



AUDEAMUS



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Reader,

AUDEAMUS IS CELEBRATING ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY; our goal this year was to stay true to our name, which means “Let us Dare.” In order to celebrate this momentous occasion, the *Audeamus* editorial board chose space and innovation as our design and conceptual theme. Our journal design has ventured into a new frontier, and we have removed our usual filler pages and focused on a cleaner and more minimal design. Drawing inspiration from the cosmos certainly inspired our board to search for more original, engaging, and complex pieces from our 113 submissions. Our submissions came from 8 of the 9 University of California campuses and we ultimately chose 13 eclectic pieces.

The spaces our editors discovered went beyond mere space-themed metaphors or pop-culture's fascination with planetary bodies. The winners of each of our Editors' Choice Awards represent our theme of space and innovation in their respective categories. Space can be durational or dimensional, range from literal to metaphorical, and even occur within the uncharted depths of an idea or individual like the main protagonist's experiences in Sarah Wendel's “Best with Butter” (Editors' Choice Award for Fiction). Some of the spaces our editors found most unusual were generational as in Rebekah Grace Keagy's “Lessons from My Mother” (Editors' Choice Award for Poetry). On the other hand, Natasha Schimka's “I Can't Even: An Investigation of Internet Linguistics” focuses on innovations within the space of the ever-evolving English language (Editors' Choice Award for Research). “*Shuun* Webcomic: ‘Ben's Grandma’” by artist Zorocan documents the difficult realities that can occur in normal everyday life but presents them in a unique comic format (Editors' Choice Award for Art/Photography).

Just as our *Audeamus* editorial board is composed of many students from various backgrounds, we also have supporters from various fields and backgrounds. We would like to thank our staff advisor Jane Kim, our faculty advisor Dr. Richard Cardullo, and the rest of the University Honors staff who have helped support our efforts to bring the journal to the rest of our academic community. Our editorial board also had the privilege of meeting with Professor Nalo Hopkinson, Professor Jenene Nagy, Professor Robert Nash Parker, and Professor Richard Cardullo to gain invaluable faculty perspectives on publishable work. The knowledge of previous Editors in chief, Leads, Editorial Boards, and Faculty Advisors have also contributed to the foundation of our tenth volume.

The hard work of our editors and supporters has propelled this journal from its humble beginnings in 2007 to the only UC-wide, multidisciplinary journal. Starting with 2016 and beyond, *Audeamus* will accept submissions from any undergraduate student in the nation in order to broaden our reach and bring more compelling undergraduate work to our readers. As we progress into the future of our daring and singular publication, we hope this volume inspires you to “dare” in whatever time or space you inhabit.

Sincerely,
J. Megan Krum

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Best with Butter

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD—FICTION/NONFICTION



Tim wasn't the type of man to have occurrences at all.

IT WAS ON A TUESDAY MORNING that Tim woke up with a lobster claw for a left hand. It shouldn't be supposed this was a normal occurrence for Tim—Tim wasn't the type of man to have occurrences at all.

It also shouldn't be supposed that Tim actually woke up with a lobster claw for a left hand. No, indeed, he was suffering from a hallucination of a severe kind, but this is perhaps less important to Tim's story than the fact that he *thought* he had a lobster claw for a left hand. (Though it should be noted that, despite the aforesaid hallucination, his left hand would henceforth only contract in pincer-like movements, the four fingers drawn together as if stuck with glue and the thumb forgetting its evolutionarily strategic opposability.)

Nonetheless, as you might imagine, this came as quite a shock to Tim. With a shaky hand—his last human one—he turned off the alarm and lay there. His wife Lorraine—such a good woman, his rock, really—shifted beside him, and panic rose in the back of his throat.

He blinked rapidly, wondering if this was a side effect of the sleeping pills. Was he the 1% of patients the commercials warned about as the actor-patient was doing something interesting like chopping vegetables in the background? When he got up the courage to lift his left hand, the claw was there to greet him. The shell gleamed dully in the soft white light seeping into the bedroom.

Tim admitted he sometimes mused about what it was like to be a fish—this was usually when Lorraine bit his lip too hard while kissing, and he wondered about the sensation of getting a hook speared through the bottom lip. Was this wish-fulfillment, then?

He felt a push against his shoulder.

"You're gonna be late."

Tim cleared his dry throat. "Not feeling so well—I'm gonna call in sick."

Lorraine cracked an eye open. "I thought you didn't have any more days off after Miami?"

"I'm sure it'll be alright."

Lorraine propped herself up on her elbows, tossing her honey hair over onto one shoulder. If he hadn't had a lobster claw for a left hand, he would've kissed her.

"I wouldn't want you getting into trouble," she said.

He shook his head, touched she cared so much. "I won't. I'm sure Pete will understand."

Slipping from between the sheets, Lorraine made for the bathroom, pausing at the mirror to muss her hair for a moment. "I've got a lot to do today."

Burying himself under the covers, he said, "I won't get in your way."

He caught her making a face in the mirror before hopping into the shower. Tim listened to the rhythmic patter of the water, wondering if he had accidentally activated some sort of voodoo.

Piling a pillow atop the claw, he laid, Roman style, on the couch and flipped on the TV.

He couldn't remember offending a witch doctor recently.

Tim listened to Lorraine get ready for the day, wincing through the noise of the hair dryer. Now and again he opened an eye to check the time. He should be getting into his Mazda by now. He should actually be all the way down the street. Much as he could barely stomach lying to Lorraine, he knew Pete wouldn't like him not coming in.

She came alongside him and patted his hip. "You sure you're not gonna go in?"

He shook his head.

After she left the bedroom, Tim flung the comforter off of him and sat up. He put both hands—human and lobster—on his lap and just stared between the two. What was he to do?

Sitting alone in the bedroom made him anxious, and suddenly Tim, going against his better judgment, needed to be with someone. Tiptoeing out of the bedroom, he made sure Lorraine wasn't in there as he made for the couch. Piling a pillow atop the claw, he laid, Roman style, on the couch and flipped on the TV. Matt Lauer was trying to look enthused about women's spring fashion.

"Did you want some breakfast?" Lorraine asked, appearing in the threshold to the kitchen.

"No, I'm fine. Don't mind me."

Her mouth opened to say something but closed quickly at the sound of a *ding*. Her phone in front of her face, she read the text before clicking out a message.

Tim had never caught on to that new-fangled technology. He was lucky if he remembered how to check the voicemail on his flip phone. Not that Tim got voicemail—the only people who called him were Lorraine and Pete. Both were the type to hang up and call again until he answered, rather than leave a message.

Leaning back against the countertop, Lorraine continued texting someone, her brows slightly bent towards each other.

"Something the matter?"

She looked up, surprised, as if she had forgotten he was there. "No, no," she said, waving her hand. "Just Sandra."

Sandra. Lorraine's lifelong friend had never liked him, and had only been Lorraine's maid of honor at their wedding because she liked the dress. He didn't press her after Sandra's name.

Lorraine continued texting, the crisp little sounds of the digital keyboard almost drowning out Al Roker saying to stay tuned for the weather in his neck of the woods.

"I'm headed into town today," said Lorraine, pulling her arms through her trench coat.

Before she could get to the door, Tim said, "Oh, if you could, can you pick up the dry cleaning, since I won't be at work?"

She looked down at him. "If I have time."

After the front door shut behind her, Tim stalled, counting in his head to a hundred. Lorraine had to be halfway to the store by now. Still he didn't call. He watched a cooking segment and learned too much about oregano. He wondered if anyone else had noticed the \$pice was just Oregon with an 'o.'

He plowed a hand through his—NO! Stopped. Lowered the claw. That was too close.

When the TV clock hit 9:00, he knew he needed to call. Shuffling into the kitchen, he picked up the home phone and dialed the number by heart.

"Yeah?"

"Hi, Pete, it's Tim."

"I know—I got caller ID. Why you calling from home?"

Tim cleared his throat. "That's the thing, see. I'm not feeling so well—I don't think I'll make it in today."

Pete's breath came out slow, almost in a hiss. "What'd I tell you yesterday, Tim? Hmm?"

"To have the Collins project on your desk by Wednesday and—"

"By *Wednesday*, Tim. How the hell is it going to get on my desk by Wednesday now?"

"I-I can work on it from here, Pete, I—"

"You're damn right you can. And don't think you're getting overtime. Wednesday, Tim, you got that?"

"Yessir, Pete, I—" There wasn't a point after that; Pete hung up.

Tim replaced the receiver thinking that that could have gone much worse. Pete really was just a stellar guy, under it all. Yeah he was big and loud and foul-mouthed. Like the Hulk. But the Hulk was a superhero, after all.

His chore done, Tim stood in the middle of the kitchen, opening and closing his fist and claw. He hadn't been home alone on a weekday in years. What did everyone else do at 9:12 AM on a Tuesday morning?

Tim set about making himself coffee, only realizing how much he used his left hand upon not being able to anymore. He suddenly had newfound empathy for amputees—it was one thing to see them on the news, but now Tim *understood*. Was that bad of him

Yeah he was big and loud and foul-mouthed.
Like the Hulk. But the Hulk was a superhero, after all.

Lorraine had suggested he start jogging. He tried once, thought he would die right there on the asphalt.

to say? he wondered, shoveling coffee grounds into the coffeemaker.

As the kitchen filled with the warm aroma of coffee, enveloping him in a mask of productivity, Tim set to work. It would take him extra time to finish Pete's project from home.

The laptop's keyboard stared back at him. He'd have to Pigeon type. Add an hour.

Working off of a pot of coffee and his deep rooted, if not wholly acknowledged, fear of Pete, Tim managed to get the project done by mid-afternoon. That was even allowing himself small distraction breaks. Sometimes he played Solitaire, other times he just gazed out the window. A lot of people jogged in his neighborhood. Lorraine had suggested he start jogging. He tried once, thought he would die right there on the asphalt. What a way to go, die right there on the asphalt. What we got, Jimmy? Oh nothing, Bob, just another overweight forty-three-year-old who died jogging. Haha.

Tim frowned when that sporty red Toyota drove by again. He hadn't seen it before, and being part of the mass exodus from the neighborhood with all the other nine-to-fivers, he prided himself on knowing all the other cars on their street.

