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April 13, 2014

Section 4

Best Poem: "Constantly Risking Absurdity"

The poem "Constantly Risking Absurdity" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti attempts to relate the quest of a poet in his process of self-expression and creativity to the search for genuine beauty and significance in life. Ferlinghetti uses acrobats, who are extreme in nature and are "always risking absurdity / and death / whenever [they] perform," to delineate the extent to which poets, and all people who are trying to discover meaning and value in life for that matter, truly go in order to make their pursuits rewarding and worthwhile (1-3). The entire process may be tough and difficult to endure, as portrayed by the acrobats' "performing entrechats / and sleight-of-foot tricks / and other high theatrics / and all without mistaking;" however, the poem elucidates the fact that the end result of beauty and of a greater understanding of life will ultimately outweigh the costs and expenses of its discovery (13-16). Personally, this poem speaks to the very heart of my insecurity. Not only does the poem encourage the reader to go out into the world and to live although he "may or may not catch / [his] fair eternal form / spreadeagled in the empty air / of existence," but it also reassures the reader that risking his own sanity and reason may be necessary in order to derive the most value out of life, directing his focus away from the preservation of social reputation and towards enhancing the quality of his life. These urgings of the poem also reflect the attributes that make it poetic, namely the fact that it acts as an inspiration for people to make something of their existences, to discover the secret to live, and to live for beauty, meaning, and truth. The poem poetically motivates people to live in such a way that brings them the personal satisfaction and self-fulfillment that a fearful and refrained

lifestyle could never provide. In my life, I have personally experienced problems with going out on a limb and expressing my opinions and beliefs in fear that others would reject or immediately deny them, but this poem has rejuvenated my faith in myself and has helped to expand the breadth of my societal actions. Literarily, the poem considerably relates to Mary Shelley's horror and thriller novel *Frankenstein* that tells the story of a mad scientist who thinks he can bring the dead back to life. Stretching beyond the bounds of human knowledge, the scientist, Victor Frankenstein, risks absurdity by going against all of the ethical and moral principles of human nature by attempting to create a new superior and powerful species from dead human body parts. Although he fails, Victor at least approached his experimentation from a fearless and courageous standpoint.