance that of an angel in her white apparel. You gently kiss and embrace as your connection strengthens and *you experience agape*. You hold hands and walk away from the stream as the rocks crumble under your feet.

The cars honk loudly around you. You drive erratically around the usual traffic that pollutes the city. You run countless red lights and almost crash into several cars. You don't care. Because you are in a hurry against space and time. You quickly find parking as your car makes a screeching noise that makes even the strongest people cringe. You stare at the watch and realize it's 2 p.m. You bolt out of your car and run into the ER... tick, tock, tick, tock goes that heart-beat of yours... tick, tock, tick, tock... You open the door...

Silence.

You slowly walk in and see the most beautiful sight that can be seen on Earth. A newborn child. You slowly and gently observe and listen to the faint and fragile breathing, the closest thing to silence on Earth. It's love at first sight. You go and embrace your wife and whisper in her ears the three words that will matter at the end of all ages... You lie down next to your wife as you care for your newborn, and you imagine the future full of hardships, yet full of love and affection as well.

You close the trunk of your car as the sound echoes through the driveway of the neighborhood. It's 4 p.m. Your daughter packs the final suitcase for her long journey to self-discovery. You are full of excitement for her, yet at the same time full of sorrow for an inevitable future with her absence. You see her as that adorable baby girl who just started learning to walk, who got her first A on that math test, who played soccer for her school, who got invited to Prom, who became the President of the Student Body. Now you see a young, intelligent, and beautiful young woman ready to become the best neurosurgeon of her era. You stare at her in awe of her achievements and of how she's matured in a world filled with so much enmity. You drive her to the airport and embrace her one more time. As she walks up the stairs, she slowly disappears within the crowd. A single tear gently rolls down your face...

You sit down with your wife as you grab her hand. You stare at your watch... 6 p.m. She looks at you with those eyes that are filled with the stars of the universe, you both look at the sunset on the horizon as you hear the sounds of the ocean slapping across the shores. As the sun disappears in the horizon the grip of your wife's hand weakens; you look at her as she slowly slumps across her chair and she swiftly closes her eyes. She sits there motionless and silent. You turn your head towards the sunset and suddenly start to see all the events of your life. Your body is full of pain as you lose the grip of the love of your life, the truth of your existence. You begin to slump in your chair as you look up to the clouds. You smile and reach up to try to grab one of the clouds that could help you escape such a horrid reality. Your eyes swiftly close as you reach the impending Oblivion.