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My Pencil
Brandon Pettey

My pencil is as sharp as the *Excalibur* sword.
My pencil defeats sorrow, anger, and anxiety with the written word.
When I am feeling adventurous, it is my travel guide.
When the introvert in me comes out, it is my invisibility cloak
that helps me to hide.
Most days, my pencil helps me to explore my feelings, doubling as a therapist.
Sometimes, it is so lazy that it even refuses to jot down a simple grocery list.
To my pencil, I owe a great deal of gratitude.
Following it wherever it may lead has always vastly improved my attitude.

Unexcused Absence
Corrine Hinton

— *A tribute to undergraduates and the faculty who teach them.*

I forgot we had something due for today.

My father threw me out.

The printer wasn't working again.

Someone broke into my car and stole everything.

My laptop crashed.

I spent the weekend in jail.

I misplaced my flash drive.

My daughter spent all night in the E.R.

I locked myself out of my dorm room.

My father was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

I had to work.

We just learned that our newborn is deaf.

I couldn't get access to the Internet.

My boyfriend died in a car accident.

My car broke down.

My brother tried to kill my mother and me.

Fun Times with the Library
Brandon Pettey

Last weekend, I met up with the Library to make some crazy memories.
I arrived promptly at the strike of noon as he instructed, lest there be late fees.
Knowing my passion for the great outdoors, he introduced me to his friend
Captain Ahab.

He was a nice enough fellow, a little on the obsessive side, though.
Then the Library introduced me to a man with the last name of Poe.
I think he could benefit from some time with a therapist. With whiskey
on his breath, he kept muttering something about a bird.

Finally, we ended up going back in time to 1984.

Once there, the Library introduced me to a gentleman named Winston Smith.
He seemed nice enough, though hard to get to know as he was so preoccupied
with television.

We arrived back home around nine o'clock, laughing as we came in the door.
Someone shushed me as I told the Library I hoped to see him more.

Megan Rose
Megan Flannery

My parents named me *Megan Rose*. Not *Meghan Rose*, the “brave warrior” recognized in our Irish homeland . . . just *Megan*, a Welsh pet name of the more elegant *Margaret*, meaning “pearl.” I never felt much like a pearl, not with the other twenty thousand pearls born in the country that year. They almost named me *Rachel*. At least then I would’ve had the thirteenth-most-popular name instead of the tenth. I could’ve been three steps closer to being extraordinary, but my mother, exhausted and arguably delirious from giving birth, listed two reasons for naming me Megan over Rachel:

1) I had big feet. (Apparently, no true Rachel would have such large feet.)

2) I didn’t come out screaming. I was quiet. (The joke’s on her, though. That’s about the last time I was quiet around members of my family.)

I didn’t mind the name Megan. It was easy enough to sound out, my teachers never mispronounced it (although I can’t say the same for some of my more whiskey-tango relatives), and nothing really rhymed with it (sparing me an unflattering childhood nickname from some of the crueller kids in elementary school).

Of course, it wasn’t long before I personally knew half a dozen other girls who shared the name. I became friends with some of them. I became inseparable with one of them (simplifying and yet complicating things for those around us). The lazy ones would greet us simultaneously with a “Hey, Megan” that killed two birds with one stone. What’s worse is that they always thought themselves clever for doing that. (As if they were the only ones to make the connection that two best friends shared the same name.) Others, like the poor boy who would eventually go on to date each of us, sought ways to distinguish clearly between us. So began the series of nicknames.

My family often called me *Meg*, but few people outside of our household ever considered it. I was *Megs* to my close friends, *May* to the extended family who believed that was the first syllable of my name, and *Girl* to my baby brother, who, at the time, had no other female in his life besides Mama. I was never *Meggie* because I hated the way it sounded, and I was never *Flannery* because there were too many of us roaming around.

As I grew older, I earned additional nicknames (although they became more and more outlandish): *Merg* because it was like *Meg* but the off-brand version (to separate me from the gorgeous, pristine plastic versions like Ms. Fox); *Meegan* thanks to a popular Key-and-Peele skit involving Jordan in drag as an overly dramatic girlfriend; and *Reuben* because a drunk slurred what he thought was my

name and changed it from *Reagan* to *Reuben*. My friends found the name entertaining as Hell, so they made sure it stuck.

Still, I never wished to change my name, not even when the middle-school boys snickered at my initials of *M. F.* or when I stopped responding to my first name in public because nine times out of ten the call wasn't meant for me. All that changed in high school when my mother informed me of the name she'd picked for her daughter that my father had vetoed from their shortlist: *Eleanor Austen* (or *Nora* for short).

Eleanor came from a strong first lady and activist who was known for knowing her own mind. *Austen* came from the famous author whom my mother and her mother both adored. An entire lifetime played out in mind about who I could've been and how my experiences might have been different if only my parents had called me *Nora*. I could've been more patient and, therefore, kinder. I could've been bolder but still more dignified. I could've been enigmatic and made myself and my company more desirable. I wouldn't have been the same person at all, and I'd have been all the better for it.

Ten years after discovering who I could have been, I still adore that name and anticipate having an *Eleanor Austen* of my own one day; but I've developed an affinity for *Megan Rose*. The name isn't just comforting because it's familiar. The memories of where I come from and how I've grown resound from it. Sometimes, it's just a name—a few sounds barked out to get my attention; however, sometimes it's so much more than that.

"Megan," my brothers announce excitedly upon my homecomings (not less and less frequent and thus even more treasured).

"Megan Rose," the diploma reads after four years of pulling all-nighters, working multiple jobs, and burying myself in books.

"Megan," one of my first students giggles on her last day in class when I finally allow her to address me in such an informal manner.

"Megan Rose," my best friend greets me joyously with tears in her eyes on her wedding day.

"Megan," my boyfriend rolls off his tongue playfully and affectionately (and the name has never sounded so beautiful).

"Megan Rose," my parents call me on special occasions when they're particularly pleased with me, appreciative for me, and proud of me . . . just like when they first gave me the name.

So I may one day change my last name, but I have no intention of changing the rest of it. Nothing sounds better or captures me so well as *Megan Rose*.

Elegy for My Maiden Name

Corrine Hinton

On March the fourth, we wed on morning dew;
the shadow not yet cast across the day.
United, you to me and me to you,
O'er hands and heads, the chaplain he did pray.

And on tradition, you in stoic blues,
did prey to make my surname into yours.
And then, without my knowing what I'd lose,
had set in motion fierce Bellona's wars.

For mine, a name I held in high regard—
dismissed in just the blinking of an eye—
was Hahn, from German tribes I cast this bard.
Atop an iron pullet, roosters cry.

Upon a sapphire surcoat, tears did fall
to feed the soil under which you lie,
encased, in chains—as I am—in your thrall;
a mausoleum for what could not die.

Between the links, methinks, that She still lives.
No more a branch upon my family's tree
but yours; from roots, the meristem still gives
and births new fire for Juno's elegy.

The Absence of Clarity
Chandler Moree



What Happened to My Dreams?
Sammie Browning

Did they fly
like a bird to the sky
or rupture like a vein—
and then bleed?
Did they pale like written words?
Were they erased and drawn over—
like a misplaced comma?
Maybe they just withered
like a plucked rose.

Or do they remain?

Jelly Bracelets
Megan Flannery

Back in the days of jelly bracelets
And baby teeth,
Ponytails and bed head,
Shirts without bras,
Faces without makeup,
Head without the weight of worry.

Back in the days of cameras with real film
And fitting in my mother's lap,
Ambushing her on our ugly old couch
Before she'd even had her coffee,
Just because the day was new
And the world waited on us.

Back in the days of security,
Feeling her cheek pressed to mine.
Knowing we were one and the same:
Same eyes, same skin, same hair, same blood.
Knowing where we belonged
And that it was side by side.

Back in the days before I grew up,
Lost the bracelets, the teeth, the ponytail.
Acquired the bra, the makeup, and a burden of worries.
Updated the camera, outgrew the lap,
Trudged out of bed begrudgingly,
Met the sun with a grimace, and put coffee first.

Back before I found insecurity, felt her grip hold me back.
Discovered we're not at all the same:
Same eyes, different views.
Same skin, different scars.
Same hair, different tangles.
Same blood, different relations.
Still knowing where we belonged,
But not knowing if we'd ever find our way back
To that ugly old couch.

Click

Chandler Moree

Click

The moment transcends time to become more

Click

Time stopped to gaze upon the shore

Click

The message frozen forevermore

Click

Taken into a dying war

Click

May in March
Lynn DiPier

The end of our road was undeveloped,
a swamp my mother said, forbidden.

But she worked afternoons and Saturdays
and we went to those taboo places,

the old black bridge and railroad tracks,
the brushy body of water we tossed

sticks into in summer, braving mosquitoes,
black flies, and gnats. The mud that oozed

between our toes. The stench. We went
and never said, my sister and I. She

the follower, younger, I the instigator.
It was a Saturday when she broke through

the ice of early spring. We skated the best
we could in our boots and good coats,

our parkas washed and hanging, still
damp on the basement clothesline.

Laura dropped into a soft spot,
reaching for a sprig of pussy willow,

her wool coat the heavy color of wet,
her hair tangled in her fingers

as she grabbed at the rim of ice
cracked around her like a mirror. I saw

but didn't really, got a branch, extended it,
lying on the ice the way I'd seen on TV.

She lost a glove, both boots. I almost lost
my sister, then, when some cool hand

held her tightly enough to leave its mark,
not a bruise but a dark code between us.

At home we drank cocoa and doctored
the evidence, keeping our secret safe

by not speaking. In solidarity, we held
our shields of nonchalance with trembling

fists, which became, as we warmed,
more solid than the sum of our fingers.

Roses in the Snow

Dennis R. Roberts, Sr.

An event.
An emotion.
A thought.
A plan.
A cold winter night.
A white blanket that covers the ground.
The shine.
The shimmer.
The smoothness.
The sharpness.
The swipe.
The splatter.
Drops hit the blanket,
adding color to the pure white.
Some bunch together like a bouquet.
Your blood paints the white canvas.
In the moonlight, your life fades away.
In the moonlight, I look to the ground.
In the moonlight, I see Roses in the Snow.

Journey
Richard Ehler

I don't know where I'm going,
don't remember where I've been,
but I've got a funny feeling
I'm headed there again.
I think back to when it started,
to the moment when I fell,
when I thought I was in Heaven
and I found myself in Hell.
I never do the thinking
till after I have lost
the will to live my life alone
no matter what the cost.
So this time I'll be careful;
this time I'll be smart.
I'll watch the signs
and read the minds
before the loving starts.
And when I meet a lady
who takes my breath away,
who makes me leave the hurt behind
and love another day,
I'll tell her she will have to wait
for me to come around
and have a little patience
till I get to higher ground.

Sparrow
Sara Vacanti

This tale belongs to Sparrow, a fairy who was neither beautiful nor ugly but exceptionally intelligent, ambitious, and inquisitive. She had recently emerged battered and bruised from a particularly stormy moment in her life when a beautiful rainbow on the horizon caught her attention. Led by her curiosity, she left her current path and made her way to the end of the rainbow; she was certain she would find a treasure that justified the rough terrain she had previously trekked.

Her discovery once she reached her destination surpassed all her hopes and expectations! She found the sky a cloudless blue and the grasses a dark emerald; this land was a place where doves glided through the lilac-scented air. The sense of security and belonging instantly captivated her. She was not accustomed to feeling as if she belonged anywhere, so she clutched at this opportunity with uncharacteristic tenacity.

Sparrow vowed she had found her forever, her always; however, the deception faded. The charm and the shine tarnished, the blue skies developed squally blemishes, and the terrain turned treacherous. She was heartbroken.

A stone bridge allowing access across a minuscule river appeared on the path before her. A wobbly creature with pointy ears and bare feet lumbered out of the soggy undergrowth from the riverbed. He introduced himself as Tradition while sneering around the name. Sparrow felt chills roll down her back as Tradition spoke. She only wanted to feel the sunshine on her skin again and dance in the meadows.

Tradition informed Sparrow that she must forgive and forget in order to continue with her life. Mistakes could be corrected, and a happily-ever-after could be reached. Sparrow could simply walk across the bridge to maintain custom. She could have her happiness.

Sunbeams lit the adjacent riverbank, and sweet-smelling flowers carpeted the ground. She pictured herself twirling through the meadow as laughter and music filled the air, and she admitted to herself that she was not prepared to give that hope up. Sparrow took a deep breath, renewed her commitment, and walked across the bridge.

The renewal was false. Details spun to portray her as crazy and unstable. Change was sworn to her, but she always reached another bridge instead of the crossroads that were promised to her. The path contained sticky mud that immobilized her feet, grabbing vines that wrapped her in pain, life-sucking insects, and unpredictable weather.

Sparrow glimpsed her reflection in a shallow pool and was shocked to find that she did not recognize herself. Her dull eyes and brittle skin scared her; she was beginning to forget who she was and who she had wanted to become.

This lifestyle became a sacrifice, and Sparrow's heart was the lamb for the slaughter. She became numb to all but the rejection and betrayal. Her favorite joy became her endless pain. A sickness infested her mind, and she began a twisted cycle of receiving an antidote from the cause.

Spark by spark, Sparrow's brightness slowly dimmed over time. Where once a dazzling brightness shone for the world to see, there was now a muted paleness colored with dark and murky uncertainty. She questioned her existence and discarded her dreams. Her wings felt burdened with a debilitating weight until she forgot their purpose and stretched them no more. Her light flickered intermittently until she lowered her head in defeat. Her light extinguished with a sigh.

The pattern continued.

Of course, another option was there for Sparrow. During a routine bridge crossing, Tradition intentionally pronounced her name as Hollow. They had been there many times before; the stupid troll knew her name well by now. He snickered and pointed his crooked finger at a jagged cliff edge that was barely visible at the far left of the bridge. He told her that she could jump, but she would never survive. Sparrow believed him. The fall alone would end her.

The pattern continued.

Colors in her immediate surroundings became more muted with each passing bridge. The post-bridge pleasantness was briefer and briefer. Sparrow began to predict to the day when she would reach the bridge. The routine was abusive and unavoidable. She would curse ultimatums, yet she would always cross the bridge.

Sparrow would occasionally recall the cliff and weigh her options. She knew surviving such a jump would be difficult, but she thought she could prepare beforehand to allow a greater opportunity for success. The thoughts felt disloyal to Sparrow, but she couldn't ignore how her soul was tearing in half because of the current path she was on.

The pattern continued.

The same damn troll at the same damn bridge. This time he greeted her by the name of Sorrow. She felt trapped in a loop; she was doomed to repeat the same painful path. She would always return to this troll's bridge with no hope of the promised crossroads. She was bitter.

Sparrow had begun to resent all that the process had to offer—the short-lived change and the promises of happiness that would easily break. She recalled the troll snidely informing her of the alternate path, but no shudder followed as on

previous thoughts of the cliff. She entertained the thought of jumping with pleasure . . . with longing this time.

She focused her attention on the path behind the troll bridge. The scene looked like a snowy field at first glance—white powder covering everything—but it was an illusion. Sparrow blinked. She allowed her eyes to see the upcoming path for what it was: a desolate ruin covered in ash with another bridge in its midst. This was her repetitive, damaging, suffocating path—her damning path. Sparrow’s head spun with the predictability and the knowledge that nothing would ever change.

Finally, she jumped.

Sparrow threw herself into the unknown with no fear of what would come next. She would fall to her ending on her own terms if such an ending were necessary, but the descent would be breathtaking because it was of her own making.

Then she remembered her wings. They were shaky and weak from disuse, but they grew stronger and bolder with each beat she made. Sparrow’s eyes opened to a new world filled with color and possibilities. It was a world that saw beauty in her imperfections, embraced her thorns and scars as positive attributes, and set fire to her soul once.

Thus her story began

Viewing Time through Christianity

David Zwirn

Few things have more power to shape societies and civilizations than religion. Particularly, Christianity helped shape the perception of time. It introduced a new system of dating events; it instituted annual calendars; and it shaped daily life through liturgical observance of hourly prayer times. Occasional controversies over some of these issues demonstrate the seriousness with which many Christians took these new views.