Swallowing the lump in his throat, Tim realized maybe they were casing the joint. Was that what all the hip robbers said now? He looked down at his claw. Snapped it once, twice. You picked the wrong house, buddy. Tim was about to call the police when he heard the front door open, Lorraine's keys plunking crisply into the bowl beside it.

He was too caught up in his fantasy of analyst by day, Lobsterman—was that a Billy Joel song already?—by night to really notice her walking into the kitchen. He didn't have time to hide his claw before she breezed into the room, bringing with her the scent of vanilla and paper bags.

When he did realize both she and the claw were there in light of day, Tim went rigid. He watched her anxiously, knowing that if he tried putting it underneath the table, he risked her looking. With his luck he'd bang it against the table and then the jig was up.

"Sweetie, what're you doing?"

Tim realized with a start that the claw hovered in mid-air, still unsure if it was going under the table or staying on top with the laptop. Wincing, Tim looked from the claw, to Lorraine.

She was staring at him, not it.

"D-don't you think it looks...odd?" he forced out from between pursed lips.

She frowned, finally looking at the claw. She picked it up, turning it over in her hands.

He sat there, frozen in place, concentrating with all his might not to pinch her. Or worse yet, just chop the whole hand right off. Too much French lotion had gone into making those hands soft as a baby's behind. Not that Tim knew much about a baby's behind.

"It looks a little red."

A surge of relief washed over him, and in that moment, Tim had never loved Lorraine so much. He spent the rest of the evening wondering how it was he could be worthy of Lorraine. Surely he didn't deserve her. He barely heard her ask whether he preferred pork chops or roast, didn't notice how she kept looking out the window, watching the red Toyota drive past, didn't even taste how underdone the pork chops were when she put them in front of him. All that mattered was that, if he was to be only half a man, at least he would be the beast to Lorraine's beauty.



IT WAS A WEDNESDAY MORNING, the next morning in fact, when Tim woke up with a start. And a lobster claw for a left hand. A

sort of bittersweet dismay washed over him as he lay in bed. Lorraine accepted him, hadn't seemed to think twice about the claw while they watched reruns in their pajamas. But would the world accept him? Pete? He gulped.

Pete had been very clear—Collins project, desk, Wednesday. As Tim slipped out of bed, careful not to wake Lorraine, he wondered if early Christians could have predicted Judgment Day on a Wednesday. Probably not. Probably would go for something sportier, like a Friday.

Lorraine mumbled, "Have a good day" through his kiss on the cheek. He smiled lovingly down at her. "Get a move on," she said.

And Tim did, though he stalled as long as he could over making himself oatmeal. He couldn't get the bag of brown sugar open with only one hand, so he contented himself with tasteless mash. Coffee, at least, he could do.

Easing himself down into his Mazda, Tim took his time backing out of the driveway, suddenly aware of how narrow it was. He cringed when he just dodged Lorraine's Lexus on the curb. When he noticed Mrs. Yao across the street, watering her prized azaleas, he nodded instead of waving, not wanting to give her the impression he was a reckless

It was a Wednesday morning, the next morning in fact, when
Tim woke up with a start. And a lobster claw for a left hand.

The drive to work wasn't so bad one-handed, though he did white-knuckle it on the freeway.

driver who couldn't keep a hand on the steering wheel, much less someone who would suddenly sprout a lobster claw for a left hand.

The drive to work wasn't so bad one-handed, though he did white-knuckle it on the freeway. But by the time Tim pulled into his assigned parking spot, he was nearly hyperventilating. Lorraine had made a vow for better or for worse, but Tim couldn't recall such a thing in his job contract.

Could they fire him over suddenly having a claw? He didn't know—oh, why hadn't he read his job contract more closely! If they did, would he have the guts to call the ACLU? He gulped thinking about two crisply-dressed humanitarian lawyers in Pete's office. As he entered the elevator, relieved it was empty, he began harboring the hope that they couldn't fire him for the claw—weren't there always people on the TV protesting about things like that? Well, maybe not *exactly* like that, but close enough.

Tim scurried from the elevator the moment the doors were wide enough to let him out. He had the passing fear the claw would get stuck in them, but to his small delight, he made it to Denise's desk without incident.

"Morning, Denise," he said as he walked past Denise, Pete's secretary. In weighing his options, Tim decided to err on the side of habit and greet her like he always did, lest he incur suspicion and she look up, suddenly curious why he, Tim, hadn't greeted her on his way in.

"Hi, Tim," she said without looking up from the binder spread out in front of her.

If Tim had had hair on his forehead, he would have blown it off with a relieved sigh. Crisis averted, he now headed to his own desk.

He got through printing out half the Collins project before having to deal with coworkers. He patted his past self on the back for a fine choice of cubicle. While others crowded to get near windows, doors, elevators, Tim had known it was the one closest to the bathroom that was the true prime real estate. Never did Tim have to take the power walk of shame once the nine o'clock coffee hit, oh no. What was more, no one ever came over there except to use the bathroom. The only cubicle adjoining his was empty. Sometimes he missed Dave; he'd been such a scamp. No one was surprised when he ended up in Fiji with a twenty-four-year-old girlfriend.

Slowly arranging the papers in a neat stack, Tim didn't hear Pete come upon him

until the bear of a man was nearly breathing down his neck.

"Didn't you hear me?" he said.

Tim leaned back in his chair trying not to squeak. Pete must have been talking with the divorce lawyers yesterday; his breath smelled like something a little stronger than milk had ended up in his coffee.

"S-sorry?"

"Meeting. Five minutes. You got the report?"

Tim gestured proudly at the growing stack of paper, hoping the brightly-colored graphs would distract Pete as he eased the claw behind his back.

Pete nodded. "Five minutes," he said again, holding up all five meaty fingers. He stalked back to his corner office.

Five minutes was less than Tim needed to get all his papers suitably fluffed, and as he picked up the still-warm stack, he hoped that he'd be able to slip in unnoticed. He sort of got his wish.

Pete was in the middle of a sentence when Tim walked in, and his eyes flicked up to him, then to the papers. He made a small nod at the table and went on speaking. Tim quietly placed the proposal before Pete, the claw held stiffly at his side.

Fleeing to one of the farthest chairs at the conference table, Tim didn't hear much of the pitch. If history was to be believed, the people from Collins Enterprises wouldn't be able to say no to Pete. It was one of his charms.

Instead Tim retreated to the recesses of his mind, musing, as he sometimes liked to, if Pete had once been a bear in the Russian circus. He certainly looked like it, what with his burly, hairy arms and booming voice. He was also a seminal showman, gesturing in all the right places. If Tim believed in past lives, he could see Pete as a Russian bear.

He glanced down at the claw. What did that make him? He suddenly felt like the inside of a Bruce Springsteen ballad.

"Isn't that right, Spalding?"

Tim's attention took a moment to resurface, and he blinked at Pete. He hadn't a clue what was going on, so he nodded, smiling weakly.

Pete made up for his lack of enthusiasm by smacking a palm on the table. "What'd I tell ya? I challenge you to find better numbers than this!"

Tim made sure to pay attention after that, becoming hyperaware. The Collins representatives looked overwhelmed at the sheer size of Pete. Christie, sitting across from them,

He glanced down at the claw. What did that make him?
He suddenly felt like the inside of a Bruce Springsteen ballad.

Instead Tim happily Pigeon-tacked away at the Friday analysis until 6:30 PM...

was smiling too widely to be believed. A thin trickle of triumphal sweat ran down the right side of Pete's face. The claw shook in Tim's lap. He scooted his chair closer to the table.

It wasn't long after that that Pete was shaking the hands of the Collins reps, promising to have a full analysis to them by the end of the week. They wouldn't regret it, not with him on the job.

The end of the meeting brought with it a rush of relief, for Tim fantasized about nothing else than getting back to his desk. Fate is a cruel mistress, however, and instead Tim found himself amidst a full-blown celebration, the conference room buzzing with excited chatter after the reps stepped into the elevator.

Something amazing happened then. Tim began to accept that he wouldn't escape the room without someone seeing his lobster claw left hand, so he decided to bite the proverbial bullet. He put it on the table square in front of him and waited.

And waited. By the time he dared look at his coworkers, Moses had already come back with a celebratory stack of pizzas. It was more than just the promise of cheesy goodness—none of his coworkers noticed the claw. And this fact filled Tim with a sort of tentative joy. His soul was a buoy that refused to sink, bobbing back to the

surface no matter how many seagulls crammed onto it.

He was so buoyant, in fact, that he barely noticed how Pete, buoyant himself from having secured Collins Enterprises, let everyone go two hours early—everyone, that is, except the janitor and Tim. Instead Tim happily Pigeon-tacked away at the Friday analysis until 6:30 PM, unable to hear how heavily Lorraine sighed at the news of him being late. Again. His elation carried him through the McDonald's drive-thru, all the way home, where he didn't even see the red Toyota pulling speedily away from his house.



TIM SPENT A MONTH IN THAT TENUOUS euphoria, slowly coming to terms with being a lobster-man. The world's acceptance of him was his espresso shot every morning, getting him out of bed, readying him for the day to come. He wore it like armor, knew it protected him against the claw.

It ended, however, when Lorraine wouldn't accept his kiss before leaving, turning her face into the pillow and giving him her shoulder.

Tim was so consumed by what this could mean that he barely noticed having

to drive one-handed, barely heard Pete ask him why he was typing like someone with Tourette's, didn't see how the claw shook as it lay in his lap. What he did notice, finally, was the red Toyota. Wrenched out of his dream-like stupor, Tim's gut clenched as he pulled into the now empty driveway.

His eyes shifted back and forth from the street, to the house. His thoughts went to Lorraine, and then he was running into the house. To his surprise, he didn't find it ransacked, instead anticlimactically organized.

"Lorraine?"

She leaned around the threshold to the kitchen. "Oh, Tim, hi."

Closing the front door behind him, Tim asked, "Who was that just now? Are you all right?"

Lorraine wouldn't look at him. "No one. C'mon, dinner's ready."

Tim walked to the dinner table in a sort of dubious complacency. He watched her as she put the plate of mashed potatoes and lasagna in front of him.

"Is something wrong?"

She slumped into the seat across from him. "Tim, listen to me, we have to talk."

Reaching for the salt, Tim gingerly tried securing it with the claw. The slippery shaker had other ideas, maybe even dreams of

Broadway, and went sliding two inches away. He tried again, following it around the rim of the table as it continued its libretto.

