

Life is a spell so seraphimic
everything conspires to break it.
-Emily Dickinson



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Beauty: An Autopsy



Exulting beauty, -phantom of an hour,
Whose magic spells enchain the heart,
Ah! what avails thy fascinating pow'r,
Thy thrilling smile, thy witching art?
Thy lip, where balmy nectar glows;
Thy cheek, where round the damask rose
Ten thousand nameless Graces move,
Thy mildly speaking cerulean eyes,
Thy crimson hair, where cunning Love
In many a mazy ringlet lies?
Soon as thy radiant form is seen,
Thy native blush, thy timid mien,
Thy hour is past! thy charms are vain!
Ill nature haunts thee with her sallow train,
Mean jealousy deceives thy list'ning ear,
And slander stains thy cheek with many a bitter tear.

-Emily Dickinson, Part IV: Time

The word beauty in many cultures has myriad meaning, though each etymology opens up infinite worlds. Two etymology will work for this autopsy. In Sanskrit beauty comes from the derivative काल, kala, which means, “a fixed time, a space of time, predestination, fate, death, and oddly the color black.” The Koine Greek word for beauty is ὥραϊος, hōraios, an adjective etymologically coming from the word ὥρα, hōra, meaning “appointed hour.” Beauty was thus understood in context of kairos, “opportune moment,” rather than chronos, “clock time.”

Why is beauty understood as a form of time? This question has always haunted me. Emily Dickinson even seemed to perceive that beauty were the, “Phantom of an hour.” She wrote extensively on beauty. Hear her words echoing across the veil of the abyss, “I died for beauty, but was scarce adjusted in the tomb, when one who died for truth was lain in an adjoining room.” He questioned softly why I failed? “For beauty,” I replied. “And I for truth,—the two are one; we lovers are,” he said. And so, as we met a night, we talked between the rooms, until the moss had reached our lips, and covered up our names.

Beauty can only be perceived by the beautiful, or like attracts like, as the great Hermes Trismegistus taught us so long ago. What does it mean to live beautifully? I know beauty occurs in the scattering of the first spring apple blossom, when the winter no longer chills our hearts. When spring descends gracefully and the wind softly cloaks us in the warm embrace of Time and Space.

“Patron” is a column in *Athenaeum* that focuses on someone connected to FCPL. This month I interviewed Sheldon Hubbard, former employee at the FCPL and world renowned author. I got to spend some time with him.

Who is Sheldon?

Sheldon? He’s alright, others told me he’s a pretty good guy, just out there trying.

Does mythology play a role in your life?

Probably a bigger role than people would think, but I just love the knowledge and old world history that comes with it, especially all the creation stories!

Who inspires you? What inspires you?

I can’t explain all of them without writing a book, so I’ll just name names: Jesus, Ghandi, Abe Lincoln, family, friends, nature, Stephen King, J.K. Rowling, the band *Wage War*, and of course The Dude from *The Big Lebowski*.

Talk about your tattoos?

I have a lot of them and there are many more to come. The next one I plan on getting is either the Roman Numeral IX on my right bicep or the word Pray on the inside of my left upper arm. To coincide with the one on my right arm; to complete one of my life’s mantras: “PMA & Pray (PMA meaning positive mental attitude).”

If you could invite one person from history to dinner, who would you invite?

This is always a tough question. Probably Jesus, but I really think picking Thoreau’s brain would be pretty cool also.

An answer to any question?

Who killed Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls?

Do you have a favorite movie, or series?

Movie is hard because there are just so many that hit home, but my favorite series is *That 70’s Show*. Watch it enough I’m sure you’ll see why!

Do you have a favorite quote in life?

“The universe is wider than our views of it,” says Henry David Thoreau, of course.

Do you believe in the concept of fate?

Oh absolutely. Everything happens for a reason. I find this in the works of Thoreau. It was one of the subjects he explored Thoreaully.

What were you like as a kid?

I was a little brat, ha. Naturally, that’s not the case anymore. Thank, God!

What is your greatest fear?

Sharks... I can’t even look at pictures of them without feeling terrified and unimaginably scared.

Who has been the biggest influence in your life?

Probably my dad. I’ve heard nothing but good stories about him.

If money was no object, what would you do with your time?

Travel! There are so many places I want to see.

Is time travel possible?

Who knows? I’d like to.

What do you wish others knew about you?

That I know that I’m too nice sometimes, but now I know who better to direct it towards.

Do you have any artistic interests?

I’m a writer, and I play music. Not everything, by any means! But specifically bass and singing. I have a couple musical projects I’m hoping to get into with some buddies. I’m also writing a book!

Do you have any future ambitions?

I’m currently working on transferring to IUK to finish my undergraduate in English and a minor in Creative Writing. I then plan to acquire a Master’s in Library Science from IUPUI. I want to be a librarian, if you couldn’t tell.

Do you have any superpowers?

I am good at eating and feeling emotions.

What is one obstacle you have had to overcome that was meaningful?

The death of my father. It took years to finally accept that wherever he is now is much better than here right now.

What is the meaning of life?

Happiness. I believe that once you are truly happy, you’ve found the meaning of life.



This is a picture of Sheldon Hubbard as Superman, which is just one of his myriad incarnations.

“The universe is wider than our views of it,” Sheldon quotes Thoreau as one of his heroes.