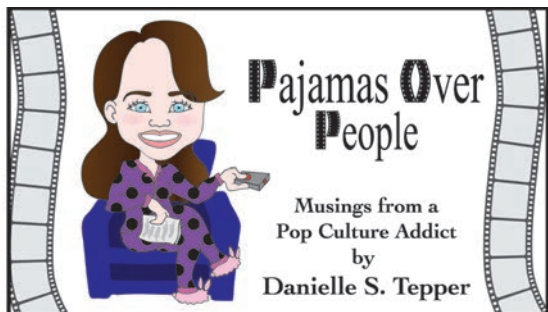


Remembering Robin



Writing this issue's column has been like ripping off a Band-Aid ... slow, and painful ... taken one little bit at a time, each word more agonizing than the next. At press time, it's been exactly one week since the world learned of Robin Williams' tragic death. The news hit me like a ton of bricks. Celebrity accidents and overdoses come and go so commonly these days, it feels natural to shake your head and think, *what a shame*. But this one hurts.

There is no denying that Robin Williams was a one-of-a-kind comedic genius. He had a brilliant mind that ran a mile a minute and a mouth that could just barely keep up with the speed of his humor. His talent was immense, and it's easy to feel like his death is a "waste" of that gift. The surrounding circumstances paint an ugly picture of the mental health stigma we have in today's society, and in the months that follow, it is my hope that people use Robin as a reason to explore their own contributions to this devastating affliction. But that's still not why it hurts.

Selfishly, I believe his death affects my generation more so than others. *This* celebrity, *this* wonderful man, impacted our childhoods and rooted his many voices permanently into our memories. I've seen it affecting my friends nearly every day since, with the relentless hashtagging of #RIPRobinWilliams, Facebook statuses comprised of movie quotes, and every so often, the simple declaration of disbelief: "I can't believe he's gone."

"Aladdin" hit theaters just a month before I turned five, in the midst of a '90s streak of Robin's

family-friendly films. His face is emblazoned across last week's issue of *Entertainment Weekly*; in their tribute to him, there is a line that brought tears to my eyes simply because it is an undeniable fact: "It's hard to think of a single sentence Genie uttered that didn't become etched in the brains of a generation of children." Robin had that effect on all of us.

Throughout the next few years, he morphed himself into characters that lit up the big screen like a live wire, whether he was a mad scientist creating bouncy green goo or a confused young boy in the body of a middle-aged man. His zany mannerisms and eclectic voices gave erratic life to any script he touched. You never felt as though you were laughing at him; it was the sheer joy he exuded from playing such roles that gave those full-belly laughs the perfect notes of admiration and affection.

It's now, in the melancholy re-watching of some of his best work, that I regret not partaking in more of Robin's serious side. I've never seen his Oscar-winning performance in "Good Will Hunting," nor his pivotal portrayal of teacher John Keating in "Dead Poets Society." As a lover of both words and film, it's the latter that particularly stings.

Witnessing the outpouring of love for a man we never actually met has been a poignant experience over the last several days, one that I think shows just how deeply Robin's career touched so many. For those of us who grew up on his movies, we're not grieving the loss of Robin Williams alone ... we're also mourning Mrs. Doubtfire ... and Armand Goldman ... and Peter Pan ... and Patch Adams ... and Alan Parrish ... and our beloved Genie. And that's why it breaks our hearts to say goodbye. ♥



To read about Danielle's favorite Robin Williams film roles (including video clips from favorite scenes), visit www.townandcountrygazette.com/category/blogs/pajamas-over-people.