"Ha!" Finally nabbing it, Tim triumphantly shook some salt over his lasagna.

When he looked up, he found Lorraine frowning at him. He sat there stunned by her look, eyes wide and shadowed in that frown.

"What are you doing?" she demanded.

"Salt," he said lamely.

Angrily running both hands through her hair, she put jutting elbows onto the dining table. "Are you even listening to me?"

He cleared his throat. "I know you think I work too much—"

"You do! You're never here!"

"Pete needs me to—"

"Pete," she growled. "Are you married to Pete? Do you fuck Pete or—oh, no, wait, Pete fucks you, that's right. That must be why you don't touch me anymore. You get it at work. No wonder you don't want to come home."

She left Tim with his ears ringing. He blinked. "I'm not sleeping with Pete," he croaked.

Letting out a howl, she threw her napkin on the ground. Tim cringed—they were the nice ones, a wedding gift from his mother.

"It's a *goddamn metaphor*!"

She slumped into the seat across from him.

"Tim, listen to me, we have to talk."

“I know it's hard to accept—who wants a freak for a husband? But I thought you understood.”

His throat was dry, and he knew it wasn't because of too much salt.

“I'm not good with metaphors.”

She launched herself off the chair and began pacing about the kitchen.

“I'm sorry,” he said. “I'd never cheat on you. I just didn't want to hurt you.”

“What're you talking about?”

He held up the claw, his face full of shame. Snapped it for effect. “What if I couldn't control it? What if it turned on you?”

Her eyes glinted, her hands thrown up in the air. “It's too much to ask for a husband who speaks two words of sense, isn't it? I'm asking too much, aren't I?”

“Please, sweetheart, I didn't ask for this to happen. But this is how it is now.”

“Stop doing that!” She batted away the claw.

He looked up at her, hurt. “I know it's hard to accept—who wants a freak for a husband? But I thought you understood.”

“I don't understand a damn thing. What're you even talking about?”

He shoved the claw under her nose. “*This!* I'm a freak! This claw is what's wrong with me.”

She shoved the claw right back at him. “You don't have a claw, Tim! I *wish* that's what was wrong with you!”

He recoiled as if she had struck him. Lorraine fled the kitchen, and Tim sat there staring at the linoleum tile. Didn't have a claw? He turned it over in front of him. Why couldn't she see it? Why couldn't she accept him? Hot tears splashed onto the lasagna.

Slowly the sound of her rummaging around their bedroom hit his ears. His head shot up.

Walking out of the kitchen, he found a suitcase already standing in the middle of the living room, the sound of Lorraine packing a second one echoing down the narrow hall.

“What're you doing?” he asked when she appeared.

“I'm leaving.”

“What?”

“I can't deal with your bullshit, Tim. I've had it. Goddamn it, just look at yourself!” she said, putting her hands on her hips.

His head dropped, more tears running down his face. “I-I don't want to be like this.”

“Then be a fucking man!”

It was the animal in him that slammed the front door shut when she tried to open it. He pulled her back, away from it, wrenched the suitcases out of her hands.

She cried out, put her hands in front of her face, demanded he leave her alone, get

out of her way. He put his body between her and the door, told her it wasn't his fault.

"Baby, baby, listen to me—I'll get rid of it—I'll make it right!" he said, trying to put his hands on her, get her to stop squirming away.

She pushed him back. "Tim, you're hurting me!"

"I'll make it all go away!"

"You're hurting me!" she gurgled.

Tim's brain snapped like a rubber band, and suddenly he realized the claw had clenched itself around her throat. His stomach hit the ground, and he grabbed his left wrist, right where red shell morphed into human flesh, and wrested it away from Lorraine.

Lorraine pushed him, and he went toppling over her suitcases. The front door banged against the wall as he lay there on the carpet, wriggling against the coffee table.

His hand finally won long after the squeal of her tires faded away. He lay shaking, the whole scene replaying in his head. Focusing, he tried to replay it exactly as he remembered, trying to find what he did wrong. But despite his best intentions, Tim instead found himself bearing the morbid thought of if his hand would taste good dipped in melted butter.

He tripped in his haste to get to the kitchen. The knives bounced, clanging around

in the drawer as he jerked it open. He rummaged, nicking the pad of his forefinger on a carver.

When he found the cleaver, he pulled it out, brandishing it at the claw. He'd make it all better—make this all go away. This was just a nightmare, and he was going to wake up. Lorraine would be lying right beside him. He would kiss her, she would kiss him. He wouldn't go into work, would make love to Lorraine all day long. He'd tell Pete where to shove it. The cleaver came down.

Tim screamed when the wrist tendon split apart. Pain gushed from the open wound, and he realized with no small amount of nausea that he hadn't cut all the way through. Daring to crack an eye open, Tim stumbled backward, landing hard on the floor.

It was still red, blood dripping from it melodiously onto the linoleum. But instead of a lobster claw for a left hand, Tim had only a normal, human, if not somewhat mutilated left hand. And it shook uncontrollably as Tim collapsed to the ground, vomiting lasagna and mashed potatoes. It was a Tuesday.

When he found the cleaver, he pulled it out, brandishing it at the claw. He'd make it all better—make this all go away.

Red flickers over to green, but your foot
anchors the brake to the floor, choked
engine causing the steering wheel to quiver
in your hands. Chance a look right to the
synagogue, left towards the dingy day care,
both advertising for new bodies, and you don't
want to go, want to keep looking. We die
when we're not looking. There's a man settled
on the curb to your right, maybe homeless maybe
not, probably hoping to soak up salvation from
the consecrated concrete, his back keeping vigil
over the makeshift roadside alter, snug between
the uneven planes of the sidewalk and the newly-
erected iron-wrought fence, candles and poster boards
technically huddling on holy ground, but only barely,
only just. And there, nestled among the rosary beads
and grainy Facebook photos and drying rose petals,
is a half-gallon of orange juice, still cold from the fridge
of whatever convenience store it came from, perspiration

percolating near the unbroken seal. Green blinks to yellow, blinks to red, your grip on the wheel still chokehold-tight, tires nudging the faded white of the crosswalk. The man on the curb reaches behind him, like he knows the carton is there, acting like he put it there himself, and he cracks the lid open, toasting you in the snuffed out darkness of your cab, like a drunkard toasts their ghosts after last call, and in his hastiness, streams of citrusy orange run down his chin. The boy two doors down liked to feel the pulp build up on his tongue, used it to make thick globs of spit that would slide down the slope of the driveway. You used to have races, to see whose could make it down to the gutter first, wads of saliva leaving orange and white comet tails streaking all the way down the concrete. The rusted car he was fixing up was left cold and unfinished in that same driveway, until they bought a cover to strap over the hull, a vehicle-shaped body bag. Red gives way to green and the only thing you can think to do is stay.

Women as Monsters Reclaim Their Bodies From the Constructs of Oppression

YASMIN HUSSEIN
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SANTA CRUZ

ABSTRACT

THIS PAPER PRESENTS A CRITIQUE OF THE COLLAGE WORK OF WANGECHI MUTU from a predominantly Feminist perspective, concentrating on the piece “One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwhack” (2004). My research focuses on themes of the grotesque as a formal apparatus for breaking down societal norms while simultaneously reconstructing the greater identity of women. The choice of collage as a medium is analyzed as a tool for confronting Western ideology oppressed on women through available imagery.

KENYAN-AMERICAN ARTIST WANGECHI MUTU creates artworks that reference the hybridity ingrained in her identity and the identities of all those who may fall into the realm of cross-cultural nationalities. As an African-American woman, born in Kenya and currently working out of Brooklyn, she is interested in the representations of women (especially women of color) in the Western world. She works around the subject of how depictions of women are manufactured out of discriminatory sentiment, such as that which may be found in popular media like beauty advertisements, pornography, and even National Geographic magazines, contribute to the construction of female identities around the globe. Her artworks, which can be found exhibited in many gallery spaces as well as printed in multiple books, make an important feminist commentary on how this kind of popular imagery contaminates the way that the majority of the world per-

ceives women as well as how women perceive themselves and each other.

Mutu transforms principles of Western visual culture that have been passed down through histories of racial and sexual oppression by appropriating popular media imagery to create large-scale, mixed-media collages of monstrous women. By doing so she brings into consciousness notions of beauty that are imposed on the female community in their everyday lives. These notions of beauty are rooted in the Westerners' fetishization of the (black) female body, which stems from the colonial era. By repurposing the imagery that imposes these standards of beauty on women to confront the ideologies that they perpetuate, Mutu is constructing artworks that are self-referential as a means for reclamation. Collage is employed as a tool to confront Western philosophy and in turn establish a voice for the bodies of women who have been oppressed by it.

Tiny motorcycles crash into her head and foot, and blood explodes out from the wounds.

One example of Wangechi Mutu's fragmented, monstrous ladies is a piece titled "One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwhack" (2004). It is a mixed media work created out of collage, watercolor, synthetic polymer paint, and stickers. The image is portrait-oriented and stands at 68 ½ inches tall by 42 inches wide. Mutu utilizes many materials to puzzle together an image that is part animal, part human, and part monster—that appears fantastical and surreal, almost like a mythological character.

The woman in the image floats in a fantasy space of dark shadows, or clouds above a ground of plant-like tendrils. Two leopard-printed curls stretch out from the sides of her face, functioning as either horns or hair. Her lips are luscious and bright pink, like those you might find in a fashion advertisement. They draw a psychological line down to the center of the image where the creature-lady displays her foot dressed in a designer stiletto shoe. Scary black appendages extend out from her center, appearing simultaneously as an infectious growth and a high fashion runway garment. Her legs are gold and glowing, while her face and arm look like bloody flesh beneath skin or possibly the underside of a sea tentacle. Tiny motorcycles crash into her head and foot, and blood explodes out from

the wounds. Her hands, the heads of hippos, growl in anger.

Attached to the subject's foot, is a white-skinned, jewelry-adorned hand of a very small, dark and patterned person, who hides in the plant-like matter in the foreground. They support the woman above her, functioning as merely a tool without agency. However, unlike the woman they grasp onto, they peer out of the frame connecting with the gaze of the viewer. The gaze of the main subject appears worried, looking away into the distance. This leads one to believe that she may actually have less agency than the small creature beneath her. She seems stuck in her stance, frozen and contained by that which attacks her body and oppresses her. Multiple tiny, masculine motorcycles crash into her flesh, breaking through her exterior, representing the outside pressures she must face. However, her pose appears strong, aggressive, and arguably performative. Parts of her attempt to fight back, like the hippo hands and growth of black appendages that extend out of her being.