Christianity introduced the concept of fixing dates and events before or after Christ's birth. Most writers of antiquity used a system of dating events that referenced how long the local ruler had presided over that area. Suetonius thus gave the date of Augustus Caesar's birth as "the ninth day before the Kalends [First] of October in the consulship of Marcus Tullius Cicero and Gaius Antonius" (qtd. in Grout). Even centuries after Christ's death, writers still used this system of dating. For example, Dr. Glen Clary cites a passage by Clement of Alexandria, wherein he gave multiple views on how to express the date of Christ's birth: "... they say that it took place in the 28th year of Augustus, and in the 25th day of Pachon [May 20]. And the followers of Basilides . . . say that it was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, the 15th day of the month of Tubi [January 10]; and some that it was the 11th of the same month [January 6] Further, others say that He was born on the 24th or 25th of Pharmuthi [April 19 or 20]" (qtd. in Clary).

Following that tradition, the Roman emperor Diocletian, in one of his many reforms, imposed his reign on the official dating of events and designated this new system as *Anno Diocletiani*—"In the Year of Diocletian." Over two centuries later, a Christian monk named Dionysius Exiguus devised a new system to replace Diocletian's. Exiguus used a new designation, *Anno Domini*, or "The Year of Our Lord" (meaning Christ), to replace *Anno Diocletiani*, "specifically to do away with the memory of this emperor who had been a ruthless persecutor of Christians" (Coolman).

For this new system, Exiguus recalculated the date of Christ's birth and determined that 532 years had passed since Christ's birth. Thus, the first recorded use of the "A.D." designation appeared in Anno Domini 532, the year after Anno Diocletiani 247. Even though Exiguus meant to designate A.D. 1 as the year of Christ's birth, he "... was off in his estimation by a few years, which is why the best modern estimates place Christ's birth at 4 B.C." (Coolman).

Exiguus, however, did not devise the term "B.C." The Venerable Bede first used the term in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (published in 731). Bede's book expanded on the A.D. system to designate events that occurred before Christ's birth as B.C. In the ninth century, Holy Roman Emperor

Charlemagne adopted the system, using it to date official government acts; such uses spread the system throughout Europe (Coolman).

As much as the Church valued determining the date of Christ's birth, it valued the date of Christ's resurrection even more. The early church sought to establish a fixed date upon which all Christians could celebrate Easter together. This ambition shaped an annual calendar that affected other annual events.

During his reign, Julius Caesar brought the Roman calendar into alignment with solar positions by his numbering of the days within the months. By contrast, early Christianity, as an offshoot of Judaism, followed the lunar-based Jewish calendar, which fixed the dates of festivals such as Passover and Pentecost according to the proper phase of the moon. By the time of Constantine, the Christian Church had begun to institute exclusively Christian festivals, such as saints' days, which did not pertain to Judaism. Since most Christians at the time lived within the Roman Empire, these new festivals followed the solar Roman calendar (Cowie and Gummer 7). Christians had adopted a schedule of weekly worship services by choosing Sunday as the Sabbath prescribed in Jewish law. In this system of worship, "every Sunday was a sort of Easter" (7). By the second century, Christians had begun to debate strenuously about the proper date for Easter, "... for some thought it should be set in accordance with the Jewish Passover, while others believed that it should always be celebrated on a Sunday" (Gonzalez 111). Thus, some Christians celebrated Easter on a different day than others.

When Constantine convened the council of Nicaea in 325, he sought to fix one specific permanent date for Easter. He wished to convince all of the bishops present "... how unseemly it is, that on the same day some should be fasting whilst others are seated at a banquet; and that after Easter, some should be rejoicing at feasts, whilst others are still observing a strict fast" (Halsall).

Ultimately, the council reached a compromise between the solar and the lunar traditions and fixed the date of Easter as the Sunday nearest to the first full moon after the spring equinox. Christians thus always celebrated Easter on a Sunday, but the lunar cycle still determined which Sunday. This method required constant revision over the years. The church eventually adopted Exiguus's recalculation of dates in order to keep the calendar current.

Rome had never conquered Ireland, however. Therefore, the Celtic Christians of Ireland and Britain differed in some practices from the Roman Catholic Church. The Celtic church accepted "what it believed to be the ancient Alexandrian calculation of Easter" and did not adopt Exiguus's modification (Hunter 795). Once again, one group of Christians celebrated Easter using a different date than the others. These differences eventually led to conflict,

particularly in Britain, where Celtic and Roman missionaries alike sought to convert the Anglo-Saxons.

This conflict even affected households, as in the famous instance of king Oswiu of Northumbria, who “followed Scotch-Irish tradition, [while] the queen held to the Roman one. Since the date for Easter differed, one of them was fasting while the other was feasting” (Gonzalez 275-76). To resolve the difference, they convened the Synod of Whitby in 663. The Roman representatives ultimately persuaded the king, who “ruled that the Roman approach should replace the Celtic approach everywhere” (Hunter 29). As a result, Celtic Christians everywhere had to alter their conception of the moment when Christ rose from the dead.

Societies have always observed special days and times of festival and feasting. As Christianity spread and took root, the celebration of events with particular importance to Christians began to proliferate. The year soon filled up with days commemorating not only significant moments in Christ’s life but also those moments from the lives of Mary and the apostles as well as the numerous martyrs and saints. In celebrating these numerous holidays, medieval society began to orient itself around them.

The practices of the pious affected lives on an hourly basis as well. In Benedictine monasteries, for example, Benedict’s Rule laid out a strict daily schedule of prayer for the monks of the order. This rigid schedule included the times when the monks should wake up during the night to gather and pray in the chapel: “In winter time, that is, from the Calends of November until Easter, the brethren shall rise at . . . the eighth hour of the night And the time that remains after the night office should be spent in study From Easter to the aforesaid Calends of November, the hour of rising should be so arranged that the morning office, which is to be said at daybreak, will follow the night office after a short interval” (Benedict 167).

Monks gathered in the chapel seven times a day and once at night for prayer and scripture reading: “These hours, kept by most monastic houses during the middle ages, were called *matins* [midnight], *lauds* [3 a.m.], *prime* [6 a.m.], *terce* [9 a.m.], *sext* [noon], *none* [3 p.m.], *vespers* [6 p.m.], and *compline* [9 p.m.] The eight hours of prayer came to be called canonical hours, and their celebration the Divine Office” (Gonzalez 280). The monks would pray certain prayers and recite certain scriptural passages that “depended on the time of day, the day of the week, and the liturgical season” (280).

For example, “. . . at Prime on Sunday four sections of Psalm 118 are to be said; and that each of the remaining hours, that is Terce, Sext and None, three sections of the same Psalm 118 At Terce, Sext and None on Monday let the nine remaining sections of Psalm 118 be said, three at each of these hours Psalm 118 having been completed, therefore, on two days, Sunday and Monday,

let the nine Psalms from Psalm 119 to Psalm 127 be said at Terce, Sext, and None, three at each hour, beginning with Tuesday . . . ” and so on (Benedict 170). The monks therefore came to know large sections of the Psalter by heart but undoubtedly also came to associate certain sections with certain times of day.

Since monasteries and churches occupied central positions in medieval towns and villages, the local communities also associated certain days and times with worship services: “Church bells rang out the hours, called people to worship, and warned of danger Religious services were held several times a day Markets, festivals, and fairs were all held in the shadow of the church's spires (towers). During the Middle Ages . . . [t]he church was a daily presence throughout a person's life, from birth to death. In fact, religion was so much a part of daily life that people determined the proper time to cook eggs by saying a certain number of prayers!” (“The Role of the Church in Medieval Europe”).

The Christian church, despite a complicated history, often prides itself on its profound impact upon civilization. Some of its most profound contributions, however, are also its most practical—civilization's calendar and a daily schedule.

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Tick-Tock
Charles Simmons

A baby's cry.
Watchful eye.
Years commence to fly.

Big hand.
Little hand.
Fleeting granules o' sand.

Ebb and flow.
Life's aglow,
But lurks a fading shadow.

Tick . . . tock.
Mirror shock.
Dali's crooked clock.

Flickering flicks.
Waxen sticks.
Melting-into-mind tricks.

Sobbing cries.
Opaque eyes.
Last breath's heaving rise.

Mr. _____ (from *Voice Box*)
Casey Purifoy

The bespectacled secretary sat at her black desk. Her glasses glowed white from the computer's bright screen. To her left, a black rotary phone rang into life.

"_____ & Co., Mr. _____'s office. Yes?" The secretary listened. "He's not here at the moment. He's in a meeting. I can take a message." She placed the phone in its receiver and activated her headset while she pulled up a new e-mail on the computer. "I'm ready," the secretary said. Her fingertips blurred as they struck the keyboard and completed the message. "Anything else?" She listened. "Very well, then. I will make sure he gets this message. Thank you and have a good day." She disconnected the call before finishing the final syllable.

The secretary reread the message she'd typed into the e-mail. She proofread and revised the e-mail and, one minute later, saved the draft. She turned off her headset and forwarded the phone to the automated phone service. She stood up and turned to the heavy mahogany door behind her desk. She gathered her clipboard and passed through.

There was a desk in the center of a large room with three large windows behind it. The sunlight outside lit a room with a checkered marble floor. Books lined the walls of the office along with leather chairs and couches. The room was empty and silent. The secretary looked around and then started walking toward an area of the bookshelves. She stopped in front of the books and selected a tome with a thick red spine. She pulled it lightly, and a section of bookshelves behind her creaked open. The secretary walked inside the door-shaped hole in the books.

The secretary's footsteps echoed through the cold corridor as she made her way past the gray walls. She finally reached a metal door and pressed a red button beside its handle. A screen came to life on the wall.

"Hey, Lilly, what's up? I'm in here with NARCISS."

"I know that, but it's about your son."

There was a pause. Then the screen blackened, and the metal door hummed as it slid to the side to permit the secretary entry. Lilly walked into a large room. The décor matched the primary office: leather furniture, rugs, and books . . . but there were also accommodations for technology. There were charging stations, USB ports, Bluetooth accessories, and touch screens.

A man entered the room from an obscured hallway. He wore a welding mask and large black gloves. He discarded these articles into a box just inside the hallway. Metallic dust bordered the man's tan face. His black eyes glinted.

"You found him?" said the man.

"Yes, but there's a problem," said Lilly.

“What? Let me talk to them,” said the man. He paced to his desk and picked up his smartphone. “Who called? What’s their number?”

“It was a hospital.”

The man stopped dialing the number and looked at Lilly. “What do you mean?”

“He was in an accident. He’s in a coma.”

The man turned to look outside the window. The sun was setting behind a wall of jagged skyscrapers. “Where’s my son, Lilly?”

“I’ve prepared your itinerary, Mr. _____. He’s in Hawaii.”

Insane Schedule

Junius Stone

Why do I do this to myself?

Why? Why? Why?

You know why.

(Rather, I know why. Precision is necessary to avoid encroaching insanity.)

Life is short.

Fifty isn't far. (Six months and change.)

Stuff to do.

Things to accomplish.

Hoops to leap through. (Damn it.)

And loved ones who care about certain hoops even more than you.

They say time is the fire in which we burn (Soran).

Time is the companion that reminds you to cherish the moments (Picard).

Whichever it is, it is a finite commodity, and I'm squeezing mine like a lemon.

Pinching mine like a penny.

Only so much in the day.

Still so much more to do.

But that bachelor's, that thrice-damned bachelor's.

All this effort to wear a flat hat in front of an audience.

Well, that hoop is now in sight.

Over the River and through the Woods:
Queen Victoria's Grandsons Go to War
Melinda Zwirn

Queen Victoria of England filled the royal courts of Europe with her children and grandchildren. The *Pax Britannica* theory of world peace that her extended family should have brought instead contributed in some ways to the events that created World War I, the bloodiest conflict in the history of the world and the strongest conflict waged between the English and German armies despite what should have been a close personal relationship between their ruling monarchs.

Victoria's oldest grandson Wilhelm was born in the midst of swirling seas in his own country. His parents—Crown Prince William of Prussia and Princess Victoria of England—spoke out often in direct opposition to the Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (Ponsonby 45). Wilhelm watched his Prussian family alienate his mother for her Anglican loyalties even as they squabbled amongst themselves. Throughout Wilhelm's childhood, Prussia worked to unify the German principalities under one empire: "Prussia is making great progress, and there is plenty of room for her to go further. She has a vast mass of antiquated political machinery to sweep away before she does herself justice" ("Prussia and the *Times*").

Due to a difficult birth, Wilhelm faced this legacy with some physical difficulties that worried his English mother. Princess Victoria alternatively coddled him and put him through hellish training despite his malformed hand and balance difficulties. At age four, like many of his contemporaries, he wore the uniform of the Prussian military. As heir to the Prussian throne—and the budding German Empire—much rested on the boy's shoulders. Even Wilhelm's father felt the pressure keenly. On Wilhelm's thirteenth birthday, his father wrote about his feelings in a diary: "It is truly a disquieting thought to realise how many hopes are even now set on this boy's head and how great a responsibility to the Fatherland we have to bear in the conduct of his education, while outside considerations of family and rank, court life in Berlin and many other things make his upbringing so much harder" (qtd. in Ponsonby 99).

Perhaps the pitch and roll of life on his home ground caused Wilhelm to become fascinated with the sea. From his early life, during which his mother took him to visit magnificent shipyards in the British Royal Navy, Wilhelm believed that nothing would bolster the world's opinion of Germany like a strong, powerful navy. After he had become Emperor of Germany, he made investing in the German Navy a strong priority, though he met opposition from his councilors and parliament. Before a state visit in 1892, Queen Victoria gave Wilhelm the

honorary title of Admiral of the Fleet of England; this title allowed him to live vicariously through the exploits of his mother's mariner country (McLean 78). During the Boer war, in which Germany maintained a loose neutrality, he frequently advised the English on their sea tactics by urging faster modernization and growth. In 1900, he sent a letter to the Prince of Wales: "As long as your fleet is the first and is looked upon and feared as invincible, I do not care a fiddlestick for a few lost fights in Africa!" (qtd. in Kohut).

The Prince of Wales to whom Wilhelm wrote had been deeply involved with the British Navy for most of his life. A less admired grandson of Queen Victoria, George, the son of Edward VII, had been sent to the anchored training ship *HMS Britannia* at the age of twelve (Carter 42). Though he was the smallest and youngest boy on board, he had been sent to bolster his brother, who was fifteen months older than himself. Third in line to the throne behind his older brother and his uncle, George did not expect to rule. Instead, for much of his childhood, George served as his older brother's guide by keeping him focused and humble.

George's naval career made him the most widely traveled British prince. While his academic education suffered, Queen Victoria described him as "fearless and honest" (qtd. in Carter 42). By the time his older brother died in 1892 and left George heir to the English throne, George had centered upon the navy continuously for sixteen years. Though his service on the sea provided George with an escape from his extremely temperamental father, he had no deep abiding love for the Navy. He asked several times to leave. His father refused to allow it (Carter 45). As soon as George took his place in line for the throne, he left the Navy and began his Constitutional education instead. George had never been naturally inclined to academic study. In fact, some speculation had arisen that he might be dyslexic. His high ranking in the Navy, however, was an accomplishment he had earned in his own right.

Wilhelm had ruled the German Empire for thirteen years when both his mother and his grandmother passed away in 1901. His blustering hunger for empire—a reflection of both his love for and his competitive spirit toward his English family—drove his ambitions. Wilhelm cried for a more powerful Navy. He enlisted the help of Alfred Peter Von Tirpitz. Tirpitz's express ambition was to build a fleet so threatening to the British Royal Navy that Britain would allow Germany to remain peacefully in second place through fear for its own dominance. This position would then allow Germany to rise to its rightful place as the world power it deserved to be (Carter 208).

However, farsighted councilors saw the possibility of conflict on the Eastern and Western horizons and began to pour resources into preparing for a two-front war by funding a standing army and investing in new weapons technology. In 1906, Prussian Captain Bauer, who had served at Port Arthur, campaigned for the

General Staff to build larger siege cannons. Eventually, the General Staff called upon the Krupp Company—a family of manufacturers who had built weapons for the Prussians since the sixteenth century—to build what would be called “the gamma device,” the 420-millimeter howitzer (Brose 53).

