

JOHN MAILER

ENGLISH

LOU

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock. Looking at a clock for more than half an hour is said to drive men insane. Lance had been staring for three. A crowd had formed around him after the second. Cheers of his name rang out through the entire party.

"Did you hear about Lance? No? Well he's just been staring at The CLOCK for three hours! I know, I know, he's possibly the classiest guy I know."

Lance wasn't nearly done yet. He still had a good five hours in him at least. It wasn't so bad, kind of peaceful actually. And besides what was wrong with staring at a clock for hours on end. He wasn't trying to prove anything to himself or anyone else. On that day, for no apparent reason, Lance had decided to look at the CLOCK.

Word of this had left the party by now. In fact the whole block had heard of it. Of course once the whole block knew, the whole town found out, once the whole town knew the whole state found out. Now, people being the way they are and all, had managed to literally send this news of Lance all over the country. And once the news was all over the country, other countries found out. They wanted to know why they didn't have someone who would stare at the CLOCK for hours on end.

By this point Lance had been staring for ninety nine hours and forty three minutes. People started coming from all over the world to see him stare at the CLOCK. One man was quoted as saying. "After I sat and watched Lance watch, I knew the meaning of life!" When asked what that was he replied. "Why don't you go and find out?"

News programs began to have twenty four hour updates on him. "In news today, twenty die in airplane crash, BUT FIRST the Lance report with Chuck Dix!"

Lance had become a national hero. He had outlasted all the foreign CLOCK watchers and given Americans Something to be proud of. Until the day he stopped.

The news of his stopping hit the country faster than his starting. The Russians claimed it was all a hoax and that Lance was a fake. Since he gave no reason for his stopping, people began to believe he was. Pretty soon Lance was just a memory. His followers disappeared, and the press left. Lance went back to his ordinary life and never looked back.

Jason Watts
1/22/95
English 301
H

Deeper Meanings of the Clock:
Satire of the Study of Symbolism

Many writers have sought to express the human experience in today's American society. None has captured this experience better than John Mailer, in his brilliant short story, "Lance". Through the myth surrounding Lance's staring into the clock, Mailer has captured the essence of an overcomptative, male dominated American society.

Competitive or contemplative?

The wide scope of Mailer's symbolism begins with his hero, Lance. Not going deep into Lance's character Mailer says all with the name which he expects us, the reader, to understand and interpret. The lance as a noun is a long, thin, metal weapon popular among knights during the days of feudalism in Europe. Thusly, as knights were among the gentry in feudal days so is Lance today; he is a white male in upper-middle class America. I say middle class not only because of the blatant reference to knighthood in the characters name, but also for the fact a lance is a weapon. Weapons are used during fighting, and are symbols of aggression. Similarly, Lance has aggressively fought to attain his place high on the socio-economic ladder, by beating out those inferior to him namely women.

✓

✓ Mailer's references to male domination of females is very well hidden, and a reader not fully concentrating on the material may have missed it, but I will elucidate. The two names in the essay are: Lance and Chuck Dix, both very phallic. The lance as I explained above is long and strait obviously symbolizing an erect penis, but

*This is hilarious in its context;
the idea is exquisite.*

Chuck Dix is somewhat more difficult. His last name "Dix", when spoken aloud bears a striking resemblance to the slang term for a penis, the "dick, in the plural form. This resemblance to the plural is what is most important; "Dix" represents all penises of all the men in America. Then the continues return to Chuck Dix with twenty four hour updates -the constant wanting be with Dix, to be with the penises- is symbolic of female penis envy. Penis envy of course comes from the penis being the definition of man, and of man being the definition of power and women identifying the penis with power, so therefore envying the penis and the power it represents.

$A=B$
 $B=C$
 $A=C$

The power theme one might think translates into Mailer's motif of Lance, the good ole' red blooded patriot 4th of July loving American, pitted against the rest of the world to determine the best clock watcher and strongest country. While it is true Lance does become a symbol of American superiority over the world, that is not the main point Mailer is trying to show with Lance staring at the clock.

Mailer's symbolism is not of global competition but of man's relation to God and the powers greater than himself, in the modern society. The clock is the symbol of God and greater powers, for the clock measures time which chronicles the moments to our death. The clock is beyond man because it answers only to time which controls man, thus the clock is greater than man. Mailer sets up Lance, who is now symbolic of all mankind, to stare at the clock for over ninety-nine hours. Lance is staring at the clock trying to find God, a search that takes a long amount of time. In the end Lance stops watching, gets up, and walks away "back to his old life." Lance does not

but.
time is
a man made
construct,
is it?
ok

undergo a change, unlike Siddhartha after three years of meditation or Moses after the burning bush, Lance does not find God. Lance's inability to find God correlates to the decreasing popularity of religion in America. The man who watches Lance watching and "finds the meaning of life" is simply a zealot who is worshipping Lance as a false god. This is a reference to David Koresh and the Waco (what a ^{shit!} cook out) incident. The false God theme is continued with the people who doubted that Lance ever watched the clock. With their faith shaken they turn away from religion even more.