In this piece, Mutu is making a commentary on notions of beauty and femininity that are imposed on women in society through expectations driven by patriarchal order, which praise men and masculinity as well as formulate the ideal of the 'perfect' woman. In "One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwhack"

The grotesque can be understood as a monster that lies beneath all aspects of one's reality, whether literal or figurative.

(2004), the interplay between color and pattern and the context each is placed in, create an image of a woman as animalistic, monstrous, sexualized, and broken. The subject in the image is a visual juxtaposition of the objectification that is imposed on her as well as an articulation of how this makes her feel. Inclusion of details like the growling hippo heads, leaching black tendrils, and aggressive stance/pose create an effect that suggests Mutu is making an attack on ideals of perfection and beauty. The overall piece formulates a representation of how women's bodies are constructed through media and how it obscures the way that they are perceived by society and, in turn, themselves.

Throughout history, women have been depicted through media as objects of desire. Further, stemming from the colonial era, women of color were portrayed as savage, primitive, and sexualized. As a woman of cross-cultural background, Mutu is interested in the interplay between both depictions and the issues that arise from them. Her appropriation of imagery from sources such as National Geographic, *Africa Adorned*, pornographies, ethnographies, tourism, fashion, and overall mass culture publications, constructs an image of this stereotyped woman for contemporary times. In "One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwhack" (2004), aspects of these ideals can be noticed in vari-

ous details of the subject's construction. The use of leopard print for hair, or horns, is a reference to the archetypal characterizations of African diaspora. Mutu is critiquing the way that Westerners still assume that the continent is underdeveloped and wild. The designer stiletto shoe is a symbol of fashion and the media's influence in constructing notions of beauty. In her book *A Shady Promise* Mutu quotes,

"High heels are the quintessential heightening apparatus that constrains and deforms the body whilst functioning as an indicator of modernity, urbanization and 'foreign' ideals of beauty" (85).

Through each additional layer of photo clippings, Mutu is creating a form that is unique as a composite, yet is made up of commonplace, reused imagery that elucidates these socially constructed principles.

Due to the nature of image appropriation, the technique of collage/assemblage, when utilized within this feminist paradigm, is an effective tool for making commentary on the oppression of women established by Western philosophy. Collage, as an artistic process, is rooted in domestic practices because it is commonly considered to be more of a craft than a creation of high-art, which classifies it as a woman's discipline. When formulated with the intent to exclaim pro-feminist messages, collage, as an art form, allows the artist

to recycle oppressive imagery and repurpose it to flip the ideologies, that burden and constrain the female body in contemporary Western society. Mutu's piecing together of popular images to assemble a representation of the female body depicts women as fragmented and distorted constructions of media culture. A prevailing theme that emerges from this kind of depiction is the notion of the grotesque.

The grotesque can be understood as a monster that lies beneath all aspects of one's reality, whether literal or figurative. It is ignored out of fear, hidden underneath the surface of that which we choose to confront. In explaining the concept of the "Revelatory Monster," connected to the theory of the grotesque, Cohen states, "They are wonderful like that, refusing to ever completely disappear from our lives, affording us the opportunity for self-inspection, if we take a moment to recognize that monsters don't die because they are essentially us," (qtd. in Hightower 4).

Mutu embodies the grotesque through her constructions of hybrid women as monstrous, animal-like creatures. She is claiming that the unrealistic expectations of women fabricated by popular media as submissive, sexualized, orderly, perfectly shaped, proportioned and purely colored beings is an ugly monster that invades reality and therefore skews perceptions on what is considered "beautiful" in common society.

Her implementation of collage in relation to the grotesque is successful due to its very literal representational nature. Harpham states,

"—this is why the grotesque...deals with representational art as opposed to abstract or conceptual. It is rooted...in what we are familiar with. Otherwise we cannot experience the categorical confusion that is at the heart of any paradigm shift," (qtd. in Hightower 5).

This connection between material and metaphor is what makes Mutu's work so strong. It is obvious that she uses her art making process as a purposeful stratagem for conveying the context and underlying meaning behind her projects. Malik Gaines and Alexandro Segade quote, in the afterword of the book *A Shady Promise*,

"In the hybrids of Wangechi Mutu, the human and animal are collaged as a tactic for defying the tyrannical, taxonomical order of seeing, that most violent imposition onto the bodies of those made into specimen," (146).

Her monstrous women embrace the oppression they must carry, imposed on them by Western society's unreachable standards of beauty. Their literal bodies are built up out of the images that enforce such ideals.

A possible objective for Mutu, in applying themes of the grotesque to the female body, is to establish a means for transformation. Through her collage work she makes visible all that is ugly in Western ideologies that permeates the minds of individuals. She is bringing to the surface the monster of oppression that is frequently ignored. In an interview with Rich Blint following the opening of her 2010

Imagery that was at once oppressive is now functioning as argumentative support...

solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Mutu quoted:

I believe our bodies are only a single part of the many dimensions of our identity and, in some ways, the body becomes a trap in the understanding of the whole. We can invent, transform, re-imagine ourselves through manipulating our outer appearance and thus, “conquer” adversity through our physicality; or we can become subjugated ...often there may not be a choice (99).

In confronting what is wrong with these ideological practices, she inaugurates a space to move and grow beyond this limiting scope towards the emancipation of women from a patriarchal society.

This visual restructuring of perception made through Wangechi Mutu's collage hybrids functions as a reclaiming of the female body. Her grotesque, fragmented depictions of women uncover the truth of the situation and allow us to find value in aspects of reality rather than in fabricated standards of beauty.

“Such a large part of her corpus is obsessed with transformation: forcing us to read the beauty in human disfigurement and fragmentation as a mere transition to a different type of beauty,” (Veal 10).

By wearing the images that serve their oppression, female bodies are given agency in a patriarchal society. It is a transformative flip

and reversal on who is speaking about women and how they are being actualized. Imagery that was at once oppressive is now functioning as argumentative support for women in voicing their objections against unrealistic standards of beauty and other forms of injustice against them that have previously formulated their existence in Western society. Such restructuring can allow for the collective perception of women to alter in ways that shifts the focus away from solely concentrating on appearance.

Through her application of collage, Wangechi Mutu is able to reconstruct understandings of contemporary Western visual culture to create images with different and improved meanings. Her artistic process is a useful tactic in creating a message and a new visual rhetoric that can be easily processed by the modern day viewer. Employment of the grotesque allows Mutu to make such important commentary on Western ideologies she wishes to subvert by taking what is normally seen and accepted and flipping it to appear ugly and distressful. By doing such, she, as a woman, is reclaiming her body and setting a means for the reclamation of all female bodies that are constantly subject to dominating pressures and constraints that label how they should look and be perceived.



WANGECHI MUTU

One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwack, 2004

Cut-and-paste printed paper with watercolor, synthetic polymer paint, and pressure-sensitive stickers on Mylar
68 ½ x 42 in.

Courtesy of the Artist.

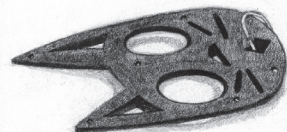
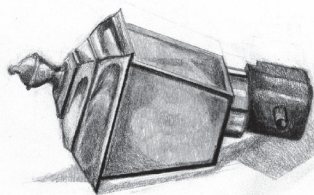
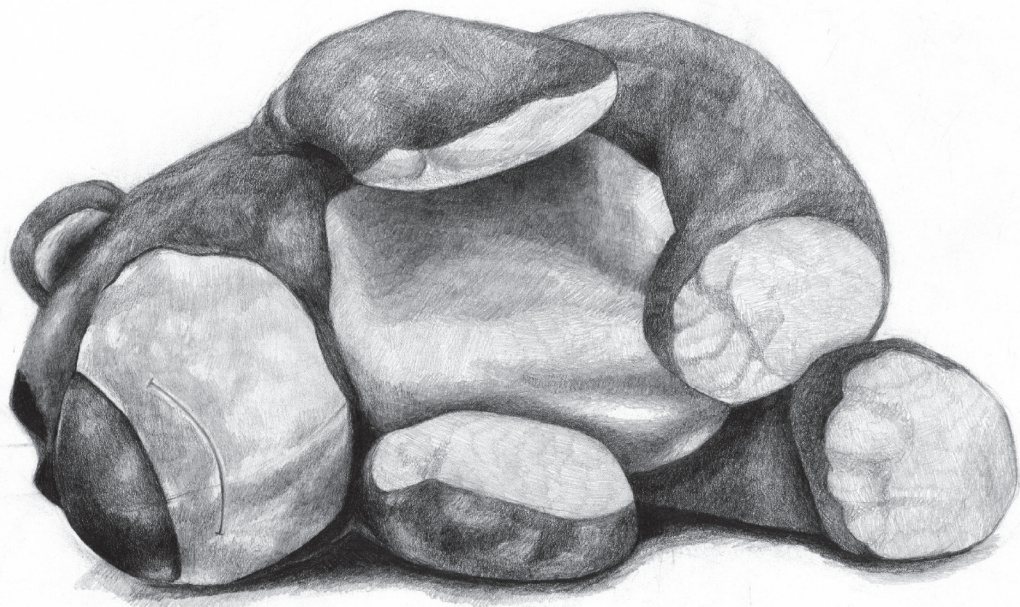
Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NYC.

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WHAT LURKS IN THE DARK can no longer be shielded by teddy bears and night lights. What awaits us now requires much more attention.

My work is a visual diary of my thoughts and experiences; static yet charged, this piece creates tension upon the viewer. Inspired by vanitas still lifes, I drew the self-defense cat ears keychain juxtaposing it with the bear and night light to remind the viewer of the very real danger of being alone during the night.



I DON'T REMEMBER MY PARENTS. At Camp Seventeen we try not to remember their faces. With the Last War burning through the world like wildfire, we do our best to forget. And forgetting comes easy to us children. It trails us like a shadow during the day, while we work. It waits for us on the ground when we get beaten, and it whistles through our ears when we stand up and brush the dirt off our rags. We forget their faces to avoid the pain that comes with our work. When the search lights come on at night, we huddle together for warmth, and we still don't remember our parents. It might be the same at the other camps.