By 1910, when George V succeeded his father to the throne, Germany had become a dangerous and unpredictable force in the middle of the European continent. George had formed a deep brotherly friendship with his cousin-in-law Tsar Nicholas II of Russia that reflected in treaties formed between the two countries. This treaty caused Germany to feel threatened and led to its bolstering its forces further by forming its own treaties.

Through these treaties and the assassination of an archduke of Austria in 1914, this seasoned naval man and this child of Prussia ended up across a battlefield from each other.

Both England and Germany believed that a war would end quickly. For some people, this belief stemmed from a nationalistic belief in superior technology. Germany had spent several years before 1914 investing in its own military development. The strength of the German Empire lay in its formidable Prussian army. Prussia had always boasted fewer resources and manpower than its rivals, so Prussians had always sought decisive victories in battle and avoided wars of attrition (Citino 1-3). Prussian warfare, therefore, had always been a war of movement. Wilhelm believed that a strong Navy would only allow him more movement.

However, Wilhelm’s precious Navy enjoyed deployment only in a single battle. The British naval blockade checked its power in port, and Wilhelm hesitated to risk his ships to break that blockade. The ships rusted, and the sailors became disaffected while the blockade starved the civilian population in Germany (Carter 386).

As England marched over the landscape to face German troops, battles devolved into trench warfare. The Prussians were much more familiar with this kind of land-locked fighting. Against weapons like the “Big Bertha” howitzers, England and its allies found their artillery neutralized and their entrenched infantry pummeled.

In both cases, the technology upon which hope of a quick victory had been based proved a disappointment. Both Germany’s naval forces and England’s military ground forces met heavy resistance. The war that should have ended by Christmas dragged on for three more horrible, bloody, murderous years.

As both England and Germany and all of their allies took heavier and heavier losses in the Great War, the countries’ respective monarchs withdrew into grief and despair. Both men became medal-pinner who rarely executed policy based upon their own ambitions. Instead, their function became to see their own

countries reach the end of the conflict and achieve some kind of ceasefire. When the countries agreed to an armistice in 1918 to end the fighting, the relationships between these two cousin countries and their ruling monarchs had been utterly destroyed.

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Choosing the Right Domestic Bliss
Megan Flannery

Can't find the stud.
You acquire
Greasy garage-sale castaways.
These tools
Slow you down,
Cause damage.

Then, one day,
You notice something wondrous.
Solid and unassuming,
Even your plumber will want a peek.
It's easy to become passionate,
All charged up.

When you're ready,
Capture the strange beauty.
Every house needs a sturdy ladder,
Something that has a good weight and feel.
Last a lifetime,
He says.

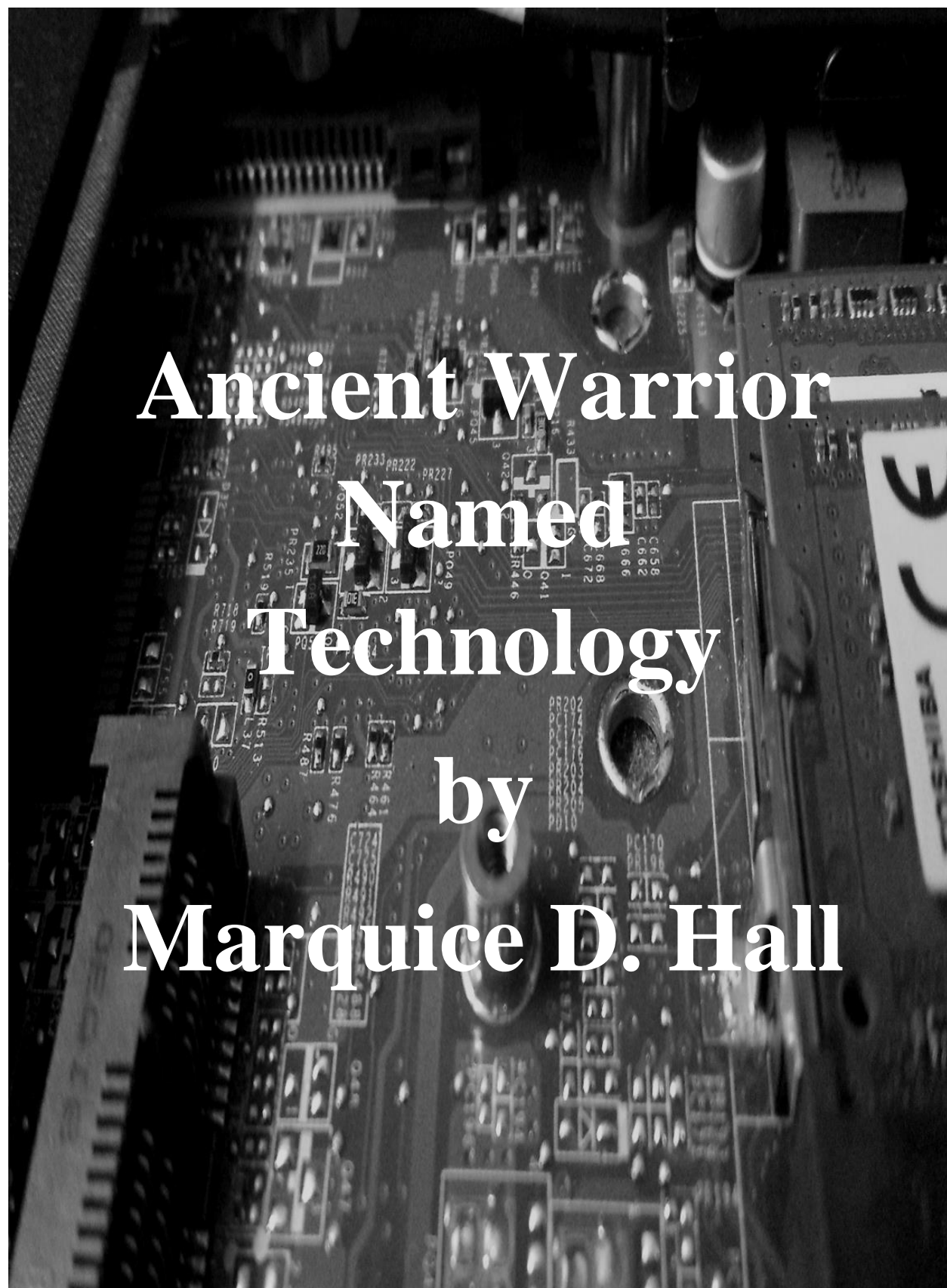
Add extra shelves to the bedroom closet,
Never mind the fancy handles,
Remember where everything goes.
Domestic bliss
Arrives unassembled.

You'll end up with things you don't need;
Smoosh the sides to fit
Into your decor.

In times of crisis,
A porch step wobbles,
The toilet overflows.
Pesky problems,
Chore to chore.
To keep drywall from cracking,

You step back and decide:
No need to hammer new holes.
The most mundane win a place in your heart.
There's an art to
Home repair.

When you reach for a butter knife,
You know it's time
You need a screwdriver,
The cocktail.
Powerful enough for any task.
What could be more treasured?



Descriptive Analysis

Marquice D. Hall

To deny their presence would be a continuous denial of oneself.
Both are fundamentally needed for the progress of humanity.
Methodical and associational traits make these brands a continual significance.
We need intellectual and practical activity to discover the unknowns,
And we need intellectual material that is connected throughout the universe.
An honest observation of these two human creations has to bring humility
and respect.
This field has absolutely no boundaries in its relentless pursuit of data.
While this field assesses data that boundaries may have forbidden many to see
in the past,
Their power, at times, can be intimidating.
One must remember, though,
They are here to bring facts and assist the human.
This poem is not a persuasion of its greatness;
This is just a descriptive analysis of both science and technology!

The Ocean

Marquice D. Hall

Close your eyes and listen to this metaphorical synchronization.
Science is like the ocean.
You observe its beautiful borders as a template . . .
Waiting to dive in.
You know once you dive in, however,
The sounds you hear,
The objects you see,
Cannot be denied.
Do not be afraid of the ocean.
It is a smooth and rich atmosphere.
The ocean is here to only guide and direct you.
The ocean is not the enemy.
Get in tune with it,
And you'll never want to leave.
Trust me.
The ocean is just a sea of data you never experienced.
Do not hesitate.
Just dive in.

A Societal Alliance
Marquice D. Hall

Is there a societal soul without technology and science?
Extremely thankful that they became an alliance,
Imagine if these two giants were to face.
Society would just be completely erased and disgraced.
A societal alliance would turn into a societal violence.

How Does It Feel?

Marquice D. Hall

To have something that
Discovers the unknown,
Disproves previous held theories,
Documents natural phenomena,
Displays dynamic data . . .

And to have another that
Develops surroundings,
Delivers toys,
Dazzles society with its brilliance . . .

Darn it! It's amazing!
And I ask, "How does it feel?
How does it feel?"

Pleasure and Pain
Marquice D. Hall

So much pleasure comes from technological devices
(And so much pain when observing the prices).
Before the purchase, we go through scientific observation to see if it's worth it.
After all the hesitance and dedicated searching,
We give up and realize that its true worth is priceless.

The Brief Renaissance Science
Marquice D. Hall

Ptolemy was the first of this system,
Persuading others of what was above their minds:
The sun, the moon, the planets . . . all in a dance

While the Earth stood firm observing its peers,
Everyone having a celestial opinion,
This explanation was named the Ptolemaic System.

The next was Nicolaus Copernicus.
Copernicus proclaimed that the sun stayed still;
It was the Earth dancing to melodies.

Successfully convincing his doubters,
Copernicus became the new science hero.
This philosophy was known as Heliocentric Theory.

Johannes Kepler was the next scientist's name—
A mathematical and astronomical genius.
In his view, the planets were elliptical, not circular.

The universe speaks in mathematical distance.
Mathematical observations and science were related.
This was not the end of his findings, however.

Human perception was indeed a question.
“The retina can be tricked,” he exclaimed profoundly.
Kepler was the first to place mathematics over the senses.

Galileo Galilei, my personal favorite,
Was also keen on explaining mathematical reality.
All celestial objects moved by mathematical laws.

He touched on many aspects of space existence,
Proclaiming eleven bodies in the heavens instead of seven.
Galileo even made the telescope a famous tool.

He also said, "Objective and subjective reality must be separate."
Objective reality is absolute and immutable;
Subjective reality contains color, feelings, and smell.

Many scientific contributions underlie this man's name
How can others forget his influence to science?
Galileo Galilei is unforgettable.

Peaceful Bonds
Marquice D. Hall

What a beautiful time to be alive.
This world is organized because of the harmony of these two sources.
One brings the knowledgeable idea.
Another manifest the idea into reality.
Some people dispute the influence of these two sources.
They believe civilization would be better without its core constructors.
Huh?
But, then again,
Some people really don't want science and technology.
Some people really don't want
Peace.

Ancient Warrior Named Technology
Marquice D. Hall

I heard of this warrior through my grandparents ,
Who happened to hear of this warrior through their grandparents,
Who happened to hear it through their grandparents, who . . .
Okay. We get the point.
Anyway, my grandparents was describing this warrior named Technology.
They swore he was the greatest warrior of all times.
They proclaimed that Technology had produced lamps, microwaves, satellites,
And many more inventions during his time.
This man made life-changing inventions every year!
They were astonished by how one man had changed their life by so many
dynamics.
I did not believe their narrative for one second.
How could one man do all of this?
No way.
So I went to my parents,
Elaborated on my grandparents' outlandish story,
Expected to hear laughs and sarcastic remarks about this folktale.
There were some laughs and remarks;
However,
They were directed at my lack of rationality.
"Of course he's real," they exclaimed.
So they, too, provided examples of this somewhat godlike figure.
Apparently,
This guy is also responsible for vacuum cleaners, the radio, cameras,
and space rockets.
My parents added that he is very much alive.
I just walked away.
I could not take this anymore.
Who was this guy!?!?!?
Who was he?!
After careful research, I discovered
He's produced grand innovations in my time as well.
He's the same guy who produced the Internet barcodes and barcode scanners,
HD TVs, and electronic books.
Ironically enough, he's responsible for computers as well,
The same object I'm using to describe my disbelief in him.
I give up.

This guy is amazing,
And he still lives and produces:
An ancient warrior named Technology.

Positivism

Marquice D. Hall

Particularly a science that is publicly analyzed.

Observation is the key to scientific knowledge.

Sensationalists provided a great influence to this movement.

Introspection is obsolete due to being private.

The philosopher responsible for this scientific movement is August Comte.

Illustration is the heart.

Validation is attributed to open truth.

Improving society is the fundamental goal.

Science is everything.

Metaphysics is not allowed.

Lifetime of Questions

Marquice D. Hall

The very moment science and technology were designed,
They created such a wonderful glide,
So much intellectual impact throughout the universe . . .
But one should have interesting inquiries into such.

Was the idea of science created by a group of people who were freezing outside?
Can science and technology ever be wrong concerning space and time?
Will these two ever be crushed?
If so, what can we do when it happens?

How many complicated tasks have science and technology accomplished
through time?
What are their astrology signs?
Can science determine what I am going to have for lunch?
Wow. This lifetime of questions can certainly lead to an adrenaline rush.

The Imminent
Marquice D. Hall

Only science and technology know,
Yet so many people are scattering for the foretold.
Who knows the next aim of direction?
What will be the new life-changing manifestation?
All of this remains as civilization grows.

Computers and Minds
Marquice D. Hall

Computers and minds.
They are very much alike
In separate physiques.
One is inside a body,
And another is inside houses.
Both can reach analytical conclusions like no other.
At first,
Both appear to be a blank state,
But, eventually,
Both acquire programs that adapt with civilization.
When compared to other animals,
The human mind *is* a computer . . .
And who could argue?
The mind created the computer,
And, in turn,
Some would say that a greater computer made the mind!

Empirical Measurements

Marquice D. Hall

Let us go to the sun and measure what the universe has to offer.
Living in this dazzling moment of abundant tools and gifts,
Lashing out with all of our beliefs just to be proven wrong by this phenomenon . . .
Curse you, science and technology!
Why must you be so great and observable and so evident and wise?
Teasing your opponents with enlightened research,
Terrorizing anyone that deny your powerful presence . . .
There isn't much anyone can do against you
But sit back and observe
Your empirical measurements.

Outer Space
Marquice D. Hall

Empirical evidence has provided miraculous data pertaining to the human senses.
This data, however, did not just magically appear.
It needed an instrument,
An instrument that could cope with universal distance,
A form of advanced mechanism that could correlate with the human.
Just look at the stars and the wonderful planets that are beyond human cognition.
Science opened the discussion,
But in no way could science have accomplish this quest alone.
Technology came through strongly like the wind
And provided
The telescope, rockets, the spacecraft, the satellite
The imaginable became perceivable;
Thoughts became reality;
And
Stars and galaxies were admitted to the human consciousness.
And just to think,
This information was supposed to be outer space.
Out of space.

The Removal of Technology
Marquice D. Hall

I woke up one morning covered in sweat.
Maybe the air conditioner isn't on, I thought.
I reached for my phone, and it was gone.
It couldn't be.
Realizing my hopes and expectations were out of synch,
I couldn't let it be justified.
Glued in the state of denial,
I reached for the television remote
Only to grab air.

It was all nonexistent.
I never knew how much technology meant to my life
Until technology was outside of life.

No more social media.
No more texting late at night.
I had to leave my home and make social bonds with real people.
I couldn't game with my friends while listening to romantic melodies of the past.
Old recordings and pictures of my deceased love ones were all gone.
It was real.

I sat up in excruciating pain,
Crying as much as I can ever remember.
All I wanted was technology.

Reflection Period
Marquice D. Hall

Science and technology.

What comes to mind when these words are mentioned?

So many images surface behind the eyes.

Maybe you think about today's popular technological tools such as
Television or the computer.

What about the periodic table

And all the extraordinary elements that are contained in the universe?

Do you see planes and boats migrating in their respective properties?

Do you see stars and the sun being viewed with a telescope?

