

The Great Pagliacci

Everyone enjoys a good laugh, something to bring their spirits up, but what if the people who cheer us up the most are also the ones who suffer through the most pain? Comedians help us in the darkest of times and knowing that even the funniest of them may be going through worst than what we may experience daily. I guess you could say that knowing what a comedian hides from us emotionally, makes me feel more sympathetic. Our laughs come with their pain. My cousin, who has been diagnosed with is an excellent example of someone who uses the darkness within him to cheer others. He gives me, in rough times, a personal view of the extremes and how it is used to shield true emotions. That said, it is the use of comedy in everyday life brings about a shield that each person's uses to block the darkness in their life and focus on the short comings of others instead.

When we look at comedians we see these energetic individuals who make us think as if they are the happiest people in the world. They make light of what affects us in life. Comedians give us glimpses of ourselves and our everyday routines, habits and life in satire, sarcastic and straight forward examples. We somehow forge on living, while they maintain a tightrope walk in the success of their humor. We hear about their meltdowns, their suicidal thoughts, how they really feel behind their mask of humor. Sure, not all comedians are like this. Hell, most are narcissists who truly enjoy getting people to laugh at their jokes but when I see the public display of over bearing emotion by these people who I look up to for comfort I can't help but feel for the worse myself. All the laughter I get is just taken from the pains of another individual, another human just like me. There comes the case of everyone laughing with the pain and not at the pain but really, that just isn't what happens. We'd like to say we laugh with the comedian as he jokes

about being unattractive to the opposite sex but in reality we laugh at his misfortunes. We dehumanize them and laugh at their pain as if it's alright. Sure it's their job, we pay them to be able to laugh at their failures, but is this right? How long, before being paid, did they go cracking jokes to side track the hurt they felt, the pain they were caused. Patton Oswalt, most notably famous for his role in King of Queens and his nerdy stand up routine, was continuously bullied throughout his childhood. Ridiculed and physically bullied he started to learn that if he laughed at himself his bullies would laugh with him (**Widner 1**). He set up a shield of laughter so only the bullies could laugh at the misfortunes that he let them hear. Yes, this led him towards a path of incredible amounts of money but what it also brought was a burden that he can't let go without losing his fans and money. He must continue to allow others to ridicule him even after being away from his former bullies for so long. Only he really hasn't left his bullies, he has become his own bully with the self loathing laughter that he will carry with him to the end of his career. Now we as fans have fallen into a vicious sympathetic cycle where if we don't support them their depression could worsen, but if we continue to support we are only supporting their failures and encouraging them to give us the satisfaction of their own demise.

"Strippers and comedians come from the same background, but comedians are ugly." (Widner 2). An old quote as stated in Michael Widner's article. I see strippers as people who have given up on themselves. Have fallen off the grid and taken up what they felt they were worth. Mostly abused as they were young, leaving a distraught emotional taste in their brains causing them to follow suit with a job that entices them to degrade themselves for satisfaction by viewing eyes. They want to be loved, to be appreciated. The difference between them and comedians are the sex appeal. Comedians commit to this life of self depicting hate for the same reasons the

strippers commit to being fondled by old drunken men, the idea that they may be worth something after all. Both the stripper and comedian share a sense of being broken down again and again leaving them to follow in the circular footsteps of their past.

A role more reserved for the comedian who masks himself out of fear is the Clown. Now clowns, they are vastly darker than the average comedian. They pertain to a younger age group and yet set the stage for how low someone can get in life. Clowns hide behind two masks. A mask of paint to make them seem as someone they want to be and the as-said before mask of pain laughter. Now take this and add in the very fact that even the best of clowns won't make nearly the money as a stand-up comedian, therefore leaving them to live in a lower class life style never being able to reach the outer limits. "I heard a joke once: Man goes to doctor. Says he's depressed. Says life is harsh and cruel. Says he feels all alone in a threatening world. Doctor says, 'Treatment is simple. The great clown Pagliacci is in town tonight. Go see him. That should pick you up.' Man bursts into tears. Says, 'But doctor... I am Pagliacci.' Good joke. Everybody laughs. Roll on snare drum. Curtains. - Rorschach" (Watchmen 1).

Clown or standup comedian, they both are able to put on a mask and fool the public eye. Only when they wear the mask for too long they forget who they are. How they feel. They go through the motions of their robotic lifestyle, running away from the harsh truth that they constantly exploit.

At this point you may be asking why, why have I been constantly drilling into you the pain that comes from the laughter of others? Well for a very simple yet complex answer, my cousin. My cousin is one of the most talkative and crazy people I ever met, yet he suffers from depression. He tries to cover up how he feels and sees the world in the only way he can without

people directly hurting him, through laughter. He follows in the footsteps of comedians such as Jim Carrey or Robin Williams and deflects the situations he is put in at school and makes the kids laugh at a pain he has chosen for them to laugh at in order for them to be mesmerized away from the true pain he feels deep inside. I share this burden with my cousin to help relieve the stress he unknowingly makes worse on himself. To be affected by the same depression that hits these comedians really stops you in your tracks. You begin to understand and sympathize. No longer do you laugh at their jokes that try to dehumanize themselves. You find yourself wanting to help and pat them on the back, only you can't. At least with me, I can lend a shoulder to my cousin before it's too late.

Comedy will always be around for the enjoyment of others. Comedy is there to fulfill the emotional void in our lives. I will always laugh when a comedian says something funny but will never stop to dehumanize them. From my cousin to Robin Williams the darkness in their soul contains difference yet their shield of laughter will always remain the same. Their suffering will not be played out like a comic for my amusement but for the aid in their recovery.