Better Than Well
by Carl Elliott

The True Self
“To lose weight and get a new haircut is to become a better person. Her physical appearance
is an expression of who she is.” This particular quote struck a chord with me because when
you stop to think about it this is how so many women in our society think today. If our
physical appearance matches up with what society wants us to look like then all will be well in
the world. Once we have mastered the outside we can move to the inside…. not true at all.
Today’s standards are so offbeat with what is natural and normal that it could potentially take
a lifetime to master the physical attributes that society deems acceptable, if mastering these
attributes is even possible. I feel as though society has become less social because we are
so judgemental. It is easy for adolescents to sit behind computer screens and chat with their
friends while a picture of them dressed to the nines is all that their friends can see. It takes
effort to meet societies physical attractiveness standards and many times people don’t want
to go through the effort. If they don’t have to be seen without makeup or perfect hair to
communicate with their peers then they don’t run the risk of being judged by them for their
physical appearance. That was a rant...

- transgender individuals
- the bodybuilder

I thought it was really interesting that Elliott said, “Finding yourself has replaced finding God.”
This is becoming more and more evident with an increased emphasis on secularity.

We have an increased dependence on prescription drugs in order to meet the new normal. In
the US standards continue to rise and in order to meet those standards human beings have to
push themselves almost to the absolute limit if they hope to be successful. From the looks of
it people aren’t truly happy doing these things. There has been an increase in prescriptions
for antidepressants…. so in order to have the “good” life we have to meet society's standards
which in effect makes us depressed and worn down. But don’t worry from the outside looking
in your life is perfect. You are the only one who knows the toll that meeting societies
standards has taken on your mental, physical, and spiritual health.

- prozac
- SSRIs
- beta-blockers
- enhancements (steroids, plastic surgery)
  - plastic surgery.. “psychiatry with a scalpel.”
  - surgeries might relieve the individuals problems, but they end up making the
    societal problems worse.

In all reality, it seems as though we are stuck. Society is running in a constant loop and if we
try to be different we will face opposition at every turn. How would one opt out of society?
Move to a completely new a different place? What happens when that society begins to take a
toll on your happiness and quality of life. I wrote a sticky not saying that they chapter called
“Three ways to feel homesick” made me want to pack up and move to France, but now I know that nothing can keep its novelty forever. Eventually you will fall in step with society and particular standards that you begin to value as a part of that society.

Griffin’s experiment was very intriguing. Pilgrimages to find oneself. Fugue states.

It has all been done before.

I thought the discussion on childhood was interesting. As I have grown up it has been increasingly evident that our entire education system is focused on our mid-20s. We begin preparing for college, for life away from home, and for our professional lives when we can barely talk. I was a nanny for a family with a 2 year old and an 11 month old the summer before I came to Olaf. The parents had educational dvds galore (baby einstein). They were attempting to prepare their children so that they would have the best chance at having a successful life. We have begun to treat our children like mini-adults, but if parents refuse to do this they might be setting their children up for failure. Enhancement drugs like growth hormones.

Elliott also discussed the medicalization of personalities which is a topic that has surfaced multiple times throughout our independent study. Elliott specifically discussed social phobia, depression and attention deficit disorders, specifically ADHD. The point that Elliott made about the long term effects of giving our children Ritalin was interesting. It was also a little scary that a study has not been done to track individuals who have been taking Ritalin since childhood. A study like this might be difficult though because there are a lot of other factors that play into the successes or failures of a life.

I really liked reading about the German fairy tales. They sound like ones that I would like to read to better understand how the messages are different from the American and British fairy tales that I am familiar with.