I know when I hear of science and technology,

I think of names such as Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, or Carl Sagan.

Their contributions to the growth of these subjects are iconic.

I also envision astronauts and space shuttles

And seeing humans touch the moon.

The illusionary process of science and technology's working together

Ostensibly to touch the unknown

Empirically and metaphorically . . .

That's glorious to me.

That is what I imagine

When I hear the legendary words

Science and technology.

Romantic Galaxies
Marquice D. Hall

The skies could not be mistaken.
They were beautiful.
They were caught holding hands as they were patiently waiting.
The stars were lined up perfectly, and they were plentiful.
Both pulled out their phones (as they were dating).
(With pictures of everything, the phone has become a precious symbol.)
She put her phone away.
He wanted a kiss, but his heart was racing.
She pulled out her phone again; he wished she would lose the signal.
Technology was now the boyfriend; time for flag-waving,
But just as he started to lose his mind,
A shooting star glared that they were anticipating.
They both wished for a kiss, which eventually became monumental.
Looking back, he remembers the one time technology was frustrating
And science was transcendental.

Exposed
Lynn DiPier

What kind of lighting
explodes like a woman's hair
across a dark pillow?

Somewhere in New Mexico
a car crawled along the back
of a sleek black dog of road,
tail to nose a distance
unfathomable. One hair shaft
miles long, the sky so black
it shoved the earth to its knees.
As solid as the flank of a freighter.
This black of a lacquered box
as disorienting as a mine shaft,
sealed and forgotten.

Lightning like the shattered glass
of a windshield after impact.
Lightning like bare electrical wires
in seizure, jerking, sizzling
as they touch water. Lightning
like anger, the strike straining
the capillaries outward,
founding the bruise. Lightning hands
of a lecherous devil, groping,
forever changing what they hold
and what they toss aside.

Make America?

William Phillips

Donkey in the room.
Now everything is gloom.
Crooked, blind, and lazy,
Everyone is crazy.
First Lady and Head of State.
She lost 'cause it was fate.

Elephant in the room.
Soon everything will go boom.
Collusion! Hate-filled jargon!
“Everyone gets a pardon.”
Apprentice. “Huge. You’re fired!”
Buffoons shouldn’t be admired.

Dems and Reps in a crowded room.
Shakespearean hatred is their doom.
Cloak and dagger. Now here’s a fight.
Another example of Left versus Right.
Hidden e-mails and tax returns.
Stormy seas. America burns!

The God Complex
Samantha Gallegos

Characters

WANDA, about eighteen years old, female, forgetful and naïve but passionate about the good of humanity

VICKI (VICTOR), about nineteen years old, male, passionate about science but cowardly

DR. VIR, an older man, a scientist gone mad with power

Setting

The play takes place in 1970s America (theoretically the post-Vietnam era) in a slowly decaying world. Everything is dead, grey, and falling apart; the only sounds come from the infected, the haunted, the dying, and those left fighting.

Scene 1

(Lights come up on WANDA—a young woman clad in bell-bottoms, loafers, a bright sweater and round glasses—standing DSR. SHE stands alone in the corner of a fully equipped lab. Behind her is DR. VIR, silhouetted CS, working and moving around intensely without taking notice of the lights or anything around him. HE is an older man sporting a lab coat, unkempt hair, khaki trousers, a plain button-up shirt, and plain black shoes. As HE buries himself in his lab work, WANDA begins to speak.)

WANDA: It was 1978, three years after the conclusion of the momentous war in Vietnam, when celebrated scientist, Dr. Vir, was finalizing what he called “the fate of the United States and the world.” For years, he had been developing the solution to bring the deceased back to life. However, in its finale, the experiment took a turn for the worse. It became a poisonous gas that stripped humans of their life by causing them to decay slowly from the inside out. The gas became airborne, and anyone exposed to it would be immediately affected. In the process of its havoc, Dr. Vir turned his back on humanity and set out to develop his project further. Slowly, he fell into the delusion of becoming “God of the Infected.” At least, that’s what I like to call him.

(WANDA smiles, jumps up, and turns back to join DR. VIR at his lab. SHE stands by his side and observes his work. DR. VIR, without paying much attention to her, continues to work. After some time, HE becomes aggravated by her presence.)

WANDA (CONT.): Aw, look at you hard at work, Professor!

DR. VIR: Wanda.

WANDA: Yes?

DR. VIR: Can you exist anywhere else that is not in my breathing space? You're a nuisance to me.

WANDA: I'm not trying to be, Professor.

DR. VIR: Worse. And please refrain from calling me *professor*. We've been over this.

WANDA: Have we?

DR. VIR: Yes. Your mud-puddle of a brain just can't remember such a simple demand as that. Perhaps it was too much for you to retain. What must you call me now?

WANDA: Doctor?

DR. VIR: No.

WANDA: Master of the Universe?

DR. VIR: Shorter.

WANDA: Master!

DR. VIR: Right. Now . . . what have I asked you to do now?

WANDA: To not exist while you work?

DR. VIR: Right.

WANDA: But I like watching you work! It's like the good ol' days when all the other kids used to be alive. And biology class was so groovy. I just loved it! Oh, can I stay? Maybe we can find the cure, ya know? Bring the Earth back to life, like during the war? It'll be cool, man! And—

DR. VIR: Wanda.

WANDA: Yes?

DR. VIR: There is no Earth anymore. I have made that very clear. There is no *we*, there is no *then*, and there is no *cure*. The only future is me—this life, this dominance. Now if you want to make yourself useful for once—

(DR. VIR pulls out a sheet of paper and hands it to WANDA.)

Go out and find these specific items. If you can't find them, don't bother coming back. Also, when you step out, leave your nonsense out there. The poisonous air should be the only epidemic around here, don't you agree?

(Crestfallen, WANDA takes the paper.)

WANDA: Will do, Master.

(WANDA takes one final glance at DR. VIR. HE begins to cross SL and exit USL. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(Lights rise on the streets of a city. Enter VICKI from USR. HE is a young man clad in dark clothing, heavy shoes, and a gas mask. HE is attempting to hide in the shadows, but the dark scares him. VICKI crosses to DSC, looks around cautiously, and pulls out a miniature notepad. HE begins taking notes. From behind him, WANDA, also wearing a gas mask, appears from USL. SHE notices VICKI and silently creeps closer. SHE observes him as HE begins to mumble to himself.)

VICKI: From what I've seen, the epidemic is affecting wildlife, plant life . . . all kinds of life. But only when it's out in the open air. My guess is direct contact

VICKI (CONT.): with the dense air. Only under the security of a closed sanctuary is anyone safe. That means . . . whatever is in the air is too heavy to seep through doors and windows and walls. Interesting.

WANDA: Far out!

(VICKI, startled by WANDA's sudden appearance, attempts to hide himself, but HE finally stays in place, and cowers in fear.)

Whoa, man! Don't be so startled! It's just so sick how smart you are! Are you a scientist, too?

VICKI: Too?

WANDA: Yes! There are cool people other than me and you, you know. Like, who even are you?

VICKI: I could ask the same thing.

(VICKI looks around and pulls WANDA to DSR. The move demonstrates that THEY are now in a sealed building. THEY remove their masks and breathe in deeply. VICKI exhales and looks at WANDA carefully.)

Who are you? What do you want from me? What do you mean by too? Man, the one day I decide to come outside after the epidemic, and you decide to harass me. Bummer.

WANDA: Man, what a worrywort I found. Chill! I'm Wanda, and *too* refers to my boss. He's a scientist, too. I was looking for stuff when I happened to pass by, but now I'm so distracted It's so funny. This always happens and Master gets mad, so whenever—

VICKI: Wait, wait. Did you say your boss is a scientist?

(WANDA nods eagerly.)

Huh. See, I thought we were all hated because of that Vir guy who decided to destroy the world and stuff. No one takes me seriously because of that, but I still totally want to be a scientist. I've kinda been hiding all this time, so, I kinda come out every now and then and try to figure out what's going on.

WANDA: Hey! That Vir guy you mentioned? He's my boss! My boss destroyed the world!

(WANDA begins to laugh joyously. Her laughing scares VICKI tremendously.)

VICKI: He's your boss?!

WANDA: God of the Infected himself.

(VICKI shakes his head.)

VICKI: There is no God. It's just us, inferior as humanity is.

WANDA: You're pretty square for a rising scientist. Where's your love for science?

VICKI: Hiding behind my fear of it. Everything scares me. The epidemic scares me—the decaying, the people . . . even life before the epidemic scared me. Besides, no one takes me seriously. I only used to leave the house for school . . . but school is gone now, and so are mom and dad . . . so I only come outside for food and to find new things to observe.

(Silence.)

So what's up with this scientist guy? Is he a real juicer?

WANDA: I don't even know what that means. That guy is *so old*. He was actually my professor before the epidemic. Now he's just kind of a meanie who's always telling me what to do and sending me on errands.

VICKI: So then why do you do it?

WANDA: No clue. Like, I was his apprentice in college and all, so I guess I just still feel entitled to him. I mean, he's a total whackjob, but he can be mellow when he's happy destroying stuff.

(VICKI, at a loss for words, nods slowly.)

VICKI: Radical.

WANDA: But that's all he wants to do now! I wish he wasn't such a square. He's all about ruling the world and all that jazz, but since you're a scientist, too, maybe you can show him the path of righteousness! Find a cure and save the world!

(VICKI begins to laugh.)

VICKI: You're jivin' me, right? Not only was that juvenile, but did you forget how deathly afraid I am of science? Then you want me to fight a mad scientist? Can't help you there.

WANDA: No, you have to do this! Dr. Vir is a complete lunatic, and we're all gonna die one day in some way or another. We can all fall apart, or we can live till we're too old to remember to put pants on. Either way, the fate of humanity rests in our hands. Are you gonna turn your back on the world, too?

VICKI: Whoa. This is heavy.

WANDA: Yeah, man. So are you gonna be a righteous scientist or what?

VICKI: Why me? I'm a scaredy cat. I'll run at the sight of this guy.

WANDA: With that attitude you will. Think about it this way. You wanna learn about the world, right? If you take down Dr. Vir, you can get your hands on his documents and past experiments. He's a smart guy, so it'll do you justice.

VICKI: That does sound promising.

(Silence.)

Okay. Fine. I'll do it . . . but I'm not doing this to face my fear or whatnot. I just really want those documents.

WANDA

First you gotta help me with Dr. Vir. Ain't that right, uh . . . ?

VICKI: What?

WANDA: I didn't get your name, Square.

VICKI: Vicki.

WANDA: Vicki?

VICKI: I wasn't even cool enough to be acknowledged as a dude. Maybe the science behind science is how it emasculates you as a man. Anyway, my real name is Victor. Yeah. Maybe just call me Victor?

(WANDA has become distracted with the list of supplies.)

WANDA: What was that, Vicki?

VICKI: Never mind. What is that?

WANDA: My errands!

(WANDA moves to pick up one of the animal skeletons.)

This is what I need!

(WANDA shoves the skeleton into VICKI's face, causing him to shriek.)

VICKI: Get that away from me!

WANDA: Wow. You're totally not ready to fight off Dr. Vir. Unreal.

(THEY replace their gas masks and begin to trek USL, where THEY exit. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(Lights rise on DR. VIR's laboratory. HE is still working. WANDA enters from USL. VICKI follows two steps behind her.)

WANDA: Master! I'm back!

DR. VIR: I'm assuming you made use of the time and found what I asked for?

WANDA: And more! I've made a new friend!

(WANDA gestures towards VICKI, who becomes frantic. HE nudges WANDA, but SHE doesn't budge. DR. VIR, yet to take notice, continues his work.)

He's real smart. I think you'll like him.

DR. VIR: Wanda, I believe I've asked you before to leave your idiocy at the door. No more of your imaginary friend.

WANDA: But he's real this time! Aren't you, Vicki?

DR. VIR: He? Vicki?

VICKI: Victor! Don't judge, man.

(HE quickly covers his mouth in astonishment. DR. VIR turns around quickly and glances over VICKI. HE slowly begins to smile.)

DR. VIR: Ah, Vicki.

WANDA: A scientist! Just like you, Master!

VICKI: Wanda, don't.

WANDA: On the way over here, he told me about all of the cool stuff he studies. He's brilliant, Dr. Vir, like, really brilliant! He tops all the biology, chemistry, and physics students! He tops your personal best students, even the valedictorian! He even tops you!

VICKI: Wanda!

DR. VIR: Is that so?

(HE looks over at VICKI.)

Well, then, Mr. Brilliant, what is the epidemic? How did it start? Oh, well, no, that's too easy. How do you end it?

VICKI: Excuse me?

DR. VIR: Well, there has to be a cure . . . or at least an answer to this problem. Come on, then. Show me just how brilliant you really are.

(VICKI breathes in deeply. HE takes a step forward.)

VICKI: The cure. There isn't one. The epidemic has reached a stage in which it has become irreversible. As the years have passed, it has developed to thrive off the pollution in the atmosphere. It has seeped into the soil and prevented any kind of regrowth to take place. In time, it will seep into the clouds and come down in acid rain . . . and if you're lucky, Dr. Vir, with enough time, the epidemic will become so strong that the Earth's slow death will accelerate, and two-thirds of the world's population will have died off. The world will be left in rot and darkness. In short, it'll be centuries before this place can be revitalized.

(Silence. WANDA is horrified, but DR. VIR is pleased. VICKI looks over to WANDA.)

I'm sorry, but it's the truth. I just didn't know how to tell you.

DR. VIR: Fascinating. All from observation, I presume?

(VICKI nods.)

How long have you been afraid?

VICKI: I don't understand.

DR. VIR: A true scientist will stop at no end to find the answer to a problem, no matter how trivial or complex. And you, my friend, have been hiding all along. Too long. That leads me to become afraid of you. You're intelligent, brilliant. Young, too. I can't live forever. Not yet. But if I had a legacy . . . if I could be allowed to have a small ray of hope You, Victor, could be just that. Live to be my threat. Live to be my envy. But most of all, live to be the God I can one day no longer be. After all, why would you even get into science if you're not going to take over the world? We all do it in some way or another.

(DR. VIR holds his hand out to VICKI.)

What do you say, Victor?

WANDA: Don't do it, Vicki. I still believe there can be a future. Remember what I said? About the good of humanity? You wouldn't turn your back on us, right?

(VICKI becomes frustrated.)

VICKI: I just came here for those stupid documents! Can't I live in peace and fear?

DR. VIR: They can all be very much yours, Victor. It'll all go to you: my documents, my records, my experiments Peace and fear of peace.

WANDA: Vicki.

(WANDA looks at VICKI pleadingly. A long moment of silence passes. VICKI takes a look at DR. VIR and then looks to WANDA. HE chuckles.)

VICKI: Didn't anyone tell you guys? The gods don't exist; they were just created to make us feel better about ourselves. To ensure that there was life after death. Humanity is truly hopeless. Science is usually the answer, and nothing is totally impossible, right?

(Puzzled, WANDA nods.)

You were right, Wanda.

WANDA: About what?

(VICKI slowly reaches his arm out. HE is shaking and showing no sign of where HE is reaching.)

VICKI: We'll live to find out.

(Blackout.)

Stolen Youth

Brandon C. Pettey

She crosses *el desierto* seeking a better life.
With only meager rations and dirty river water as fuel.
Her young *hija* squeezes her hand and looks up with exhaustion.
The hope of giving the young one a better life is the only thing keeping
her feet moving.
A greedy scavenger leads her along.

Finally, at sunrise the border is in view.
She takes in a hopeful gulp of air as she picks up her child. It is time to run.
With the rest of the group, she pushes forward to freedom.
A tear falls from her eye and she smiles blissfully after her first step
on American soil.
Now is when they finally begin to live, not just survive.

El coyote leads the group into a small abandoned house.
Most of the group beds now and sleeps for the first time in days.
An armed man stands at the door to make sure no one leaves.
She sits with her back against the wall, keeping a watching eye over her daughter.
The next morning, she scoops up her sleeping daughter, pays off the guard,
and starts the next leg of her journey.