I remember the week my parents died, and every week that followed. The Last War had taken millions of lives, but I never expected my parents to be counted among the dead. The government sent a black envelope in the mail, and my grandmother did not show it to me. She hesitated to open it, and the expression on her wrinkled face told me what it said. A grey bus stopped in front of our house the next day, filled with other confused orphans. Two men clad with beige camouflage knocked on our window, with large rifles slung over their shoulders. When Nana opened the door, they showed her a list with my name on it. Off I went, out the door, no resistance. It was illegal to harbor an orphan, and my Nana was too old to protect me. One of the men held my hand as I walked toward the bus. The soldiers were nicer back then.

At eight in the morning the camp sirens blare to remind us where we are. The barrack doors fly open, and we rise to our feet. The Supervisor counts our shaved heads and calls us out to a not-so-special patch of dirt where he takes roll. He calls my name first.

"Dench, Marley," he says with a finger hovering over a clipboard.

"Yes, sir," I exclaim from the back of the crowd.

"You're assigned to the Cremation Station for today."

"Yes, sir," I say, resisting the urge to say "No, sir."

The Supervisor moves his finger down the list.

"Deceased... deceased... deceased... ah, here we go. Rudawksi, Tolek."

"Yes... sir," a small Polish boy murmurs at the front of the crowd.

"You'll be assisting our friend Marley here at the station."

He doesn't parrot the obligatory "Yes, sir," and is struck across the face with the Supervisor's clipboard.

Tolek stutters, "Y-ye-yes, s-sir."

When the search lights come on at night, we huddle together for warmth, and we still don't remember our parents.

The Supervisor smiles and resumes calling out names. "Nielson, Matthew. You've got ash-sweeping duty."

When the roll call is finished and all work duties are assigned, the other children abandon their tired slouches and stand up straight. The Supervisor blows his whistle and reminds us of our circumstances. "Your parents are dead, and this country needs workers. As much as you want to go home, you cannot. This camp is your home, and we expect you to give back to your country!"

The Supervisor blows his whistle again and dismisses us to begin the day's work.

I grab Tolek by the arm and tug him in the direction of the Cremation Station. The barbed-wire fences extend for miles around the camp, and our work duties are at the other side. He follows me as I set off for the train station, leaping between my dusty footprints for a mile. He grows tired and trudges behind me.

"Marley, I've never worked at the station. I'm scared."

"I was scared my first time too," I say.

"The other boys say it's terrible. Do we really have to go?"

"Yes. We have no other choice. Either we work, or this camp gets filled up with rotting corpses, and we don't want that. The bodies have to burn faster than they arrive."

Tolek asks, "But doesn't it make you scared, seeing all the dead people?"

"The faces will bother you at first, but you'll get used to it. Some of them look happy. Others look sad. And in the end, they aren't really feeling anything."

"But aren't the bodies heavy? Won't I struggle to lift them onto the train?"

I laugh. "You ask a lot of questions, and yes, the bodies are heavy. That's why I'm here."

The train station is still a mile away, but we begin to smell death in the air. Tolek lifts his ragged shirt over his nose and mouth. I take a deep breath.

"How could you bear that smell?" he mumbles through the dirty fabric.

"It's awful, I know. But here you must learn to love the things you hate."

After several minutes, Tolek lowers his shirt from his face and inhales. "Gyuck, that's disgusting." He follows me to the station while taking shallow breaths.

“No. None of them look happy. They all look the same to me. They all look dead.”

When we arrive at the Cremation Station, the children from the other barracks are already there, lifting bodies from one boxcar to another. They move the bodies, two children to a corpse, from the end of one train to the front of the other, like ants carrying crumbs of bread. The busy workers mimic the faces of the dead, silent expressions marred by the stench of flesh and the sound of limp bodies dropping on metal. Tolek's face drains at the sight of the dead civilians and soldiers, and I put my arm around his shoulder.



“See, this isn't so awful,” I say with a smile.

Tolek shakes off his discomfort. “I hate this. I hate this so much.”

A boxcar door slides open, and I lift Tolek into the dark metal box filled with corpses. He shivers as he lifts an elderly woman by her heels and drags her down to me. After she falls onto the ground, Tolek jumps out of the boxcar. We carry the woman to the front of the Crematorium Train, her spine dragging in the rocky dirt. Tolek climbs into the boxcar, and I push the woman into his hands.

“This one looks happy, doesn't she?” I say.

“No. None of them look happy. They all look the same to me. They all look dead.”

Tolek drags the first corpse to the end of the empty boxcar and jumps out. We walk to the Corpse Train to retrieve another corpse.

“One down,” I jest. “Ninety-nine to go.”

Tolek glares at me. “Do you get some sort of sick thrill from this?”

“No, that's not it at all. I hate this work as much as anyone else, but you must remain light-hearted if you don't want to end up like them.” I point to the other children, who scurry about with their dead eyes and permanent frowns.

“So none of these bodies scare you?”

“No, of course not. Why would they?”

“Because they were once living, breathing people.”

“Well, I'm a living, breathing person. Do I scare you, Tolek?”

"You're starting to," Tolek insists.

I lift Tolek into the corpse-filled boxcar, and he picks out a short, bearded gentleman. Tolek struggles to lift the man, so I climb into the boxcar and roll the body out with my feet. The man falls on his face, and his nose splits off. We flip the man over and fix his nose into position. Tolek grabs his legs, and I hold the corpse under his cold, lifeless arms. We carry the man to the Crematorium Train.

"That one looked sad," I say.

"Sure it did."

At six in the evening the camp sirens blare to signal the end of the work day. Tolek and I lift the ninety-ninth corpse, a tall, half-decomposed man, into the Crematorium Train. Our arms and legs ache, and we can no longer smell the air as it wafts beneath our nostrils.

I feel a surge of disappointment. "We haven't fulfilled our quota."

Tolek says, "Let's do one quick one then, yeah?"

As the other workers trudge toward camp, Tolek and I rush to the boxcars of the Corpse Train. We open the doors, one by one, and each appears to be empty. The other workers must have been as busy as we were.

"Looks like we might be out of luck," I say.

We reach the last boxcar, and I push the door open. In the dark corner, there's a corpse laying on its stomach, a young woman. Tolek jumps into the metal box and flips the body over, searching for an expression on her face, but he cannot find one. He reaches under her and lifts her body, with one arm under her shoulders and the other behind her knees. Tolek studies her face as he carries her out of the boxcar.

Impatient, I ask, "Well? Does she look happy or sad?"

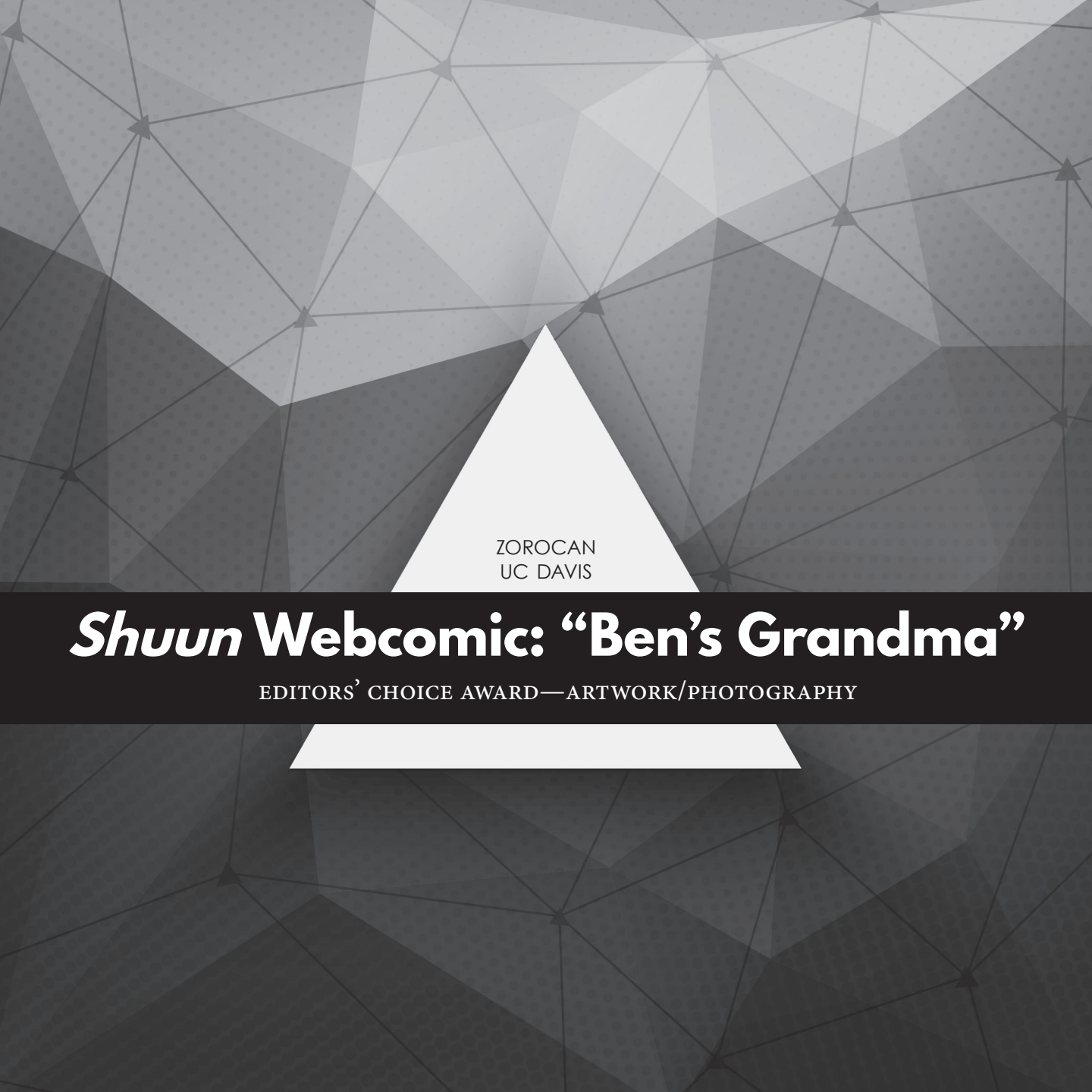
He says, "This one looks like my mother."

