

Have you opened a tear lately?

by Andrew Festa
The Collegian

In Walt Whitman's poem, *Song Of Myself*, there's a line in which a young child comes upon Walt and asks, "What is the grass?" As I see it, Whitman isn't asking us to focus on the question, or the grass, or the young child. He wants us to get beyond the question to the real meaning of life.

If you come across a field of dead or dying grass, your impulse should be to stop and ask about it but few do.

If, on the other hand, you come across a field of growing grass, stop for a moment. Look at the tear drops left over from the night before. Touch them and taste them with your mind, don't just notice them. Take the time to allow your emotions to paint you into the greatest reason for life itself: just being here in the first place.

Earth, the most wonderful gift humanity has ever known, cries more each night. But, like a field of dying grass, no one passes close enough to notice the growing pool of tears. We don't want to notice the dead or dying. We only notice the fingers of green shooting up out of the ground --until the green

fades and the fingers point to a blackening sky.

Then, we turn toward the remaining green blankets of fingers, still pointing up with what smiles they've the strength to show, and forget the sadness of The Gone. We see only what we desire to see.

I love to write poetry, short stories, and the echoes of my philosophies, not for myself so much as for tomorrow. I take vocal snapshots of today, using the filter of my own opinions and interpretations, and pass what develops on for the eyes and minds of tomorrow's readers.

However, in talks with the Earth, I am forced to wonder if there will be any people here tomorrow to read and enjoy those snapshots.

Speaking through leafspeech, she has come to my window at night and kissed my mind with wonder. I see the beauty that's there to enjoy. Earth, using a cliché, often asks, "Why don't more people stop and smell the roses, what few still grow?"

Her confusion and pain is everywhere. Even her twisted seasons, like people on drugs, don't know who they are anymore. I see and hear her anger in thunderstorms. I cannot help but notice the tears

which tumble down the face of the sky and land with a sad thud outside my open window. I can't ignore the mounting pain shouted in every thunder-clap. Earth loves us all, like any caring mother, but she's dying.



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Her children are killing her. Still, she loves us. Still, she wants to take care of us, but she can't protect us from ourselves. She spent millions of years twisting and turning herself upside down and inside out so we might have a place of beauty on which to live. She has mothered us for a long time, but even she, in all her might, is not able to keep the slap of our destruction from her face.

People, willing to exert the effort, could build a list of things with which to start correcting harms done against Earth.

We could begin the list and run it as a chain letter, around the world if possible, and keep adding to the list to make things right between Earth and her children. Further, the items of the list need to be rigidly enforced, not by some major economic, social, or political concern, but by each and every one of Earth's children.

Ask yourselves this: "Could I live with myself if I allowed tomorrow to become a waste land where 'life' is no longer a thing wherein beauty can exist, but where preservation of the fittest is the rule? Is that something I could accept giving to my children?"

Not everyone will care, but

for those who call themselves human beings, caring people, and concerned Earth inhabitants worried about the shape of tomorrow, it's not too late, yet.

I leave you with a message I recently found when I opened up a tear that had fallen from its ride down the face of the sky onto my window sill: "I am that which you call beauty, painted for your mind, designed to give you life. My existence depends upon the beauty and concern behind your eyes." It was signed, 'Your Loving Mother, Earth.'

Considering I've heard it said that millions of messages much like the one I found have been seen around the world in every conceivable language in tears big and small, I'd wager the words are for us all.



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On The Almost-Cutting Edge Of Fashion

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

Recently I read an alarming fashion article in *The New York Times*.

I should note that I have never been on the cutting edge of fashion. I'm more on the trailing edge of fashion, or even the discarded cardboard box of fashion that the blade of fashion was originally packaged in.

For example, it wasn't until this year that I went out in public with my shirt buttoned all the way to the top, and no tie. Before that I always followed the Official 1961 Guy Fashion Code, which said that if you buttoned your top button, you were a fairy, and Joey Maglio and Steve Stromack might stuff you into your locker and leave you there for the duration of the school year. (Granted, they might do this anyway, but it was more likely if your top button was buttoned.)

At some point, I think during the Carter administration, fashions changed and some guys started buttoning their top buttons. But I never had the courage to do this until just recently, when my wife, for my 45th birthday, gave me a very stylish (for me) shirt, which I

would describe as "green," and, in a bold birthday mood, I wore it to a restaurant buttoned all the way up. Nothing bad happened, although I did sporadically emit wads of high-velocity, semi-chewed food as a result of constantly whirling around to see if people were laughing at me.

So I'm making some progress toward fashion hipsterhood. Someday I may even wear earrings. Of course this would have to be after my death. And even then, I'd want the casket to be kept closed, in case Joey and Steve came to the funeral.

My point is that I am not in the avant-grade (literally, "hot tub") of fashion. That's why I was so alarmed by an article that appeared in the Aug. 3 *New York Times* under the headline: "Women's Designers Unveil A New Ease For Men." This article concerns top women's fashion designers who are now making clothes for men. At the top of the page is a paragraph of an outfit from Perry Ellis: The model, a broad-shouldered man, is wearing boots, a rugged lumberjack-style plaid shirt and... tights. No pants. No shorts. Just a pair of tight-looking tights. The model is frowning. He doesn't look like

he's experiencing A New Ease For Men. He looks like a man who realizes that he's walking around in public dressed like a cross between a lumberjack and the late Mary Martin starring as Peter Pan.



Dave Barry

I bet he's also worrying about how he's going to work things out in the men's room. Even more alarming is the

look being proposed for men by designer Donna Karan. According to *The Times*, the program for Ms. Karan's fashion show describes her designs as follows: "Take the sexiness of Indiana Jones. The earnestness of Mr. Smith in Washington. The relaxed glamor of Gary Cooper." The *Times* article has a photograph of a muscular male model wearing a Donna Karan outfit consisting of a jacket, no shirt, and-- here comes the New Ease For Men part--a SKIRT. Really. It's a wraparound "sarong"-style skirt, and notes that "It's masculinity is shored up by a garrison belt."

It most certainly is. I look at this outfit and the image that leaps into my mind is Gary Cooper, standing on some dusty Wild West main street, facing down a gang of bad guys:

COOPER: Bart, I want you and the rest of these varmits to get out of town.

GANG MEMBER: Hey! He's wearin' a skirt! Sarong-style!

OTHER GANG MEMBER: Let's shoot him!

BART: Hold it, boys! That there's a Donna Karan!

COOPER (grimly): That's right, Bart. And you'll note that its masculinity is shored up by

a garrison belt.
BART: First we'll hang him. THEN we'll shoot him.

Speaking of varmits, Ms. Karan would also like you men to start covering you heads with designer bandannas, and so would Calvin Klein. *The Times* printed a photograph of a model wearing one of Calvin's outfits consisting of a head bandanna and an enormous three-piece suit that is spacious enough to easily hold the model and at least one head of cattle.

The thing is, right now I can't imagine wearing any of these outfits, but that's exactly how I used to feel about buttoning my top button. I'm wondering if, 25 years from now, I might be stomping crankily around the house, complaining that it's bowling night and I can't find my official team sarong. So I'm thinking that maybe, instead of making fun of these fashion designers, I should respect them for having the vision and courage to point the way to the future for the rest of us. Maybe it's time I wrote something POSITIVE about the fashion industry. And I will.

Just as soon as I see a leading male designer wearing tights.