Feet aching, she stands in line at the immigration office.
Finally, she walks to the desk seeking *asilo*.
With irritation on his face, the clerk stamps DENIED on her application.
The woman begins to weep and falls to her knees as she is approached by
a uniformed man who restrains her.
Another guard grabs the child and leads her away as mother and child
scream helplessly.

Bruise

Corrine Hinton

Hot flash,
deep
from the gut.
Rising nausea, twisted stomach,
clenched teeth,
sucked breath held, until
exhaling
in
 short
 bursts.
Soft pink skin spreads to chartreuse
then speckles violet
until blue-black
and warm.
Quietly,
retracing its steps,
back over the rainbow
into flesh
that has learned,
like the kid
who gets caught stealing,
only once.

Social Exchange Theory and Love:
A Look into Today's New Media Platforms
Allison Hall

Literature Review

George Homan's social exchange theory claims that all relationships are based on costs and benefits. When the costs outweigh the benefits, people tend to leave the relationship. Although Homans developed these theories in the 1950s, they remain applicable today. People can further define social exchange theory by analyzing it in relation to rational choice theory and impression management. People can better understand these implications by applying them to two media platforms: Match.com and Tinder.

In terms of social exchange theory, individuals use their two types of comparison levels: comparing current relationships to those from the past and comparing alternatives (in which one compares current situations to others that are available). These levels help people determine what they consider to be feasible behavior in their relationships. In accordance with "Romantic Exchanges" by Bradley Wright, social exchange theory suggests that "people think about relationships in terms of various benefits and costs available to them . . ." and then proceed to make choices in their favor. In other words, individuals make attempts at establishing romantic exchanges based upon what they perceive to be worthy of their time and effort.

This idea is applicable to social behavior when viewing such behavior as a cohort to rational choice theory. This theory is "the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion" (Levin and Milgrom 1). Individuals use a collective thought process to make daily decisions. When studying human behavior through rational choice theory, one begins by first determining ". . . the choice behavior of one or more individual decision-making units . . ." and then assumes that these behaviors are representative of larger groups (Green 4). These normative behaviors receive analysis in order to interpret how they affect choice-making within society. This analysis helps answer the elusive questions of why and how regarding everyday behavior. People assume that each individual will inevitably apply a hierarchy of preference to individual choices and, eventually, use this knowledge to draw a firm conclusion.

When applying rational choice to relationships and social exchange theory, one must understand that human behavior establishes a specific and preferable set of generic qualifications. Not only do individuals take into account their own preferences, but they also use social standards to think about their choices of other

individuals with whom they may develop a relationship. This consideration explains why people move in and out of relationships until they find someone who suits their needs and does not cost them too much either physically or emotionally.

Due to this sense of normative behavior, status-based relationships based upon social exchange theory are applicable to the ideas of Erving Goffman. Goffman suggests that individuals use a front stage and back stage that allow them to influence “. . . the definition of the situation which . . . others come to formulate . . . by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression . . . that he would like” (50). People are performers who strive to control the ways in which others perceive them. Individuals regulate what they display for the public. The front stage occurs when people present what they are willing to perform and the back stage occurs when people hide what they feel to be inappropriate. Social exchange theory provides a reason for people’s perceived, basic behaviors during the dating, mating, and endearment processes. These theories can apply to studies of media platforms that individuals seeking love use.

Findings

Upon content analysis of Match.com and Tinder, one can see the possible uses of comparative analysis regarding the basic goals for each online service. Match.com argues that its ultimate goal is “to help singles find the kind of relationship they’re looking for.” While the use of the word *relationship* is a definitive example of how Match.com structures its Web site and devises its intent, such diction is more of an attempt to disguise the fact that Match.com is promoting social exchange theory by encouraging members to highlight their best attributes. Match.com accomplishes this goal by offering anonymity, providing a means for individuals to show only what they perceive to be good characteristics, and grouping by means of economic prosperity. (Notably, Match.com charges a fee while Tinder does not.) The Web site even has a blog with helpful hints for how to make oneself seem more admirable and presentable to other online users. Tinder uses similar (but not so exclusive) techniques. Tinder offers a blatant goal that suggests that its main purpose is to support individuality; it offers no suggestions for relationship building. Its stated goal “is to allow users to express themselves freely as long as it doesn’t offend others” (Tinder).

This goal becomes slightly more obvious when considering the idea that these Web sites are a ploy for allowing individuals to use their digital imagery and voices to entice strangers. Essentially, each program allows users to designate a set amount of images for their pages and couple those images with descriptions of themselves. Admittedly, Match.com provides more opportunity by using a cap of twenty-six pictures and more writing space for biographies (Match.com).

However, both sites reiterate the need to make oneself look attractive by some means.

These attributes support Goffman's theories by providing a predominant front stage in which individuals may display their preferred characteristics. Eighty-four percent of Match.com users say that they are more selective now than ever of their selections for dating partners (Match.com). Social exchange theory defines this effect using comparison levels and comparison levels of alternatives. In this matter, Match.com users are saying that they are very selective in terms of choosing between many options. Match.com may provide more lengthy content because it is for people who are looking to engage in something long term; Tinder, as stated previously, may just be for those people looking for something short term. This short-term preference could be the reason that roughly seventy percent of Tinder users also visited other online dating Web sites in 2015 (McGrath). Either way, members of both of these sites are attempting to reach an individual end goal of satisfying their own needs.

With each application, users offer their information and can be picky about who responds to them. For example, in 2015, eighty-five percent of Tinder users claimed to "look after" their appearance on the app (McGrath). In relation to rational choice theory, this sense of picking and choosing between candidates offers the idea that individuals will rationalize their choices or pick individuals with characteristics that benefit their needs and desires adequately.

Social exchange theory says that this sense of rational choice is what will guide individuals into relationships while continuously enticing them throughout the relationship. Both of these sites offer the idea that individuals are constantly weighing their options and comparing said options against future and past endeavors. Match.com and Tinder open the door for individuals to evaluate openly each person using basic information before committing to anything. For this opportunity, one can specify what he or she wants and filter through people in this way. For example, Match.com keeps everything anonymous—names, e-mails, numbers, and more—until the specific user says otherwise. Likewise, Tinder asks that users not share any information that he or she would not like everyone to know.

To establish a definitive understanding of this situation, analyzing a few demographics becomes necessary. In this case, a few demographics appear to be significant in addition to prior analysis. First and foremost is the statistic that thirty percent of Tinder users are married (McGrath). This statistic is a definitive example of how people use these sites to benefit comparison levels of alternatives. Some users have spouses, but they are still using Tinder to fill needs that they do not feel their spouses are meeting. This statistic is also an argument for social exchange theory because it offers the idea that people who would initially be

monogamous may take on multiple romantic relationships if they feel that their needs are not being entirely met . . . but still manage to benefit from each individual.

In looking at the same type of usage for Match.com, “[o]nly 14 percent of boomer women and 22 percent of boomer men . . .” use the site to marry (Schaefer). This statistic is notable because it offers the idea that these individuals are seeking a way to meet short-term needs while remaining open to finding love. Modern society, in looking at this data, seems to use social exchange theory extensively. These two statistics offer the idea that online users are interested in keeping their options open and finding those people who can fulfill all of their needs and desires.

These two applications contribute to social exchange theory by offering participants anonymity and a way to eliminate the encounter of someone in whom they think they would not be interested. Rational choice theory accounts for individuals having to make choices with little information. This idea states that individuals create situations in which they must choose swiftly while using small amounts of information. This sense of hiding oneself from those people who are not interested in a relationship demonstrates a basic understanding of social exchange theory. If individuals do not perceive benefit at first sight, they can choose to remain incognito.

The word typically thrown around in relation to this situation is *shallow*. These people are, at first, only concerned with the outside factors that contribute to a person’s attractiveness. This fact provides cost and benefit in itself. If a site member does not feel as though another person possesses sufficient attractiveness to please him or her, the user may swipe left.

Conclusion

Social exchange theory is vast in its potential to convey an understanding of social relationship building. Though not all aspects of said theory have been discussed, this study demonstrates a strong correlation between how individuals today search for love by using social exchange theory. This study offers examples of how social exchange theory is relevant when culturally defining love, especially in American societies and on ever-evolving social media platforms.

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The Burden of Disability
Brandon Pettey

It has come to my attention that I am a burden on the state and its citizens. Programs like Medicaid and Social Security Disability take advantage of hardworking Americans. For too long, people with disabilities have been enjoying a luxurious lifestyle while able-bodied Americans toil away at their jobs. Disabled people selfishly use the rest of society for opulent treatments like surgery and medical equipment to help us get around.

The liberal Democrats have propagated a myth that disabled people need to be helped by the government (starting with Eunice Kennedy and the rest of her Communist family). People with intellectual disabilities were perfectly happy living in mental asylums. Eunice had to rock the boat just because her sister underwent a failed lobotomy for an intellectual disability. She even had the nerve to give them their own Special Olympics so that they would feel included. Their medical bills certainly are included in your taxes. Sounds like enough inclusion to me. Things have only gotten worse since then. After his horseback riding accident in 1995, actor Christopher Reeve had the nerve to go belly-ache in front of Congress. He begged for insurance companies to cover more medical expenses and funding for stem-cell research. Ever since then, disabled people have been wheeling out of the woodwork with their hands out.

The 48.9 million Americans with a disability have been living a parasitic existence. According to the Center for Medicaid and Medicare, over half a trillion dollars was wasted on these programs in 2016 alone. That number does not even include other selfish indulgences like wheelchair ramps, elevators, and other accessibility equipment mandated by the travesty of legislation that is the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Luckily, divine intervention has given Representative Ted Poe from Texas the wisdom to try and make changes to this burdensome legislation. He is responsible for H.R. 620 (the ADA Education and Reform Act). The title may sound like Mr. Poe is trying to help these leeches on wheels. Don't let that fool you. He is just as tired of frivolous lawsuits as we are. If passed, the bill would prevent a complainant from suing a business as long as the business has provided them with an action plan for improving the obstruction.

The worst part of all of this is that when good Americans like Mr. Poe attempt to roll back these luxuries, disabled people have the nerve to protest. Months ago, disabled people from all around the country descended upon the US Capital and state capitals across the country. It was truly sickening. Don't they know our legislators have better things to be doing? The CEOs of this great country need someone with whom to play golf. I'm just glad the police were

prepared with vehicles that had lifts. They swiftly took these deviants off to jail where they belong. I only wish they would have broken out the pepper spray and other riot gear to teach those jerks a lesson. It is my intention to help the cause. It is time that patriotic people with disabilities stand up for what is right. We must make our voices heard by saying, "Don't be a parasite. Vote with the Right."

There are plenty of things we can do to pay back our able-bodied countrymen for their sacrifice. An engineer friend of mine is developing a wheelchair rickshaw system. With this tool, disabled people would transport hardworking Americans where they need to go. If able-bodied people have to bear the financial burden, why should they have to walk everywhere? The tips that disabled people earn from performing this service would then be used to fund their medical care. Plenty of additional benefits abound.

Disabled people are known for being notoriously fat and lazy. This program would give us some much-needed exercise, thereby continuing to decrease medical bills. It would also give us a sense of accomplishment in our otherwise wasted lives. Those of us with mobility problems aren't the only disabled people slacking. Blind and deaf people could do a lot more as well. The blind seem to be so good with dogs. Why can't they walk everyone's dog while able-bodied people are hard at work? There is no reason for the workers to spend extra money. Deaf people can contribute more, too. Able-bodied kids have musical concerts all the time. Deaf people could show up and support them so that the kids' parents don't have to suffer through the torture.

It is past time disabled people stop living the high life. If they don't want to contribute, then I bet Canada would take them. Vote to pass H.R. 620 and let freedom from cripple Communism ring.

Tree Dreams

Lee Russell

The tree outside, it comes to play,
and slowly I am lured away
from all the more productive things
that I'm supposed to do today.

The wind swirls leaves. It laughs and sings
with memories of childhood swings.
The dappled lights the shadows chase
disperse the cares adulthood brings.

Each time I'm drawn to its embrace,
shadows and sunlight on my face
prove too difficult to resist.
Dreams fall upon ethereal lace.

The sweet sap smells in dreams persist.
Wild and feral fey-filled mists . . .
These tree-sung visions wreath my head.
Adultishness inside resists.

Awaken. Stretch on the soft moss bed.
The sun, sunk low, is turning red.
Another wasted afternoon?
Or should I say well spent instead?

The Hidden Truth
Sammie Browning

Flowers spill forth
From the muted brown earth,
Pigments of pinks, purples, golds, and blues.
No pattern, no rhyme.

Words spill forth
From the muted fractured brain,
Fragments of misunderstandings, misgivings, and misfortunes.

Trust spills forth
From the muted slat of a tree swing,
Arguments for stability, safety, and equity.
No pattern, no rhyme.

Devil Bug
Tykorian Brown

As a child, there was one thing I hated more than anything on earth—and that was insects! To me, bugs were the scum of the earth and did not deserve to be here. They were foul creatures and deserved total annihilation!

Sometimes, I looked at growing up in the country as a curse just because of the bugs. I often went to my grandmother's house, and I loved it because I would get to play outside in a certain spot that was close to the road, but, more importantly, it was bug free. It was my own sanctuary, but that changed in a matter of days.

No! No! No! A bug was in my spot! Not any bug, though. This bug was giant and had thin wings, but its wings moved so fast that it looked as if it were just a floating body.

In my family, I was known for killing bugs in the worst ways possible—from catching wasps and drowning them to placing firecrackers in ant mounds and running away as the mound exploded—but with a bug this size, I knew I had to go all out with my torture methods.

After devising my plan, it was time to put it in motion. I grabbed a nearby stick and began swinging it at this devil bug! I clearly underestimated the speed of this bug. Every swing was a miss. Miss after miss! Every swing and miss caused me to become irate and frustrated to the point that behind each swing I took was the intention to kill! Twenty-nine strikes in, I was exhausted and beyond furious. This was my spot—the only spot that was bug free—and I intended to keep it that way! I paused, took a deep breath, and put all I had into one last strike.

The hit connected; the bug's body went limp and fell to the ground. I was shocked when I saw that the bug was still alive; its stubbornness enraged me even more! With fire and anger in my eyes, I began to stomp the life out of the bug. Not all the life. Just enough to where it could not move anymore.

I could finally put my plan into to action. I would take out the bug's legs! As I stomped its legs, I heard a screech come from the bug, and that sound threw me for a loop. I had never heard a bug screech, but there's a first time for everything, so I continued with the torture. The next item on the list was its spine. I started stomping. Immediately, I heard the body split, and I saw blood spewing out all over the ground. Next was the wings. I grabbed the stick I'd used earlier and punched holes in each wing. At this point, the bug was breathing heavily and twitching quickly.

The head was the only recognizable thing left on the bug; it was time to end the torture. I lifted my foot slowly, and, with much force, I came down on that head. I heard a loud crunching sound, and then I lifted my foot to look at the bug.

The sight was not pretty. Its brain was like a pool of jelly, and its eyes were popped out of its head. Finally, my spot was peaceful again!

Five years passed, and I was now thirteen. I was on my way to my first field trip to the zoo, and I was beyond excited! While at the zoo, I saw all types of animals like wolves, lions, and monkeys. We were nearing the end of our trip, but we had one last stop—the bird section of the zoo. As we walked in, I saw birds everywhere. They were flying all over, and the zookeepers were actually holding a few. I wandered off from the group to get a closer look at one bird in particular. It was beautiful, and it was so fast. The way it flew made it look like it was hovering in one spot. The zookeeper walked over and asked if I liked it, and, of course, I said, “Yes.” For some reason, this bird looked familiar. I knew I had seen it somewhere before. I looked at the head, the wings, the color, and I still could not figure it out. Then it hit me. This bird was my devil bug.

After realizing what I had done, I became sick to my stomach and wanted to cry. I had viciously slaughtered a hummingbird, and it shook me to the core. After sitting down and going over the images in my head, I came up with a positive to this situation. I promised never to kill a bird again and to be gentler with nature. I am now twenty-one years of age, and I have kept my promise.

Seastorm

Corrine Hinton

Troubled waters turn in surly seas.