In the short two page essay Mailer has managed to comment on major aspects of the world today through expert use of symbolism, and extended metaphors. With the essay Mailer has asserted himself as one of today's most skilled writers.

Jason -
What's eerie
about this is how
many ~~other~~ pieces
have been written
about this father-son
that some
pretend to be
extremely clever.
WAY better than
my
analysis.
No more of these if
you want.

JOHN MAILER
ENGLISH
LOU

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

You shouldn't be here. These are not your kind of people, this is not your kind of club. Raves. You are convinced that raves are the end of society as you know it. It makes you completely disgusted. There is nothing here for you. The whole atmosphere is painful. Lots of little kids running around, doing drugs you've never heard of, thinking it makes them mature. Mature. They don't even realize that when you're mature you don't worry about whether or not people think you're mature. But they worry.

The lights are dancing too fast for your taste. You have a nice high right now but if those fucking lights don't stop dancing in front of you, you might lose it. Why are you here again? Oh, that's right, a girl you used to think was attractive, maybe even beautiful, invited you here. You used to think very highly of this girl, that is until you came here, came here and discovered what kind of a girl she really was. Now you don't even know where she is.

One of the little kids runs up to you and asks you what you're on. You look at her for a minute and then decide that she's about thirteen, maybe fourteen.

"Just weed." You say hoping that she will be disgusted by your lack of adventure, but she's not.

"I think that is sooo cool! You don't know how people here are afraid to just do one thing at a time. But like, you want to go do some 'X' with me?"

"Maybe some other time." You say as you see her little glittered up face express a look of shock at your unwillingness to go into a little room with this girl, take some pills,

and fuck her. If you were in a malicious mood, you might have even said. "Why don't you try some of the little kiddies, your age, over there?" But you're not in that kind of mood, and honestly you probably wouldn't have done it even if you were.

Some times that pisses you off, your lack of maliciousness. You're tired of always being called the nice guy. You have this unbelievable urge to go somewhere and do something horrible, but what? Then you see him. He's a bald man, very skinny, and he looks like he hasn't washed in five weeks. That means he must have status in the rave world. Aside from pissing you off by just being there, he's talking very closely with Hannah, the girl you came here with. Even though you're disenchanted with her at the moment, you have wanted to be with this girl for many years, and you're damned if you're gonna' let some smelly raver get her tonight. You start walking over to them. The marijuana is giving you a feeling of invincibility, a numbness that tells you you can do anything. Even so, you wish you were a little drunk as well. Although you feel like you can do anything, and you feel like you know everything, you also know that you will have a hard time expressing anything in logical sentences. You think for a minute that maybe you should go and get some liquor, Not too much, just enough to get you feeling *ultra* nice. No wait. You forgot that this is a kiddy club, no alcohol, only high priced designer drugs. All this thinking has made you tired, and you feel like going to bed. But then you see this sleazy, raving, bald man put his hand on Hannah breast. You run over there and yell "HEY!"

"Oh, it's you!" Hannah says with a druggy eyed look. "Where have you been all night?"

You want to tell her the truth. You want to tell her that you've been in Hell all night. You want to tell her that you've had to deal with stupid, little, X'ing, kids all night. But first you have to take care of something.

" Hey Asshole, what the hell do you think you're doing?!"

" Oh, I'm sorry man, did you want to join us? She's tripping out of her mind and says she's up for whatever." The bald man says as he winks at you with a cocky smile. You hit him in the nose. You hit him hard. He feels the blood that is starting to gush down his face as he slowly stumbles to the floor. Hannah is laughing hysterically in the corner. She's laughing so hard, there's tears rolling down her face. You feel pleased with yourself, it was a good punch. Then you feel two strong hands grab your shoulders while another two are grabbing your feet. You try to see who these people are carrying you away and you realize that it must be the bouncers. The same bouncers who laughed at you when you mistakenly followed Hannah into the girl's frisking line at the front door. Why would you know that men were to be frisked in one line, while women were in another? But they laughed anyway.

You feel so powerful right now it's unbelievable. Your adrenaline plus the weed must have made some sort of weird Superman drug, 'cause you feel *nice*! You decide you no longer like these men carrying you out of the club, you kick one in the face.