We dig a shallow grave.

The Crematorium Train sets off to the east, and another Corpse Train arrives from the west. We don't make a sound on our way back to camp. At dusk we watch the plumes of ash rise in the distance, the faces of the dead still fresh in our minds.

He says, "This one looks like my mother."

We dig a shallow grave.



ZOROCAN
UC DAVIS

Shuun Webcomic: “Ben’s Grandma”

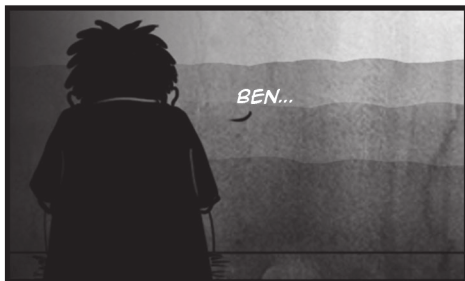
EDITORS’ CHOICE AWARD—ARTWORK/PHOTOGRAPHY



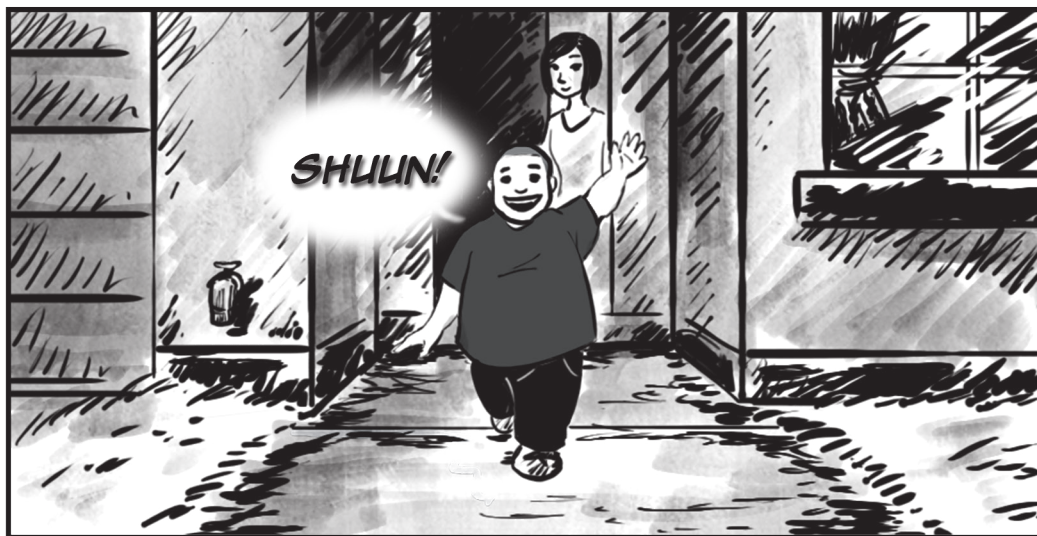
AS A CONTINUATION OF MY HIGH SCHOOL COMIC COLUMN that was published in the school's news magazine, *El Estoque*, my webcomic, *Shuun*, is a semi-autobiographical account of my life experiences; through daily trials and tribulations, I intend to convey the hilarity of humanity through truths like reality and overcoming adversity. "Ben's Grandma" is part of my webcomic, which I created at the suggestion of the comics editor of the Washington Post. The main character, Shuun, an elementary school student, can be described as either a "pessimistic optimistic" or "optimistic pessimist" since she expects the worst but hopes for the best. The comic is in black and white to convey a moody, yet contemplative atmosphere. The style of comedy is influenced by stand-up comedy, especially that of comedians George Carlin and Louis C.K. The vignette style of storytelling was also inspired by French films and the FX TV show, *Louie*, created by Louis C.K.

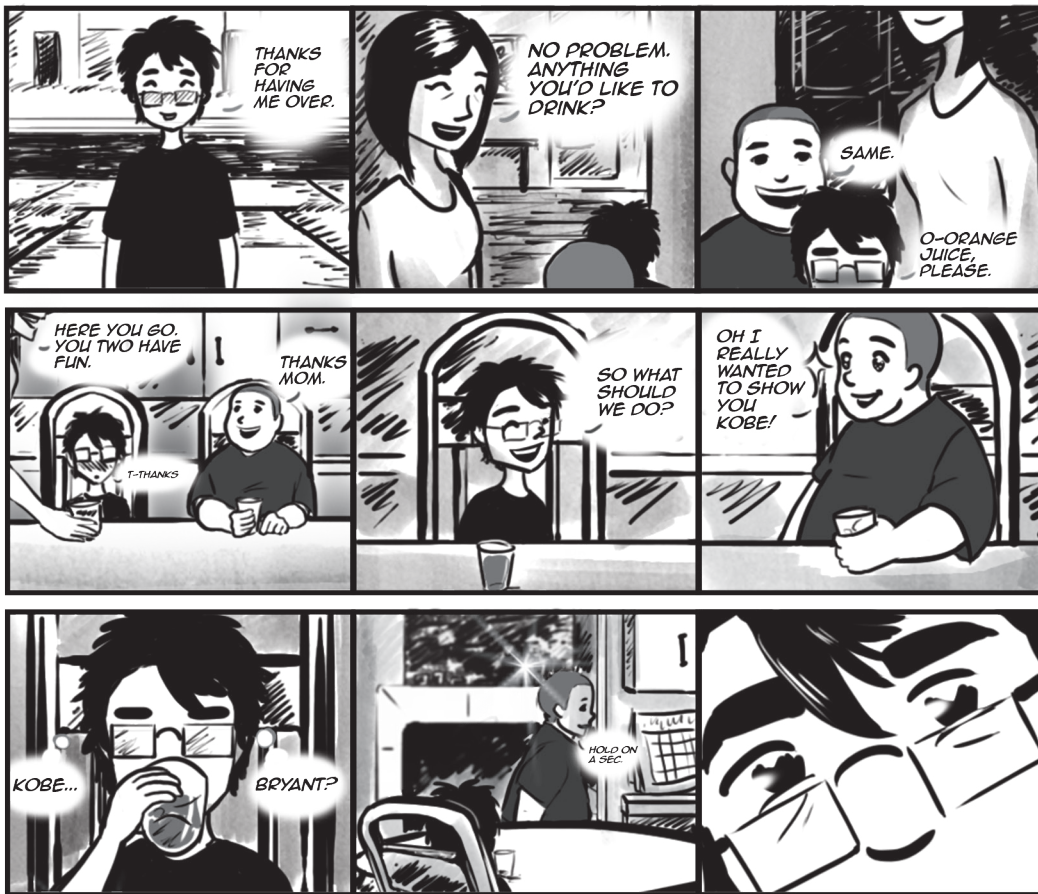
This particular comic (originally named "Ben's Grandma Part 1") is the beginning of an episode where Shuun makes a grave mistake that threatens to sever her friendship with Ben, who is one of her few friends. Although there are two parts to this series, I've decided to only submit the first part and shorten its name for *Audemus*. The language is different from the original text to be more appropriate for submission. The rest of the storyline can be found here: <http://shuun.webcomic.ws/comics/8/>.

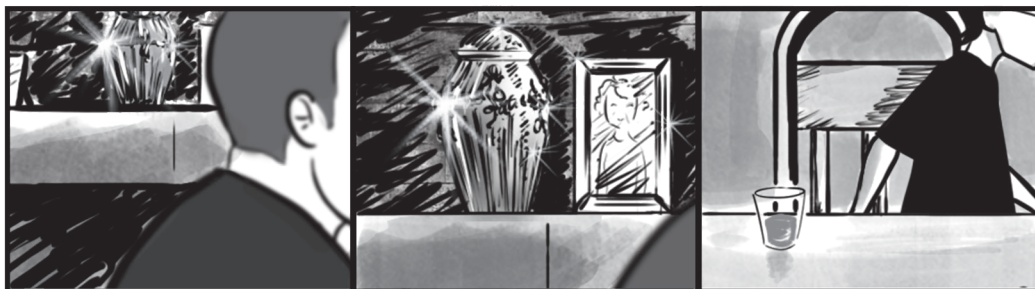
I created this comic to express many of the hardships I've endured in my personal life and I hope readers will be able to connect with the comic to discover the valuable nuggets of truth in everyday life. More importantly, I hope that the comic will help people, especially those suffering from depression, to realize that even though life can be difficult, it is still worth persevering through.

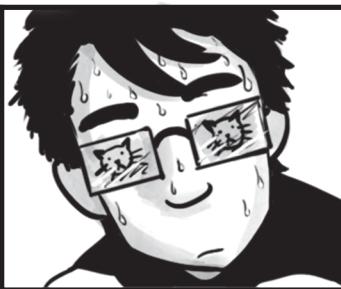
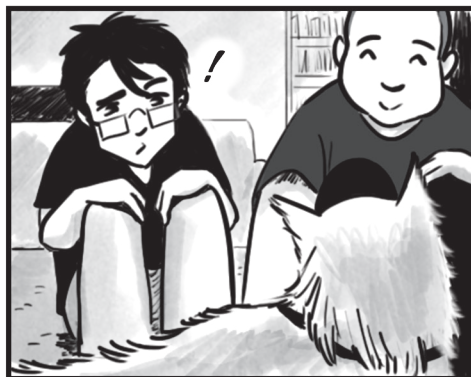