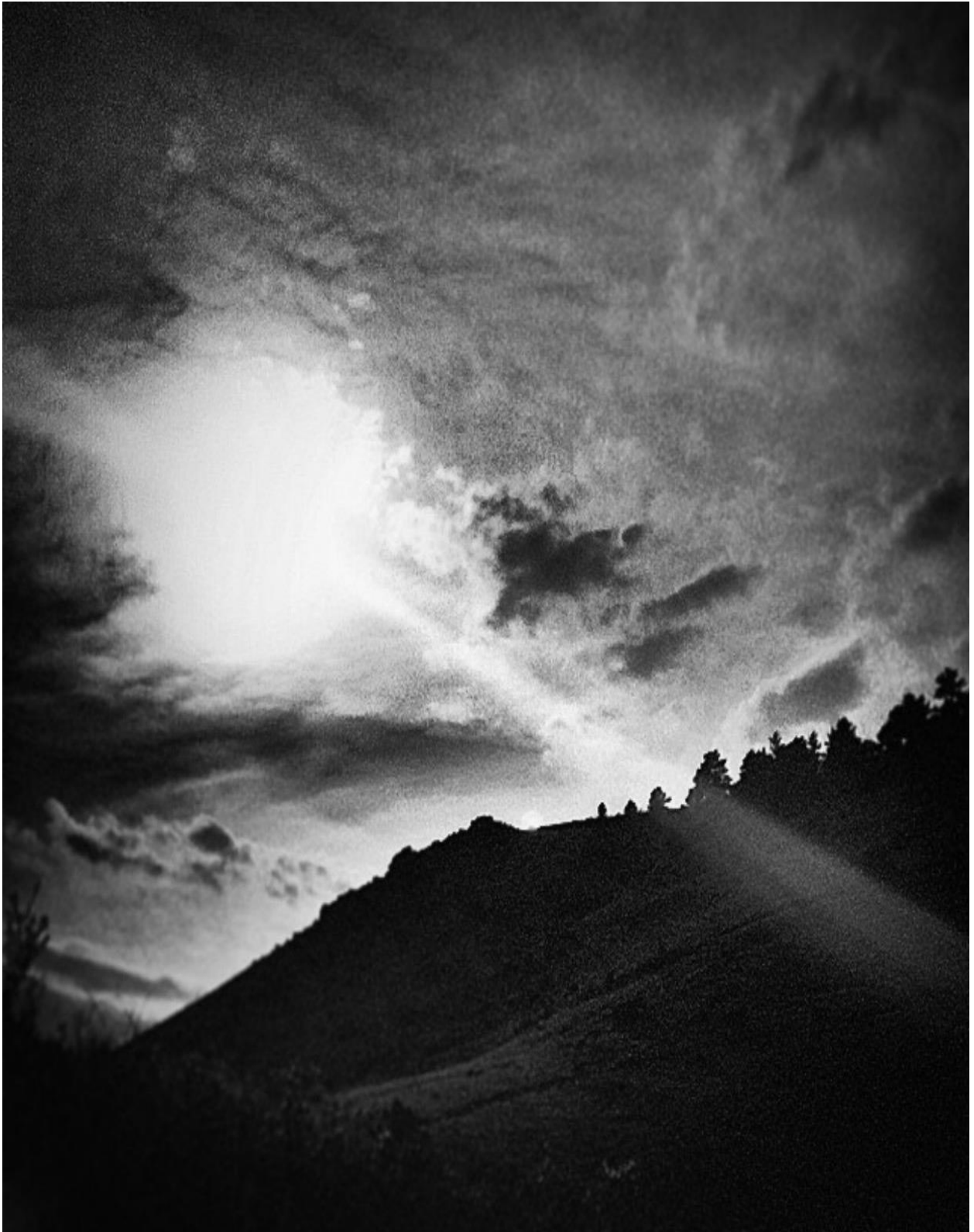
Thin clouds contract from wisps of bright white
Crushed together with help from a breeze.
Slate and pewter unite and ignite.

Thin clouds contract from wisps of bright white,
Wind whipping, shifting from warm to cool.
Slate and pewter unite and ignite.
Drops form and fall and begin to pool.

Wind whipping, shifting from warm to cool.
A flash, a strike, and a burst of sound.
Drops form and fall and begin to pool.
Waves climb to crest and find sands to pound.

A flash, a strike, and a burst of sound.
Crushed together with help from a breeze,
Waves climb to crest and find sands to pound.
Troubled waters turn in surly seas.

Escalator to Heaven
Chandler Moree



Halo, Zero
Lynn DiPier

From below,
a collar of clouds,
a floating leash,
a lariat circling
like a noose ready to drop.

From above, an ovate
pressed into the earth
like a seed, fat with nothing
but the beginning,
where we learn to count.

Reflection

Lynn DiPier

Whatever her impulse, a blur
of bird at the glass, I opened
not one window but two,
one fore and one aft
in my tiny ship of a home
so she flew through, leaving
a slice of wind
across my cheek.

The house had chilled,
and if there had been blood,
it would have congealed

Long ago
a pine grosbeak lay
so still I could examine
every feather, limp feet,
the snub beak. A curve of blood,
like a misplaced epaulet
announced not rank but
internal damage. This bird
so sharply outlined
was fixed by reflection,
unlike the other
that vanished before me.

Even without proof, I prefer
the memory to the corpse.

Sight of Joy
Chandler Moree



Across South Hope Road

Lynn DiPier

Their dog has visitor dogs that stay on the porch,
whining to get inside. They believe it's better there
than the street. No surprise, dogs emulating children.

But this is different. The girls on bikes ride hard,
screech, push against each other as if holding
off forces determined to fell them. Their home

is a place to run from, the wind in their hair
the hand holding them upright. The faster they go,
the louder they yell, they know that edge

to safety. Sometimes their mother disentangles
herself from the current man who's passed out,
stands at the door, calling, swaying, her speech diluted

by whatever is circulating through her veins.
As unstable as fog, her voice is taken and tossed
away through the trees, and the girls hardly look back.

Family Ties
Lynn DiPier

Before, we were a pack of dogs,
the alpha a female who licked her own
wounds, and then created ours
with her abrasive tongue.

Then one died.

We divided—
one bunch growling their recollections,
the other whimpering maybes.

Memory shifted and realigned,
like a stray bedding down,
and the one who died
became anointed by the barkers.
The quiet ones scratched and realized
nothing is sacred. Nothing
is owned.

What one recalls
has been appropriated
and new mythology has begun.
It's so confusing.

Did we exist at all?

I have the photographs,
which help confirm the puppy,
but not the smell of the dog.

Gobo's Vacation
Chandler Moree



Finding Home
Chandler Moree



Socially Alone
Sammie Browning

I am alone,
Never. In a room full of people
Fluttering.
A weekend getaway,
A trip to the doctor, just
Bits and pieces of conversations.
Nothing vested, nothing personal,
Moving from person to person.
A social butterfly.

(Now read from the bottom to the top.)

Menopause in a Bottle
Katharae Patterson

Characters

ADAM, an intelligent but argumentative and unmotivated young man

DR. RAMEN, a nervous, twitchy, staring man obsessed with catapults and other medieval weapons of war

EVELYN SMITH, a young, popular woman eager to boost her grade by whatever means necessary

Setting

The action takes place inside of and directly outside of DR. RAMEN's laboratory.

Scene 1

(Lights rise on DR. RAMEN's laboratory. A cage is present CSR. A desk made up of blocks stands at DSL. The door to the lab is USR. Just outside the entrance, a spot picks out ADAM, who is sitting and playing on his phone. EVELYN rushes in from SL. SHE is wearing a skirt, heels, and a button-up shirt.)

ADAM : So. Finally managed to get here, huh?

EVELYN: Oh, hah-hah. Very funny. I'm still two minutes early, anyway.

(EVELYN looks ADAM over once, confused.)

I thought you were going to be much older. You seem a lot different from the class discussion board.

(ADAM looks at his phone.)

ADAM: I think you're thinking of someone else. I didn't actually participate in the class discussion board.

EVELYN: Huh? But it was worth one hundred points!

ADAM: And if I had participated, I wouldn't be here. Funny how life works out.

(EVELYN glares at him, but HE continues in the same tone.)

Since you obviously did participate, why are you here? Teacher's pet?

EVELYN: Not that it's your business, but I'm here because I missed a test when I was doing a football game.

ADAM: Oh. Great. Cheerleader. Just my luck.

(EVELYN rolls her eyes and walks to the lab's door. SHE turns the handle and opens the door a little.)

EVELYN: It's open? Why didn't you go in yet?

(ADAM walks up behind her to peek over her shoulder.)

ADAM: It wasn't time yet.

(ADAM and EVELYN walk into the laboratory tentatively. THEY reach halfway across the room before DR. RAMEN spots them. HE has been sitting behind his desk loading a catapult. HE jumps up to greet the new arrivals.)

DR. RAMEN: Oh, good! You're both here! This is wonderful. Now we can begin the experiment!

(HE sets down the catapult and starts to walk over to the cage, but HE stops when HE realizes that HE hasn't introduced himself. HE goes back to the befuddled students, who exchange equally perturbed glances.)

I'm so sorry. I forgot to ask who you were.

EVELYN: Oh, um, I'm from your Science Is Alive 11:00 a.m. class. You said I should come here for the extra credit. I'm Evelyn Smith.

DR. RAMEN: Oh, yes! Now I remember! Ah, well then, you're my assistant, and this young man is my specim . . . er . . . tester for today's experiment!

ADAM: Hey! Wait a minute! Why does she get to be the assistant? That's sexist!

(DR. RAMEN shrugs and turns to EVELYN.)

DR. RAMEN: Very well. Miss Smith, would you prefer to be in the box?

EVELYN: Of course, sir. I can fill any role you need.

DR. RAMEN: Excellent! Shall we proceed then?

(HE gestures at the cage.)

Would you be so kind, Miss Smith?

(SHE steps inside the cage, and HE turns to ADAM.)

I'm sorry, but I've forgotten your name.

ADAM: I never gave it to you, but my name's Adam.

DR. RAMEN: Excellent! Now, Adam, as my assistant, you will be in charge of launching these projectiles into Miss Smith's cage—er, habitat.

ADAM: I don't see anything. Are you sure you loaded it, Doctor?

DR. RAMEN: Oh, yes! In fact, you are looking at my one hundred and fifteenth invention: invisible projectiles. No one ever sees them coming! Because it's impossible! Get it?

(ADAM laughs uncomfortable with DR. RAMEN.)

ADAM: Uh, yeah, sure. So, Dr. Ramming, does it do anything else, or are we just throwing invisible stuff at the specimen?

EVELYN: Did you just call me a specimen?

DR. RAMEN: It's pronounced Ram-*aine*. Oh, no, dear boy, of course not. We will be testing my latest invention: emotion bombs!

EVELYN: Did he say bombs?!

(DR. RAMEN walks toward her and taps on the cage while speaking.)

DR. RAMEN: Oh, no, ma'am, not to worry! It's merely a hormone imbalance! It's perfectly safe. Don't be alarmed!

(EVELYN starts looking for a way to escape.)

ADAM: Um, Dr. Ramoon, are you sure this isn't harmful? I mean, hormones are a pretty big—

DR. RAMEN: Ram-*aine*. Oh, no need to be nervous, son. Mad science means never stopping to ask, "What's the worst that could happen?" Am I right?

EVELYN: *Mad* science?! Oh, god! What have I gotten myself into?!

ADAM: I don't know, DR. Romania, that doesn't sound very safe to me. I mean, hormones are a chemical. How do we know what will happen?

(DR. RAMEN goes to the catapult and speaks excitedly while loading the mechanism.)

DR. RAMEN: It's Ram-*aine* . . . and don't you see? That's why we must take this step! We don't know how she'll respond . . . or if she'll respond at all! Is it fair to us or fair to her if we don't make use of this time and pursue scientific understanding? Will it be fair if we never find out what could have been?

(HE finishes loading the catapult and pulls ADAM closer for the last sentence.)

And, besides, you'll never pass my class if you don't assist me, so you'll have paid to be taught nothing. You'll be sent home in shame and misery once you fail an online class.

(ADAM gulps.)

ADAM: They weren't kidding when they said you were a tough teacher.

EVELYN: You've got to be kidding me! Don't listen to him. He's insane!

(DR. RAMEN leans closer to ADAM.)

DR. RAMEN: Pull the lever, Adam.

(ADAM pulls the lever. EVELYN coughs repeatedly and then collapses to the floor of the cage. SHE takes a second to look around the room, and then SHE starts sobbing and crying loudly. While ADAM and DR. RAMEN look for a solution, SHE cries dramatically in the cage.)

EVELYN: Why is this happening to me? I'm failing all of my classes, and I keep getting drunk even though I don't like alcohol. I can't fit in with anyone because my hair is too cute! My dog can't come live with me, and my mother said that if I fixed my teeth, she'd set me up with my cousin's best friend! She's lying! I know she's trying to set me up with Dwayne! Wah!

ADAM: Oh, my god! What happened?! Why is she crying like that? What is she even saying?

DR. RAMEN: Fascinating! We seem to have triggered an emotional meltdown! We should label this. Can you grab a pen?

ADAM: What? How do we make it go away, Dr. Ropscotch?!

DR. RAMEN: Dr. Ram-*ain*! And we'll simply need to rebalance her hormones by throwing more hormones at her!

ADAM: Oh, really?

(HE launches another projectile into the cage after holding his ears against EVELYN's bawling. EVELYN starts to make goo-goo eyes at ADAM. SHE tries to undo her buttons, but SHE can't undo them. SHE starts to walk seductively around the cage. SHE trips and then sits on the floor shaking her head as ADAM and DR. RAMEN argue.)

ADAM: Well, that didn't fix her, Dr. Rutta! What's going on?!

DR. RAMEN: Ram-*ain*. Fascinating! We appear to have simulated a menopause in hyper speed! My calculations were correct!

ADAM: Wait a minute. *Menopause*! I know what that is! This is really bad! When will she get back to normal? What happens when she gets angry?

DR. RAMEN: No fear. The container is bulletproof. As for normal . . . care for another go?

(HE gestures at the catapult. THEY look at each other, shrug, and then launch another projectile into the cage. EVELYN stands up aggressively and lunges at DR. RAMEN, who hides in fear behind ADAM.)

DR. RAMEN: Hm. Well, this was an unexpected response.

EVELYN: I'm going to sue you! Come at me, bro! You're finished! F-i-n-i-s-h-e-d. Do you hear me? I'm going to string you up by your little toes! You won't have toes! I'm warning you!

(EVELYN breaks out of the cage and lunges toward DR. RAMEN, who ducks behind his desk. ADAM grabs EVELYN's forearms and whispers into her ear. THEY turn to go, but THEY shout at DR. RAMEN over their shoulders.)

ADAM : I don't know what kind of teacher you think you are, but you just broke so many laws by doing this stuff! I'm through. This is insane!

(EVELYN begins switching between anger and sadness.)

EVELYN: You're going to be sued! Do you hear me? I don't need your class!

(ADAM pulls her away.)

I don't need extra credit anymore! You'll all see! I don't need any of you! You'll regret this, Dr. Roomba!

(To ADAM.)

Say, handsome, when did you get here?

(THEY exit, and DR. RAMEN tentatively sticks his head out from under his desk to address the audience.)

DR. RAMEN: I never considered such hysteria. Kids today can be so unreasonable. Imagine! Selling menopause in a bottle! The public will go wild!

(HE gathers up his catapult and begins to walk out.)

Just goes to show that people never see the potential that's within themselves. Maybe they just need a little splash of reality.

(HE looks at the catapult.)

DR. RAMEN (CONT.): I may have to sell these with it.

(Blackout.)

May in December
Lynn DiPier

No one saw it
coming a cable
a podium a sidewalk
an audience no
ambulance but police

a fall it was all
so benign almost not
noticed by the last
rows the only blood
later her chest
split to get to her
heart the stained
clothes saved then
a gasp a hush a moan

a pencil borrowed
a dance her hand
in marriage a need
to be excused no
one has to ask
for permission to die

broken

Amber Lewis

tears fell out of my dark-blue eyes
traveling down to every spot you kissed
until they stopped
at the place
you hurt me the most . . . every stop

Quarantine
Samantha Gallegos

The only solution is to convince them—but convince them of what? Are the changes reversible, that's the point? Are they reversible? It would be a labour of Hercules, far beyond me. In any case, to convince them you'd have to talk to them. And to talk to them I'd have to learn their language. Or they'd have to learn mine.