The next thing you know a large fist comes flying into your stomach. You have now lost your high. Fists are flying at you left and right. You're not sure if your head hurts more than your stomach, but then again, does it really matter? Finally you go crashing onto the pavement, head first. You here behind you. " AND DON'T COME BACK MOTHER--FUCKER!" You might take his advice.

You get up and realize that it is daytime. Your body has stopped hurting at the moment because it is too tired to hurt. You feel your face as you start to walk away from the club, it's torn up pretty bad, maybe even a scar, but you don't care. You don't care because you're free. Free from that Hell you just spent your night in. Yes, you're free, and you plan on keeping it that way for awhile.

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CH. II: WHAT A NIGHT YOU HAD!

You open your eyes. You're in bed. How you managed to get there is a mystery. You felt free when you left that Rave, but your freedom wasn't worth the soreness you now feel. You think about moving. After you try to get up, you reconsider. You don't remember fights hurting this much the next day when you were a kid. Then again, when you were a kid you only got into one fight, and that was in third grade after school.

It's gonna' be a hard day at the mall today. You had better get up and look at your face. You start to move and all of a sudden every muscle in your body is rebelling. They don't wanna' move. Somehow you get up and go over to the mirror. *Jesus!* You look like shit that the dog brought in. Your left eye is swollen, almost shut. You were right about that scar, but it's not too big. You might even look tough.

Why did you kick that bouncer last night? Didn't you know what he would do? You have to get over this obsession you have with yourself. You have to stop thinking you're too nice! You know where it comes from. When you were little you once overheard some girls talking about their boyfriends.

"Well you know how it is, I'm like all girls, I say, I even think I want a boyfriend who's nice. But when I get a 'nice' boyfriend, I get bored. It's true, every girl wants a bad-ass boyfriend."

That scared you for life. Because, even though you hate it, you are a nice guy. Well, it's time to pull yourself together. You light up a cigarette, Marlboro lights. You love these morning stooges. Without them you wouldn't make through the day.

The time now is 11:30. You have to be at work at 11:15. That doesn't leave you too much time. Better get moving. Your boss, T, is gonna' be pissed. but that's a whole different story. Heather, the girl who works with you, is doing overtime right now, and that's not right. Fuck her, you're just gonna' stay home today. No you're not, who are you kidding. Damn, why are you so fucking nice?

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WHAT UP KID?

Yo kid, that movie was mad phat!

It was all right.

Na kid, I'm dead ass yo! That shit was crazy phat!

It needed a little more plot.

Yo kid, how they had Dennis Leary shootin' up mad fools. That shit was phat!

He wasn't that believable.

And then, how these mad funny fools behind us started shoutin' shit at the screen.
That shit was crazy funny!

I thought I was going to have to smack them .

Yo kid, we gotta' do this shit more often!

I bet.

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HOSPITAL

It's a rule that hospitals are not allowed to be comfortable places. Let's start with the general surroundings you're in. The walls are pink without exception. The bed sheets are pink as well. So right off the bat you feel like you're living in a Pepto-Bismo bottle. Then let's move to the actual bed itself. This bed is iron, and was almost certainly a tool used for torture back in the medieval days. It's got a crank at its foot that gives you a vicious shock every time you try to adjust it, which is not often because you learn quickly that there is no comfortable position in this thing. Then, for some reason, the mattress is always too small for the bed. So you're laying there with either your head or feet hanging off, after a while it doesn't even matter.

Now let's move on to the meals. First of all, you have breakfast at six, lunch at ten, and dinner at two. I don't know what kind of time schedule these people are on, but it's definitely kooky. The food is no joy either. everything's microwaved, right down to the toast. So there you are, eating your rubbery sausages and your plastic like eggs when all of a sudden you notice that your arm is green and flickering. Fear races through your heart and just as you're about to call the nurse and tell her you think you're dying you realize that it's only the florescent light buzzing above your head.

You decide to watch some TV. But unfortunately the only two stations this set gets are the Home shopping network and the Bible channel. So much for the tube. You

look for something to read and see their selection of magazines on the table. This looks promising. National Geographic, issue number three. These are some old magazines. The only thing they keep current in this place is the TV Guide, this way you can see what you're missing.

You can't take it anymore. Your heart is starting to thump to the point where you can see it through your chest. For some reason your temperature seems to have risen to one hundred and nineteen. You gotta' get out, you gotta' get out. Just then the nurse pops her head in.

"And how are we feeling today?"

How are we feeling today? You want with all your might to tell her how your feeling today. You want to tell her what she can do with her button smile and florescent lights, her pink sheets with her pink walls, her torturous bed and her rubbery toast. You want to tell her all these things, but all you can say is.

" Oh, a little better I think."