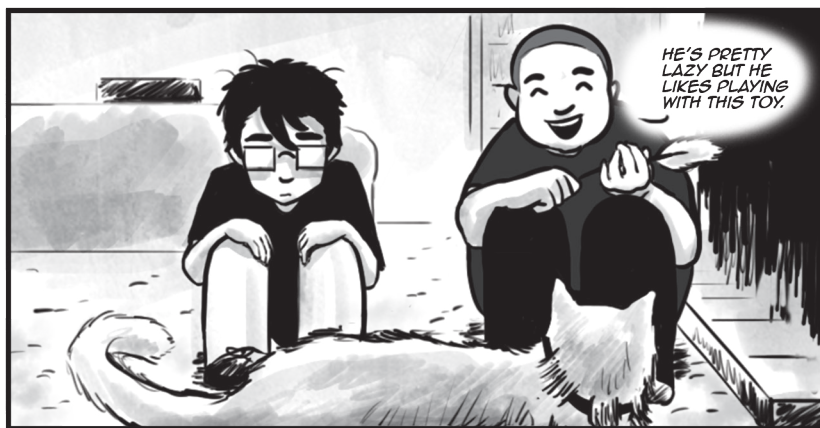
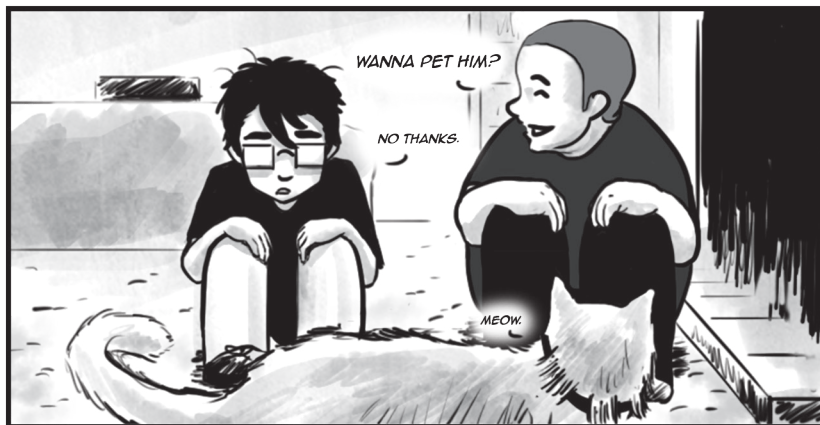
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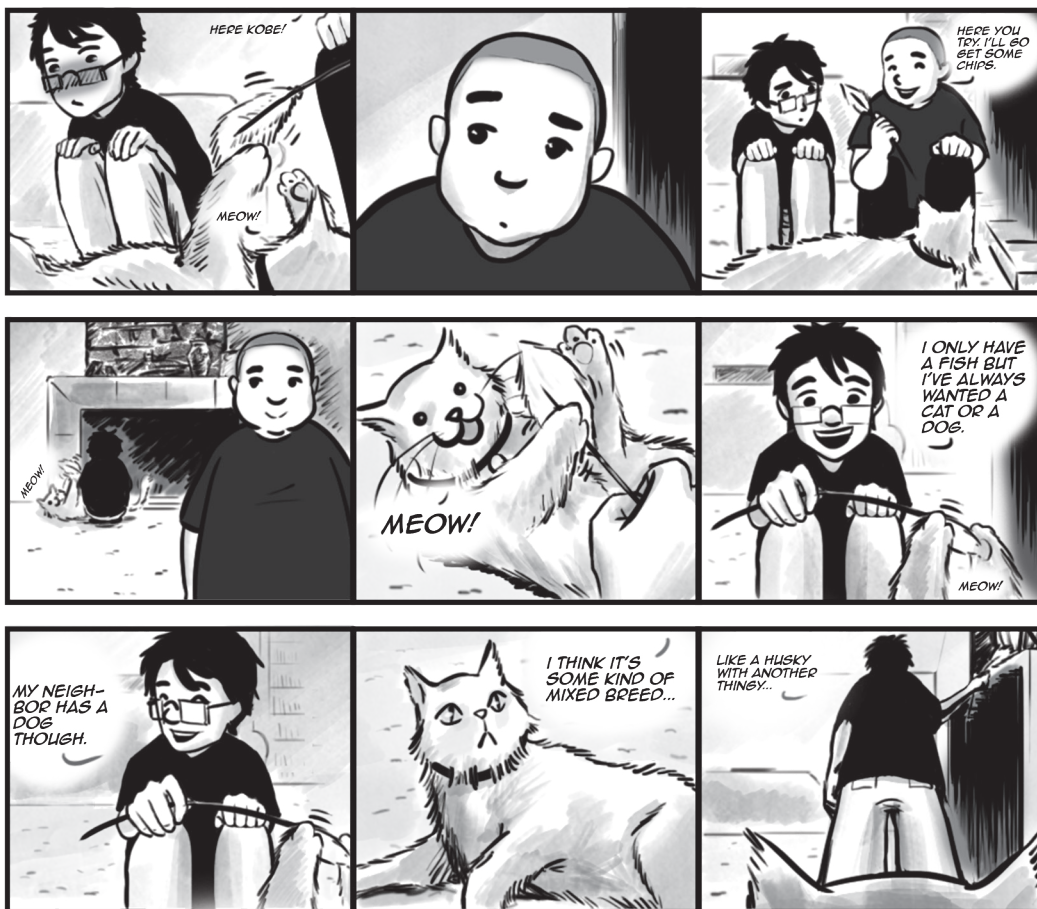




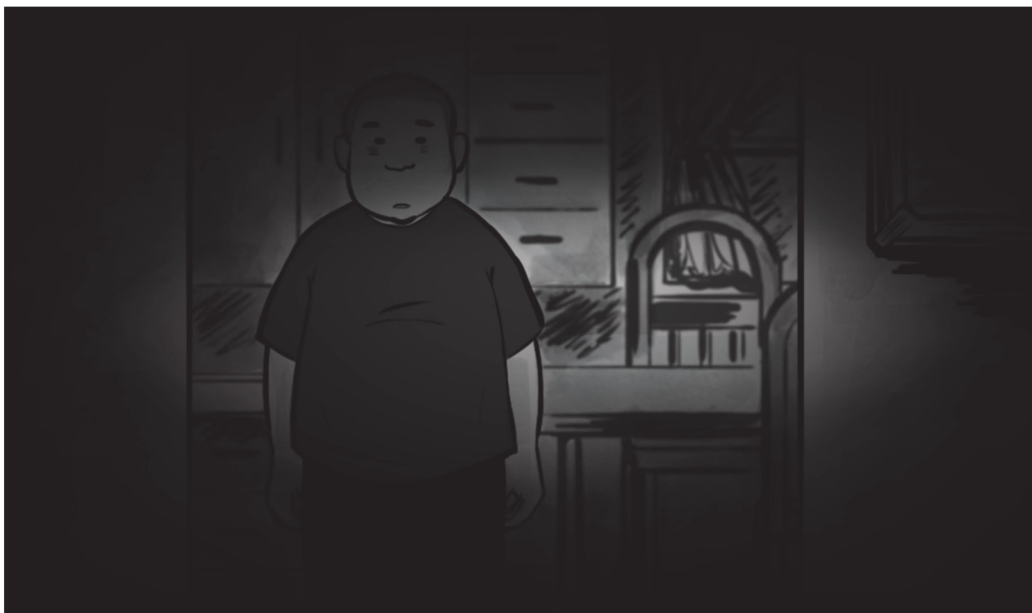




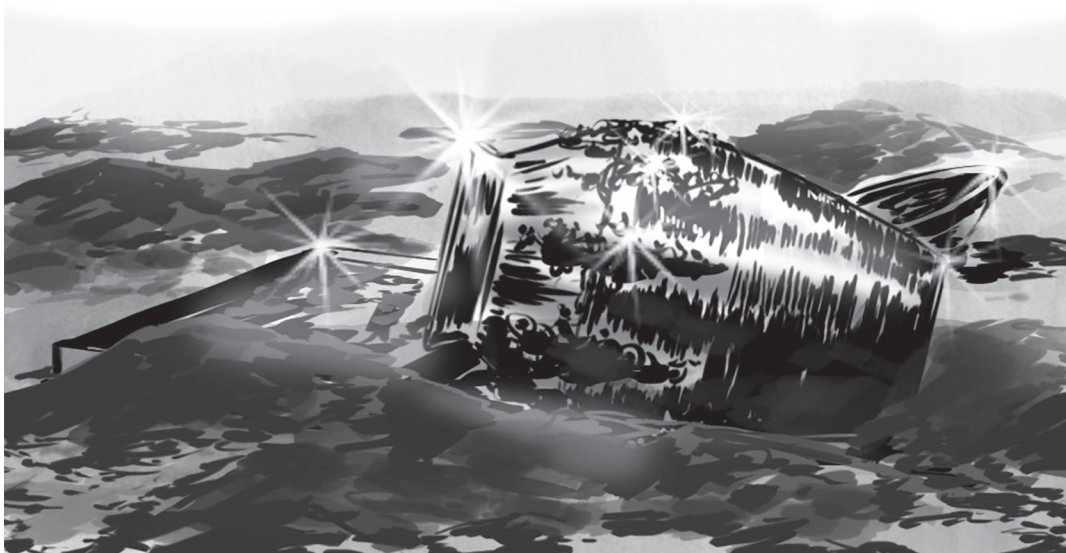












The Expression of Love in Education: Plato's *Symposium*

BENJAMIN OCHOA GONZALEZ
RESEARCH
RIVERSIDE

ABSTRACT

"LOVE IS A GOD WHO LOOKS OUT FOR MANKIND'S INTEREST..." he supports us and heals precisely those ills whose alleviation constitute the deepest human happiness" (25) Aristophanes, *Symposium*. In his famous dialogue, *Symposium*, Plato presents a series of philosophers who argue their many bold claims about the nature of love itself. The love discussed is passionate love, driven by erotic energy, and most often associated with sexual desire. It is in the penultimate speech, spoken by Socrates, where one of the most interesting aspects of Plato's theory lies; he makes the connection between love and education which he describes as actually being a manifestation of our erotic drives. You see, Plato argues that love is driven by a natural desire for a sort of immortality through one's offspring and pursuing the teaching of ideas actually leads to what he calls "mental procreation." Plato's idea of this process can even be applied to modern education; the famous 20th century American professor Richard Rorty's attitude toward education is an excellent example. While I agree with Plato's conclusions about education being driven by erotic love, I reject his reasoning that love is a one-way street driven by the selfish desires of one dominating the other for his own means. No, instead I insist we can maintain the erotic ties to education while also taking into account the ideas of other philosophers like Schopenhauer to show in fact love and education can actually be described as a much more cooperative effort than Plato suggests.