— Eugene Ionesco, *Rhinoceros*

NEWS BULLETIN: The city of Intelligentsia has been quarantined to contain the deadly virus that has plagued our once great city. The unknown epidemic has circulated around the area and may reach regions past our boundaries. Currently, the famous model, Katie Caplan, has been crowned president of This Side of the World. The public has freely elected several of her celebrity friends and family to run as politicians and decided that their first rule of order is to have lunch. Meanwhile, many museums and libraries have been overrun by the infected, who are now torching them down as we speak. Many of our intellectual heroes have stepped in for damage control, but as more people have turned, they have begun to disappear. Well, folks, that's all for now. Stay tuned if you would like to know what color Queen President Katie Caplan dyes her hair now!

* * *

Dr. Eugene Linton grabbed hold of the radio and threw it against the wall. Several bits ricocheted and hit the legs of his teaching assistant, Dorothy Nitwhite. “Sorry,” he muttered, sighing heavily. “Dorothy, how has it come to this?”

“Well, sir—”

“Never mind. We must find the cure *now*. We cannot stop. We must keep looking. *Now*.”

“But, sir, we don’t have many resources! And didn’t you hear? It’s infecting the models, and our bravest geniuses are gone! What are we to do?!”

“Dorothy, child, calm down. For right now, please send in my brightest students.”

Dorothy walked across Linton’s office and out the door. Linton picked up his head as she did, unaware of why she would walk out to bring them here if she only had to use the caller to do so. He shook his head. Eugene Linton knew it was up to him alone to find the cure to the deadly virus that had plagued the city and, soon, the rest of the world. And if he did find the cure, he would not only have saved the world from disease forever, but he, too, would be one among the great geniuses in history. Perhaps he would have his own library or museum built in

dedication to him. He would then be surrounded by the best of the best and the smartest in the world with the power of change resting in their delicate hands.

Linton took a sip of wine as he waited; his foot softly tapped on the floor. As Dorothy entered back in the office leading his students, she smiled at him. He frowned back at her. "Dorothy," he said, "why are *they* here?"

Dorothy looked at her students, who made themselves comfortable on Linton's office chairs, and then smiled back at the professor.

"Sir, Phyllis Tanism and Linda deTamonté are your best students, and they have been waiting patiently to speak with you!"

Linton inspected his students with an old, careful eye. Phyllis was a youth with shaggy hair and round brown eyes that bugged out when he was on the brink of being able to say what came off the top of his head. He always tried in class, but he was very slow and spoke in fragments. There were times that he wasn't aware of what he was saying; he would begin a sentence, trail off on a tangent, and then end it with a completely different idea than he began with. He was entertaining, Linton thought.

Linda was different. She was a young, attractive girl with sandy blonde hair and tired blue eyes. She had an aura about her that was very sleepy and pale and vague. She, the opposite of Phyllis, had a habit of sleeping in class, but, surprisingly, she understood the course better than most. What put off her professors was, despite her potential, the apathetic nature that dominated her thoughts and decisions. She was without a doubt the brightest, dullest student Linton had ever met.

"Well, how are you two today?"

"Well, thank you, sir!"

"Fine."

There was silence. Linton looked at Dorothy, who only smiled at him. He took a slightly bigger sip of wine. He had a thought, and he knew it would offend Dorothy very much; but he felt it necessary to say it nonetheless.

"Dorothy, please walk out Mr. Tanism and Ms. deTamonté. They are no brighter than a dead light bulb and are therefore of no use to us."

"Sir, how could you say that? These students are the best in the class. They understand things the rest don't."

"Is that so?" He turned to his students, who were not phased by his comment whatsoever. "What is the difference between incapacity and insensitivity?"

"I don't know," said Phyllis.

"I don't care," said Linda.

"See there? They have you on that one, Dr. Linton," Dorothy smiled.

“This is ridiculous. We’ll figure out the cure on our own, will we not, Ms. Nitwhite?”

Linton got up from his desk and began to pace around the office. Dorothy looked as if she were pondering hard on the idea as well. Phyllis and Linda were indifferent.

Suddenly, Linton felt a sharp pain overtake his mind. At first, he thought it was a migraine coming on, but then his worst fear was realized.

“Dorothy! My brain!”

“Oh, no!”

“The epidemic! It must have breached the university!”

“How could this have happened?!”

Linton stared blankly at Dorothy, walked closer to his students, and gestured at them. Dorothy shook her head. “No. It could have been anyone else who let the door open.”

“No, Dorothy, you halfwit! It’s airborne! We must figure out who it’s targeting and how we can stop it!”

“But, sir—” Dorothy approached the professor and sat him down in his chair. “The only person I see it affecting is you.”

“No, you—!” Then Linton realized that his assistant was right. His smile quickly faded as another mind-numbing migraine came on. He felt worse than only a few seconds before, as if he were sitting in a high-school classroom.

“Dorothy, I know you’re right. But why is that? Why only me?”

Linton reached for his glass of wine and took a small sip. He made a face and grunted; he dumped the liquid in the trash can near him. Dorothy looked at him with bulging eyes.

“Well, sir—”

“The geniuses all disappeared. Did ya hear that?” Phyllis chimed.

“Yes, yes,” said Linton.

“Such sweet sorrow,” mulled Linda.

“Yes, yes!” cried Linton.

“Sir, I think they’re onto something,” said Dorothy.

“YES! Wait. How? They’re only puking out words.”

“I’ve never heard you say *puke*, sir.”

Linton smacked his forehead. “Dorothy!” This was completely idiotic! He’d thought the newscaster was dense, but Dorothy was his pin-brained assistant.

“You’re telling me the—” Another migraine. “You’re saying these guys are actually somewhat smart? Like they, uh . . . aren’t useless?”

“Yes! Now you’re getting it, sir!”

“But that’s impossible. Their minds deflect knowledge and awareness like a . . . like a”

Linton lost what it was that he was going to say. That was when Phyllis spoke up and said, “A pair of sunglasses?”

Linton looked at his student like they were sharing answers for an assignment . . . but all the answers were wrong. “Yes, like a pair of sunglasses.”

He began to experience ongoing migraines that reaped his head. Suddenly, he felt a very strange impulse. “Dorothy, do we have juice? Or cookies?”

Dorothy smiled sweetly. “No, sir, I ate them all.”

Linton nodded his head slowly and then frowned. “Awh,” he cried. Then, astounded, he picked his head up sharply. He felt as though someone was scooping out pieces of his brain; he felt frustrated and numb from the lack of help from the people in the room. “Dorothy, I think I’m—oh, I don’t know—dying.”

“That’s impossible, sir. We have painkillers, though.”

“Dorothy, please, we don’t even have *cookies*. ‘Sides, I think it’s *them*.” He pointed at the smiling Phyllis and the grey Linda. “Please, take them away from me.”

“Now, I have had it, sir. You are being absurd!”

“Absurd I don’t even know what that means.”

“That’s it! These nice students have more potential now than either you or me, and they could be of use to you if only you’d ask!”

“Dorothy, don’t yell at me! My head hurts, you meanie!” Linton put his head down on his desk and refused to speak any further.

“Dr. Linton, sir! You can use my head if you’d like!” Phyllis chimed.

“Please don’t ask me for anything,” Linda complained.

“In fact, I have some theories, sir! Like, I heard—”

“Sir, I think they were onto something—”

“I’m going to nap—”

“And if you could just listen, I think their banter could—”

“Brains have juice, right? So maybe, if they take it from the smart people, and drank it—”

“Please, Phyllis, that’s cannibalism—”

“*I can’t take this idiocy anymore!*”

Linton covered his ears and shook his head angrily. His entire body quaked as if he were experiencing a spasm. In a frenzy, he threw everything around in the office and began to foam at the mouth. He kept muttering incomprehensible things until his eyes were strained red and his breathing resembled that of a caged animal. Suddenly, he jolted, sprinted across the office, and hurled himself out the window. Dorothy was dumbstruck. The students made no noise.

“Well, that was indecent.” Dorothy picked up the fallen chair and placed herself in it so she was facing her two favorite students. “Well, it seems it’s up to us, no?”

Phyllis nodded. Linda shrugged.

“Can I be honest with you two? I’m not usually this dimwitted, I think. In fact, I caught the disease early this morning, and it has slowly been progressing since. I don’t know why . . . I don’t know why it’s so slow for me while it took over Dr. Linton like a madman . . . but I have hope.”

Phyllis nodded. “Hope for what?”

Linda shrugged. Dorothy tilted her head. She stared at the dumped wine in the trash can.

“It’s spreading—” She lost her train of thought for a brief moment before Phyllis woke her with one of his statements.

“Ms. Nitwhite, Katie Caplan can be Queen President. Can I be Queen President, too?”

“I’m not sure. What do you think, Linda?”

“Who cares?”

Dorothy began to giggle. Then her giggle turned into laughter that turned into hysterical cackling. It bothered neither one of her students.

“Oh, my, it is *very* spreading,” she giggled. She curled her hair in her fingers. “I think I have to do work, but what’s . . .” Dorothy trailed off. She tilted her head as she gazed at her students. “Why . . . are you two okay?”

“Define *okay*,” said Linda.

“Are either one of you experiencing pain? Like a headache?”

The two students exchanged looks. “No, ma’am.”

“You sure?”

“Ma’am,” said Phyllis, “I really think we should talk about . . . well, celebrities becoming politicians and all. Are celebrities like the epitome of the destruction of the world? Because I thought aliens would destroy us before it would be our own people.”

Linda shrugged. “Who cares, Phyllis?”

“Well, that’s the thing, Linda. No one cares that it’s our own people!”

Dorothy was becoming unusually frustrated. She was beginning to understand why Linton had been so fed up with these two idiots. It was like they were speaking a completely different language than what they had been speaking before. Perhaps she was agitated (and Linton before her) because her students were on a level she could not reach. Their bantering—their awful, horrible bantering—that was beyond Dorothy . . . and yet so beautiful and disgusting. It was so *stupid* . . . but she couldn’t give up on them. Even though her brain was wasting away, she knew they were onto something.

“Our own people . . . I think I understand now. The geniuses are the ones disappearing. And the people . . . they’re all infected with the virus. Maybe

because they're smart and their smart cells are being devoured by the epidemic of the world? Kinda like if you're smart, then you're getting stupid?"

"Ms. Nitwhite?"

"You look . . . younger."

"You two . . . are . . . what's the word for not infected?"

"Not infected," answered Linda.

"Invincible!" chimed Phyllis.

"No, no . . . you two are so *perfect* to me. You both are so . . . oh! It's *immune*. You two are *immune* to the epidemic. So really . . ."

"Ms. Nitwhite?"

"You're looking younger."

"You two are . . . the . . . what's—"

Dorothy fell to the ground and hit her head harshly. The migraine had eaten away her thoughts and made her body incredibly weak and heavy. She knew that she, like Linton, was rotting from the inside out. She just couldn't understand why it was happening to her. The more she thought and pieced things together, the faster the infection accelerated.

"What's . . . what's a *cure*?" she asked weakly. She felt herself fading.

"I don't know," said Phyllis.

"I don't care," said Linda.

* * *

Ms. Nitwhite had passed out, Phyllis thought. He kept looking down at her and trying to figure out what was wrong with her. Why had she asked if they were experiencing any pain?

"What's wrong with Ms. Nitwhite?"

Linda shrugged. "Who knows?"

It was a very strange day. They knew an epidemic had broken loose. One thing was for sure: they hoped they weren't infected.

Using *Curanderos* in Hispanic Communities

Maria Byrd

As the use of complementary and alternative medicine becomes more common, scholars seek to why people are turning to alternative healing as opposed to visiting medical doctors. Reasons for seeking complementary and alternative medicine (specifically in Hispanic communities) may include cost, religion, cultural traditions, or dissatisfaction with medical doctors. In Hispanic communities, *curanderos* (i.e., folk healers) are a common recourse.

Scholars have found that Hispanics more commonly seek healing from *curanderos* than from medical doctors. Academic discussions focus upon what factors are associated with Hispanics using *curanderos* and what reservations Hispanics may have for going to medical doctors. Why are *curanderos* better options for Hispanics than seeking care from medical doctors? Sharon K. Favazza Titus answers this question in “Seeking and Utilizing a *Curandero* in the United States.” Titus explains that Hispanics use *curanderos* for many reasons, but one major reason for the use of *curanderos* is language.

Hispanics often feel misunderstood when they visit doctors because of language barriers. Titus writes, “Unlike *curanderos*, many health care providers cannot communicate in Spanish” (195). She also explains that Hispanics may become confused because of language barriers and stick with *curanderos* in their Spanish-speaking communities (195). Hispanics may feel more understood by *curanderos* than doctors. In “Use of Alternative Medicine among Hispanics,” Nassar Mikhail, Soma Wali, and Irwin Ziment have also determined that a gap exists in communication between doctors and patients. The authors write, “The current survey illustrates the lack of communication between patients and physicians with respect to alternative medicine. The majority (78.9%) of users never addressed this issue with their doctors, mainly because the latter did not ask” (Mikhail, Wali, and Ziment 858).

William C. Cockerham also mentions communication as being a problem when Hispanics visit the doctor. In *Medical Sociology*, he writes, “In contemporary American society, a particular problem in medical interviews is found among low-income and poorly educated Hispanics who speak little or no English, feel uncomfortable in impersonal social relationships, have no regular source of care, and find it difficult to negotiate their way through an Anglo health care delivery system” (229-31). Cockerham provides an example from William Madsen’s work:

William Madsen (1973) provides an example of cultural misunderstandings [by describing] when a Mexican American man took his wife to see a physician in south Texas several years ago. The doctor told the man his

superstitions, concerning evil spirits and the like, were nonsense and laughed at him, saying he found it hard to accept that a grown man would believe such things. The doctor then asked the husband to go to the waiting room and the wife to disrobe for an examination. The husband refused to let his wife be examine in this this manner and took her away—never to return. (231)

This excerpt shows that not only language barriers exist but also social barriers. When misunderstandings like these occur in doctors' offices, patients will likely not want to return to those offices.

Cost is another contributing factor associated with why Hispanics use *curanderos*. Patients who use *curanderos* are usually from the lower class. In "Utilization of Curanderos by Mexican Americans: Prevalence and Predictors," John C. Higginbotham, Fernando M. Treviño, and Laura A. Ray explain how using *curanderos* has an impact upon health-care services that Mexican Americans use (32). In their article's introduction, the authors explain that Mexican Americans statistically have poorer health than whites. This difference in class status helps to explain why Hispanics seek *curanderos*—they may be less costly than going to the doctor.

Titus also mentions class status and how it contributes to affordability. She points out that Hispanics "consistently experience poorer health and greater health disparities than nonminority Americans" and that they may seek a *curandero* for healing with cost being a factor (Titus 190). According to Cockerham, *curanderos* "do not charge for their services, or they charge very little" (323). Cockerham also explains that donations to *curanderos* may be in the form of a couple of dollars or a small food offering (323). Such offerings are acceptable in most instances, and they are more affordable than going to the doctor.

Hispanics also seek *curanderos* because of religious and cultural traditions. The use of *curanderos* is culturally appropriate. Hispanics commonly feel that *curanderos* are more suitable or compatible with their cultural beliefs (Titus 195). Cockerham mentions that religion is central to *curanderismo* healing in *Medical Sociology*: "*Curanderos* and *curanderas* [emphasize] religion to a much greater extent than most healers" (323). Titus also explains, "Hispanics also seek *curanderos* for spiritual healing. They believe traditional health care providers do not understand Hispanic health beliefs, in particular the need for spiritual healing" (196).

