

Touched by Nothing Sacred

This is the seventy-fifth piece I have written since I joined the Gazette in November of 1995. In that time I've written for every section of the paper, and created an Online edition.

This is my third year at Dalhousie. In that time I've changed considerably. I am more cynical now than ever before. I am also more aware, and more considerate. I have made friends which I know I will still be asking advice from twenty years from now.

My friends have changed too. Some have become more laid back. Some are angrier now. Some have found a purpose for their lives, while others have lost theirs. The one constant in our Universe is that people change. I can count on the fact that ten years from now I will be a different person than I am now.

In the first two opinion articles I wrote for this paper I reflected on how popular culture had affected me. I talked about a couple of movies — *Nixon* and *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and how they made me reflect.

The next week a woman named Lisa Delilets wrote to the paper and urged me to read a book, but two years later, I think she was wrong. There is no better way to get a reading on the pulse of a society than its popular culture. There is no culture more 'pop' than movies and television.

But this article isn't about history and my career at Dalhousie. It is about change. I know that people change, but does society change? I am reminded of a quote, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." I don't know who wrote it, but it gives me some food for thought.

I was flipping through the channels the other day, and was struck by the amount of absolute drivel that is on television with shows like *The Naked Truth*, *Sabrina: The Teenage Witch*, and *Home Improvement*.

These shows hark back to the bubble gum days of *The Brady Bunch*, *The Flying Nun* and *I Love*

Lucy, where every problem is solved in a half an hour. Every show ends with a hug, and nobody ever says "I hate you".

Yet we don't live in television land. We need years of therapy to solve our problems. We fall out of love more often than we fall in it, and frankly, I remember saying "I hate you" more than once.

These shows are like some badly constructed resume, just in case some aliens (but not the aliens from *Third Rock From the Sun*) are watching us and might be making moral judgements about us.

For true depth, however, I have learned that we have look beyond the 'situation comedy' and into the hour-long drama. I watched shows like *NYPD Blue*, *ER*, *Law and Order*, and the new *Nothing Sacred*. These shows represent real people, but not necessarily us.

We are not supposed to identify with Andy Sipowitz, Mark Greene, or Lenny Brisco. But we are supposed to see something of ourselves in them. These programs try to macrocosmically engulf our entire society into a few powerful characters, characters that remind us of our uncle, our brother, and even ourselves.

These shows harken back to other quality dramas from the past with shows like *Playhouse 90* and *Star Trek*. Maybe these types of shows come easier now,

but that doesn't mean that we still don't get myopic drivel like *Bonanza*. I point to the Michael Landon throwback *Touched by an Angel*.

The best show in this new season is easily *Nothing Sacred*. It's a show which firmly asserts that not every religious person is Jonathan Smith (from *Highway to Heaven*). These are real people, with real problems. I dare say that any religious figure has, at some point, must have found their faith imperfect.

This is what this show is about. He is a priest who has doubts, can make a case for abortion (personally), and has trouble talking to God. I am not a religious person, and even I can relate to the guy.

For some reason this show debuted at 55th, in that week. It is a shame. Does society really change, or does it merely adapt to new technology and sensibilities? I don't know. But if we don't take a chance on something that might just offend us, then I feel certain that ten years from now CBS will be airing the Colombo 30th anniversary special, with an incontinent Peter Faulk trying to solve crimes.

Does society change? I don't know, but I do know that I would rather live in the world of *Nothing Sacred* than *Touched by an Angel*.

DANIEL CLARK



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