

FM REVIEW 2016 19 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: The topic of this poem is the importance of physician self-care, specifically the problem of sleep deprivation. As reviewer 3 notes, I can easily imagine using it as a springboard for discussion. That said, reviewer 1 raises a substantive concern about the poem in its present format, namely that it is too superficial and does not reflect sufficiently on the implications of the sleep deprivation the narrator describes. I suggest we invite the author to do a major revision to address this concern, as well as the more minor concerns of reviewer 2.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: The topic of self-care - and especially the problem of sleep deprivation - that the poem raises is a crucial one for residents and practicing physicians. The first stanza is very engaging, immediately pulling the reader into the narrator's life. However, the next 3 stanzas, while containing some good material, spend a lot of time simply continuing to describe self-injurious strategies (with the exception of masturbation) presumably learned as an undergraduate to ward off sleep. Perhaps these could be condensed for impact.

The heart of the narrative is found in the two falling-asleep-while-driving incidents. Here we need more authorial (as opposed to narrator) awareness. The phrase "no big deal" seems rather clunky. Perhaps instead what can you convey is that you rationalized it as insignificant. The episode in the field is more striking. However, the last stanza does not fully realize the potential of this event. While it makes for good art not to resolve the issue (i.e., the narrator remains dazed and confused), and while it is obvious that the narrator is asking "large" questions in the concluding lines, it needs to have more punch. Perhaps you can pick up on the policeman's query, "What happened?" Something like, "I wondered that too/What happened to me?" and build on this. Another thought is to link it back to the title: "What was I supposed to do? I got in my car and kept on driving," showing the helplessness of the narrator. These are offered only as illustrative examples to spur your creative process.

In terms of other reviewer feedback, since "chartreuse" is both a color and a liqueur, this word choice seems fine to me (reviewer 2). I'd encourage you to think about whether the "self-mutilating" examples (in reviewer 1's phrase) are all necessary. Reviewer 2 also took issue with these, so please look for a way of rephrasing.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: The author has done an excellent job of considering and either agreeing or disagreeing with reviewer/editor comments and recommendations. In most cases she has agreed (condensing several stanzas into one; revising the final stanza to link back to the title, and to emphasize that the poem is working on both literal and metaphoric levels). When she does disagree (e.g., with the reviewer who requested analysis and resolution), she shows thoughtful deliberation and respect for the reviewer's opinion. I believe the poem could be tightened further, as suggested below, but this will make a valuable contribution to the journal.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for an excellent re-write of this poem. The immediacy of the first stanza remains very involving. I also like the way you retained the "shock" value of the strategies employed to keep the narrator awake, while not voyeuristically luxuriating in the self-mutilation aspect. The encounter with the policeman, leading to both literal and existentially symbolic

questions, resonates powerfully. The final stanza is very strong now. As you noted in your cover letter, it suggests not only literal driving, but also how medical education is its own "driving force."

I do have a few small suggestions. The poem strikes me as "long." It needs not to lose its momentum. One way that might be accomplished is to eliminate the second stanza - while well-written, it seems like a tangential detour back to your college days. It does make the point that these are longstanding habits, but that I think is not the main focus of the piece.

The other stanza that needs a little more work is stanza 5. I appreciate your commitment to the structural integrity of the 5-line stanza, but some of the lines seem added to fulfill structural rather than inherently meaningful requirements. For example, the rhetorical question "Was that a warning?" seems too obvious and insufficiently nuanced. The line "I took a deep breath" also seems unnecessary and prosaic. Again thinking about brevity, might you consider combining stanzas 4 and 5 as follows:

Take it seriously.

[I've fallen asleep twice - delete this line; too explanatory]

Once [as a medical student - delete; not that relevant] I drifted off at a red light and

woke to honking horns

Late for rounds,

I just pressed the gas pedal

An even smaller recommendation is to eliminate the "But" that starts stanza 6. This simply strikes me as unnecessary. It is quickly apparent this is a more serious incident.

Please play with these suggestions. They may not offer the right solutions, but I think they indicate areas where a bit more work could be done.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: As I've noted elsewhere, this author is one of our finest physician-poets. In this revision, she has refined her initial effort to address the issue of physician "driveness" especially as it manifests in sleep deprivation. The topic is highly relevant to many in medicine, and I think will provoke nods of recognition; hopefully followed by honest introspection. The author has done a skillful job of revision; and has provided a persuasive argument in defense of a stanza I suggested she delete. I am pleased to recommend this poem for publication.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you both for your skillful revisions, and for your persuasive defense of the second stanza. You offer several excellent arguments for the importance of a) showing the longstanding nature of many physicians' "driveness" (yes, the driving puns are pretty irresistible) and b) the contrast between the cocky undergrad and the dazed and confused older adult. I hope this poem will provoke both nods of recognition as well as honest introspection regarding how often this

risky behavior is rationalized or ignored. Thank you for a compelling and unfortunately still very timely contribution.