Immigration status is another major reason why Hispanics use *curanderos*. Because of the obstacles immigrants face when obtaining health care in the United States, Hispanics may feel that the use of *curanderos* is the best option for them. In "Prevalence of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Immigrants," Bilikisu Reni Elewonibi and Rhonda Belue describe the barriers the immigrants

face when trying to gain access to health care. Elewonibi and Belue also explain that immigrants use complementary and alternative medicine because of these barriers. The article explores the barriers all immigrants collectively face when attempting to access health-care options. Elewonibi and Belue write, “As a result of barriers to using conventional medicine in the U.S., immigrants might be more likely to use CAM compared to their U.S.-born counterparts” (600-01). Further, the authors explain that people of Mexican origin are more likely to use *curanderos* in reaction to immigration status and citizenship issues (606).

Dissatisfaction is another reason why Hispanics would rather use *curanderos* instead of going to the doctor. Titus explains, “Dissatisfaction [has been] noted as the inability to communicate effectively due to language, feeling confused after a medical encounter, receiving unsatisfactory Western medicine, [experiencing] feelings of reproach [from] a provider, [perceiving] that [a] provider does not believe in folk illnesses or know how to treat them, and [feeling disloyal due to maintaining] medical resources in Mexico” (196).

Hispanics seek healing from *curanderos* as opposed to doctors for many reasons. Most often, Hispanics use *curanderos* as options for healing due to language barriers, costs, cultural traditions, immigration status, and dissatisfaction. As the Hispanic population continues to grow in the United States, understanding Hispanic culture is crucial. Understanding the use of *curanderos* in Hispanic communities is important to understanding future society and its health care.

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Fishing: A Parable
Lynn DiPier

He cast his line
nightly until a nibble
and nine months
had passed. The first
one was dark and oily.
Fine fare, hearty.
A favorite by order.

After a time,
they tried again,
these parents,
reeling in a second
they both wanted
to throw back.
Pale, pale-eyed,
with oddly textured flesh,
this one watched intently,
lashes barely blinking
over the bubbles.

The two felt scrutinized,
especially the mother
who bore the weight
of constant proximity.
Luck of the draw,
they finally said
with a sigh, acquiescing.
A mixed blessing.

The third catch came
from a different stream.
While the man worked
the woman, in secret,
found another line
and tried to convince
herself no one was
the wiser. This fish, too,

was dark, but dry
and did not outlive
the couple. This time
no one said luck
of the draw or shrugged
when the young one
passed through
the too-wide net
of their lives, its fins
puncturing their hearts.

They bled, their wounds
open and raw as if they
had been gutted.

What can be learned?

A fin will slice flesh,
a dry fish will flounder,
a line will know,
with or without permission—
there will always be the story
of the one that got away.

Peace Be Still

E. B. Brooks

Night was falling swiftly, so we climbed aboard our ship.
The Lord said, "Let us pass over" as we felt the clouds begin to drip.
Peter said, "A storm's a-comin'," but we cast off anyway.
"It doesn't look too terrible," I started in to say.

Soon the waves rose up around us. We thought the ship was going to sink.
"Maybe we should wake the Master!" cried James. "Don't you think?"
He was in the bottom of the ship, a pillow cushioning his head.
"Wake up, Jesus," I said reluctantly. "I really hate to rouse you from your bed."

As he placed his eyes upon me, he asked, "Is it that nightmarish?"
I said, "I'll put it this way: Don't you care that we might perish?"
He didn't tell me to go away. He just said, "Follow me."
Then he stepped out in the rain and raised his hands out to the sea.

He told the wind, "Hey, listen up" and told us all to chill.
He uttered just three little words: "Peace. Be still."
I'll never forget the look he cast; it was as though he'd seen a wraith.
"Why are you so fearful? How is it you have no faith?"

Then he turned to leave us, but before he left he said,
"Why don't you do some fishing? I'm going back to bed."

Fishing with Dad

Brandon Pettey

The morning of June 3, 1985, my mom woke up to pain in her abdomen. She was certain they were not labor pains. It was weeks before I was due to arrive. She woke my dad, and they rushed to the hospital. Apparently, I have been impatient ever since I was in the womb because I was ready to greet the world! A few hours later, I was born. Only something was very wrong. I was born with a birth defect called Spina Bifida. This was a shock to both my parents and their doctor.

The doctor gave my parents two options. They could take me home and let me pass in my sleep, or they could send me to Children's Hospital. There was no option one for my parents. They told the doctor to rush me to Children's immediately. By the grace of God, one of the country's best pediatric neurosurgeons was able to work with me. Using advanced medical technology and the newest surgery of the day, the doctors were able to save my life. Only because of this complicated procedure would I be able to enjoy one of the simplest pleasures in life—fishing with my dad.

A few years ago, I went fishing on the Sabine River with my dad for White Bass. We have gone fishing together ever since I was a little kid, but this was the first time we managed to haul in nearly fifty fish in just a few hours. Through his work, my dad met a woman who runs a fishing-guide service. He booked our trip months in advance and shared the exciting news with me. He also showed me the company's Web site. My eyes nearly popped out of my head like Bugs Bunny when he is in love.

The whole first half of the semester was a countdown to March with a little studying mixed in. If only fishing could be a college degree, or at least an elective, I would be a very happy camper . . . happy angler, rather. After waiting impatiently for what felt like a long time, Spring Break finally came.

Alas, my waiting was not over. Our trip was not until the second weekend of the break. The anticipation was excruciating. Every night I went to bed, I stared at the ceiling and counted jumping fish instead of sheep. The morning of the trip finally came. I never went to sleep the night before because we had to leave at 3:30 in the morning (not that sleep was ever really a possibility).

At 3:00, I went into my parents' bedroom and eagerly began to wake up my dad just like when I was a kid on Christmas morning. After some protesting, he finally got out of bed. About a half hour later, we were on the road. Two hours later, we were at the fishing camp. We arrived at the river in darkness. My dad thought the safest idea was to put me in the boat while it was still on land. The only problem was that the boat was on a trailer much taller than my wheelchair.

My dad and two other guys tossed me into the boat like a sack of potatoes. Sitting in the boat, I heard the truck fire up. Goosebumps on my arms raised and lowered with the pistons of the truck engine as we moved closer to the water.

With nothing but a hand-held floodlight illuminating our way, my dad slowly moved us down the river in almost complete darkness. If Thomas Edison hadn't made the light bulb commonplace, I may have had a closer look at the river than I wanted. My dad went slowly until we came to a wider area of the river. Then, without warning, he opened up the throttle. The boat's engine roared to life. The propeller spun rapidly in the water and pushed us down the river. My dad was tossed backward and almost went for a spontaneous swim. After making sure he was okay, I began to chuckle and then felt bad . . . a little. He had tossed me into the boat, and then he nearly got tossed into the water . . . so we were even.

We came to our first fishing spot as the sun rose over the trees. This was my first opportunity to take in my surroundings. Lush dark-green trees lined the bank of the river. The light brown waters of the Sabine rippled slowly underneath us. We cast out our lines several times with no response. Our guide realized the spot was a bust and decided to keep moving.

After traveling for a few more minutes, we came to a cove in the river. On my second cast, a fish hit my bait. I set the hook and spun the reel as fast as I could to make the gears turn. Soon I had the first fish of the day. After another couple of casts, I hooked another fish. With every bite, I set the hook and coaxed the fish in with quick spins of the reel. My heart began to beat faster with excitement.

I think my dad caught a fish or two as well, but I was hardly paying attention. Our guide tossed some crawfish into the water. The river came alive. Bass rose to the surface and flopped around gleefully as if to celebrate the coming of spring.

By noon, my dad and I had caught our limit of fifty fish. As we left for the day, we ran into two ladies who had started fishing alongside us. My dad shared some of our fish with them. He did so in accordance with the outdoorsman code: take what you need and never let anything go to waste. The pair accepted the fish gratefully.

Every time I look at the picture of that day, it reminds of the best fishing trip of my life. I think about what fishing means to my dad and me. A part of me also cannot help but think about the doctors and medical technology that saved my life the day I was born. Some of the most complicated medical technology of the day was necessary to help me experience something beautiful in its simplicity—fishing with dad.

When my dad and I are on the water together, we are kindred spirits. When I am on the water, the physical and emotional pain of being disabled slips away. In

that moment, I am just a very lucky guy with his father experiencing the beauty of nature.

Ever since my dad took me fishing as a kid, he gave me the gift of knowing that I can do anything I want as long as I have good people in my life like him. Any obstacles I may face just make for a better story. I will never be able to thank my dad sufficiently for giving me this gift. However, I look forward to sharing it with him many more times in the future.

All those years ago, my surgeon had no way of knowing that his advanced medical knowledge and skill would allow me to enjoy the simple beauty of nature. Only because of medical science am I here today.

the end

Amber Lewis

close the book
you've been reading
the same nine chapters
over and over again
hoping that's not the end of a story . . .
we'll have to wait and see, but it's
been twenty years since it was opened and read for the
first time by the author

that author was me

About the Contributors

E. B. Brooks is fifty-nine years old, and he has been writing poetry since he was fourteen. He has been married and divorced, and he is the father of five children—four sons (Sean, Eli, Joey, and Michael) and one daughter (Crystal). He also has five grandchildren, three grandsons, and two granddaughters.

Tykorian Brown is twenty-one years old. He was born and raised in Camden, Arkansas. His passion is writing and creating music and art in general. He writes to learn because he knows that in life we'll deal with many trials and tribulations, but if we learn from those hard times, life becomes a little bit more bearable.

Sammie Browning is a wife, a mother, an educator, and a graduate of Texas A&M-Texarkana. She teaches fifth-grade literacy and lives in Hooks, Texas. Her motto is: "It's more about where you end up than where you start."

Maria Byrd is a graduate student at Texas Woman's University currently living in Houston. She is a 2017 graduate of Texas A&M University-Texarkana, where she earned a bachelor's degree in general studies with concentrations in political science and sociology. She continues to research race and ethnicity and social demography as areas of interest.

Lynn DiPier is an associate professor of English at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia, Arkansas. She writes poetry and prose. She is a recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize, and her poems have appeared in *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Weber Studies*, *The Laurel Review*, *Water~Stone Review*, and the anthology *In Other Words* (for which she received the Editor's Choice Award).

Richard Ehler is a man of few words but of great emotions and feelings truly showed. His poems are for those people who have no voice and no way to write their feelings. He thanks his readers.

Megan Flannery is a writer, a teacher, and a graduate student. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in English with an emphasis in composition at Texas

A&M University-Texarkana. She enjoys reading memoirs, writing creative nonfiction, and drinking massive amounts of coffee.

Samantha Gallegos was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. She is a double major in English and history at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. She aspires to become a professional writer. Participating in theatre and debate in high school inspired her to write different works (from short stories to comics). Currently, she is working on speculative fiction and coming-of-age novels as well as a gender-studies project.

Allison Hall is twenty-one years old. She is majoring in mass communication and minoring in sociology. (She will be receiving her bachelor's degree in December of 2018.) The combination of these two fields of study prompted the production of "Social Exchange Theory and Love" due to those topics' relationship with each other. Studying people by means of popular culture and behavioral patterns is a passion of hers. In terms of media progression, understanding human technological migration is a large indicator of what the future might look like.

Marquice Daone Hall is a senior at Texas A&M University-Texarkana; he is majoring in psychology and minoring in literature. TAMU-T's science-and-technology theme for PLACE (the Program for Learning and Community Engagement) inspired the poems featured in this volume of *Aquila Review*. Marquice enjoyed the challenge of writing these poems and hopes his readers will find reading the poems equally enjoyable.

Corrine Hinton is an assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University-Texarkana who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in writing and the teaching of writing. She directs the East Texas Writing Project (ETWP), a National Writing Project site, and the Young Writers' Workshop program. In her teaching and ETWP work, she engages preservice and current K-12 teachers (in and outside of English Language Arts) in effective practices in the teaching of writing that include writers' workshops, writing across the curriculum, writing in the disciplines (content-area literacy), and critical literacy. An award-winning educator, she develops higher education faculty in integrating High-Impact Educational Practices and Experiential Learning.

Amber Lewis is a senior at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. The middle child of four children, she was born and raised in Texarkana, Texas. Her hobbies include listening to music and writing poetry and short scripts.

Chandler Moree is double-majoring in computer science and electrical engineering at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. He has participated in TAMU-T's drama program by performing in *Mad Science on Demand* (a one-act-play festival) and the contemporary tragedy *Molly Sweeney*. He thanks God for all of the opportunities he's been given and gives all of the glory to God.

Katharae Patterson is a junior at Southern Arkansas University, where she is majoring in musical theatre. She has been in or a part of plays since she was twelve years old. The plays she writes are largely filled with a certain whimsy that she credits to her home life. She extends many thanks to her family and friends.

Brandon Pettey is from Carrollton, Texas. He currently resides in Mount Pleasant, Texas, and is a graduate of Northeast Texas Community College. Next year, he will graduate from Texas A&M University-Texarkana with a degree in secondary education and a specialty in English. His life motto is, "People are like puzzles. No single piece tells the whole story, but together they create a beautiful picture."

William Phillips has searched his entire life to find the meaning behind the meaningless while struggling with mental health issues. He has trouble connecting with his fellow man. He uses poetry as an outlet for his skewed perceptions.

Casey Purifoy works as a tutor in the Texas A&M University-Texarkana Success Center, where he helps students with their writing assignments. In his down time, he enjoys writing when he should be asleep, studying creative writing, and researching marketing and publishing. His poetry and essays have appeared in *Aquila Review* and *TypeWrite*.

Dennis R. Roberts, Sr. was born and raised in upstate New York. He has had a love for writing as far back as he can remember. He writes everything from short stories to poetry of all kinds, and he examines all sorts of topics. He is fifty years

young, and he plans on writing poetry for another fifty years. His goal is to publish a book of his poems. When that happens, he hopes that you will remember his name and buy his book. He promises that you will find it interesting.

Lee Russell has dreamed of being an author since the seventh grade, when an inspiring teacher assigned her class to spend the last semester writing a novel. Despite the draw of the keyboard, Russell majored in physical science in college and received his Bachelor of Science degree from Arkansas Technical University in Russellville, Arkansas. He has worked in many areas, but the love of writing has never left him. He has spent the last year in Texarkana, Texas, focusing upon his writing.

Charles (Chuck) Simmons has traveled extensively throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. He has always been an observer of the motion of life and has often sought to capture those observations through either prose or poetry. He currently resides in Texarkana, Texas . . . and remains observant.

Junius Stone is what one might call an accidental poet. After years of laboring in the trenches as a student, a writer, a journalist, and a radio personality (and after a torrid affair with the US Army), a spark fired by Harry Baker resulted in an entry in this august periodical. On the approach to his first college-level degree, this publication might be an even nicer capper to this stage in his ascension through academia. When it comes to succeeding in writing, he only has two words for all other writers: “Don’t stop.” For those people for whom two words are inadequate, he has: “Passion costs; pay the price.”

Sara Vacanti is an English major who will be certified to teach fourth-grade through eighth-grade ELAR after she graduates from Texas A&M University-Texarkana in the fall of 2019. Her greatest treasures on Earth are her three sons, who are her driving force and most honest critics. She is a self-proclaimed writer who has a manuscript that will never see the light of day and an avid reader who aspires to curate a personal library that surpasses the one Beast gifted to Belle.

David Zwirn studied theatre at the Hamilton Music Academy in Los Angeles, where he appeared in productions such as *Hello, Dolly!*, *The Diviners*, and *A*

Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. He appeared in college and community productions of *True West*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Duck Variations*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. When he and his family moved to Texarkana in 2006, they became part of the Downtown Youth Theatre. He is active with his church (his wife, Mindy, is a United Methodist pastor), where he enjoys conducting special drama services. He graduated from Texas A&M University-Texarkana in the spring semester of 2018 with a bachelor's degree in history; he began pursuing his master's degree this fall.

Melinda Zwirn is a history major and an English minor—along with her husband David—at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. She will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in December and then begin pursuing her master's degree in history in the spring of 2018. She believes in the power of literature to bring depth and understanding to the study of history (and vice versa) and in the desperate need for the study of both in understanding ourselves. She is also a Methodist pastor serving churches in Nash, Texas, and Redwater, Texas; a mother of three; and, recently, a grandmother.