EDUCATION IS NOT USUALLY CONSIDERED to be intimately connected with love. Any inherent relationship between the two might seem implausible, but it has been theorized upon notably in one of Plato's famous dialogues entitled *Symposium*. In *Symposium*, Plato presents a series of speeches told by famous ancient Greek philosophers concerning the very nature of love. It is during the penultimate speech, spoken by Socrates, where Plato establishes the connection between love and education. While Plato's

theory of love manages to cleverly tie education and love together, in a way that can even be applied toward modern education; I find fault with his presupposed notion of selfish desires which he argues defines love in all of its manifestations. Instead, I want to argue for the actual selflessness that is demonstrated through the descriptions of the processes of love that Plato and other philosophers since then have established.

First off, we must be clear about the kind of love Plato means to define in *Symposium*.

I want to argue for the actual selflessness that is demonstrated through the descriptions of the processes of love...

Love, for our purposes, has nothing to do with so-called “platonic love,” affection for a family member or a friend. The love Plato discusses throughout the many speeches in *Symposium* is passionate love, driven by erotic energy, and most often associated with sexual desire as known by the ancient Greeks as Eros. We will specifically focus on Socrates’ speech where the bulk of Plato’s theory lies.

The first major point we should note is that Plato’s theory belongs among so-called “deficiency” theories of erotic desire. In his speech, Socrates claims it is wrong to assume that one can simply “love”—love takes an object, it must be love for something. “Love,” in other words, is a transitive verb. Now what is love’s attitude towards its object? Sensibly enough, Socrates believes Eros to be a species of desire. As in any case of desire, love must necessarily involve a desire for something that is lacking, for “if it isn’t lacking, you could not desire it, surely” (S 200a). A lover, then, lacks the thing she loves. Eroticism is understood as existing in order to address a deficiency, and this foundational idea grounds all of Plato’s subsequent theorizing to its nature.

So what is this lacking object which love seeks? Plato argues that while people’s desires might take different forms, ultimately

whatever we love, we want in our possession because we believe it will bring us happiness and goodness. Could the person who has the things that make him happy, then, be a lover? During his speech Socrates insists “it’s only when a person describes what he’s got as ‘good’ and what he hasn’t as ‘bad’ that he is capable of being content with what belongs to him” (S 205e). From the perspective of Plato’s deficiency theory, this type of person would appear to have no love of anything. Socrates, however, points out that there is a sense in which one can desire what one already possesses: “What you want [in this case] is to have it in the future as well, because there’s nothing you can do about the fact that you’ve got it at the moment” (S 200d). It is not enough for us merely to be happy in the present; we strive to keep whatever good things we have into the future, ideally forever. This is what a “lover” truly wants according to Plato, the permanent possession of goodness, or as Socrates puts it, immortal happiness. This is the object of love in Plato’s theory, the deficiency that our eroticism seeks to eliminate.

But of course we cannot eliminate it, as we are mortal creatures. The best we can hope for, Socrates says, is the kind of attenuated immortality that is possible through re-

...the desire for sexual reproduction is not conceived as identical with the erotic drive...

production: “Procreation is as close as a mortal can get to being immortal and undying.” Erotic’s mechanism for achieving immortal happiness is thus through the duplication of ourselves. As Socrates puts it, each of us is “pregnant” with our best possessions, and we seek to give “birth” to them in another person. Our resulting offspring, then, is meant to function as extensions of ourselves long after we are dead—we live on through the products of our eroticism.

The most obvious example of what Plato means is erotic attraction to a sex partner resulting in childbirth. Plato’s analysis of sexual attraction involves a person who desires to implant a copy of himself in a partner. A handsome man made happy with his good looks, for example, is “pregnant” with them, and through sex is likely, subconsciously, hoping to create a child that inherits his good looks. He thus aspires to “live on” in possession of them. And what of his partner? In the case of sex, the lover is attracted to physical beauty, but only as a means to achieving his object of reproduction. What Plato wants us to understand is that in physical beauty we actually see the possibility of reproducing the physical characteristics of ourselves that make us happy—we essentially see the youth and health of a beautiful sex partner’s body

as an ideal vessel for growing the seeds of our best traits. “The object of love is not beauty...it is birth and procreation in a beautiful medium” (S 206c). Socrates’ language here is replete with sexualized imagery: a “pregnant” person is eager to give “birth” and when he is around another person whom he views as attractive, he gets excited, “ready to burst and penetrate.” When around physical repulsiveness, he will “shrink in pain, back off, and withdraw,” and goes through the pain of retaining his unborn children which is all the more painful because the failure of procreation gets in the way of his happiness (S 206d). Thus, our attraction to physical beauty is really just an attraction to something we view as a promising medium for the reproduction of our own best physical features.

It is important to note here that eroticism for Plato is not the effort to reproduce ourselves entirely, but only our “good” features—good being the ones we would like to continue to possess. This makes sense of our sorrow when a child inherits a physical defect of ours, and our joy when a child inherits one of our best features. Sexual reproduction is thus a refining process, through which (again, usually subconsciously) we hope to “cut away” our worst features and create a perfected version of ourselves. Physical attraction itself,

then, is driven by the self-serving desire to ensure the success of our own “rebirth” as a more perfect being will come to fruition.

Now, crucially for Plato’s theory, the desire for sexual reproduction is not conceived as identical with the erotic drive, but only as one manifestation of the erotic drive, and its most “inferior” manifestation at that. This is by far the most intriguing aspect of Plato’s theory: that aside from sexual life, eroticism can also express itself in terms of what Socrates calls “mental procreation.” Our best facets aren’t exclusive to the physical aspects that we want extended possession of, but also of our minds and ideas. In these cases, lovers are pregnant with wisdom; just as in sexual intercourse, Plato argues these lovers will still want to give “birth” to their good traits (in this case, wisdom) in an “attractive medium.” The “mental beauty” Plato has in mind here involves a degree of open-mindedness, enabling the lover to “penetrate” someone’s mind with his ideas. Raw intelligence is also needed, for if a teacher could get his ideas across to a student, but the student does not have the intelligence required to “nourish” these ideas, (just as a barren womb can’t get pregnant) a barren mind will not bear offspring for its lover. Education thus involves an erotic attempt to give birth and experience satisfaction in a manner comparable to ejaculation through the spreading of one’s

ideas. He hopes for these ideas to get passed on, leaving a legacy, thus achieving “immortality” through possession of his best ideas and values. The offspring that can result from this method of procreation are, in Plato’s view, much more outstanding than physical children and span a wide range of scholarly and worldly pursuits that result in what Socrates’ calls “virtue.” Socrates specifically references in his speech what he calls the mental offspring of the ancient poets Homer and Hesiod which have “earned their parents’ renown and ‘fame immortal’ since the children themselves are immortal” (S 209d). He goes on to list famous warriors and politicians who helped form Greece itself, which resulted in their immortality living on in the very fabric of Plato’s own contemporary society. All these longstanding achievements are encompassed as products of their respective parent’s eroticism.

The conception of education as the quintessential erotic activity is perhaps surprising at first glance but is actually not as far-fetched as it might appear. Many teachers experience successful education as intimate and deeply satisfying, typically to the extent that they identify with the material they are trying to communicate. It is not much of a stretch to believe that the satisfaction here is fundamentally the same we take in physical reproduction—that teachers through educa-

Education can therefore be considered one of the many “manifestations” of love...

tion seek to “live on” in the ideas they give their students, just as people seek to live on in possession of their best physical characteristics through reproductive sex.

For example, the famous 20th century American philosophy professor Richard Rorty, holds a controversial attitude toward education that in fact reflects “mental procreation.” Rorty brings up an argument commonly used against college professors by some conservative parents who claim educators corrupt their sons and daughters with ideas that go against their faith. Rorty has an unapologetic attitude toward these students whom he describes as “needing education in order to outgrow their primitive fears, hatreds, and superstitions.” While he points out that some of these parents believe the whole “liberal establishment” of American education is really a “conspiracy” to alter the ideas of students, Rorty slyly states, “The parents have a point.” He claims that many college professors, including himself, will deliberately try to show any “fundamentalist” students they come across “the benefits of secularization,” with the ultimate goal that “students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own.” Rorty strongly believes in his own ideas and values and

argues against those of what the “fundamentalist” parents have instilled in their students. In terms of Eros, Rorty wants to see his own views or ideas take root in his students. He himself calls college educators “heirs of the Enlightenment, we Socratics” who have passed on those ideas that were implanted in themselves at some point as well. To implant his own ideas into the students he refers to earlier, he would have to penetrate through their “bigotry” and narrow-mindedness, and then give birth to his views in his students’ minds. His teaching of those ideas he views as good are pursued for the same ends as other educators. “We assign first-person accounts of growing up homosexual to our homophobic students for the same reasons that German schoolteachers in the postwar period assigned *The Diary of Anne Frank*.” Rorty and other educators live on through their “views” which they try to implant in their students. Plato would view the satisfaction that Rorty experiences as erotic. Since Rorty has been driven by the erotic desire to pass on his “best” ideas through education, he is closer to immortality and happiness—love’s ultimate goal. Education can therefore be considered one of the many “manifestations” of love, and mental procreation, as defined by Plato, can be easily seen in the stu-

dent-teacher relationship as described by Professor Rorty.

Now that I have briefly explained Plato's theory of erotic desire, I want to offer some criticism. Plato's view of love is unabashedly one-sided with a purely dominant lover selfishly using the other for his own gain of immortality. In his view, the beloved's role is simply one of a container or fertile soil for the growth of what the lover hopes to perpetuate. In the case of physical procreation, the beloved, of course, contributes her own genes to the child, but this is not part of the lover's plan—all he is interested in is passing on his own best traits. It is similar with education. Like Rorty, Plato conceives of education as a one way street—the teacher wishes to pass on her own best ideas, but she does not wish to learn anything from these interaction with her students. We might not be aware of it, but Plato would argue we are just looking to retain our best possessions though our erotic interactions with others. Though Plato makes some very compelling arguments and seemingly undeniable claims, such as the human desire for happiness, some find flaws in this aspect of his view of Eros.

Interestingly, we find just such a criticism implicit in another speech on the nature of love in *Symposium*, that of Socrates' fellow philosopher, Aristophanes. In Aristophanes' view, love is a much more egalitarian phe-

nomenon than Socrates lets on. He calls Eros a god that "looks out for mankind's interest" more than any other god, who "supports us and heals precisely those ills whose alleviation constitutes the deepest human happiness" (S 189c). It is obvious that parallels can be drawn from Aristophanes' description of love and Socrates' claim that love is an expression of the human desire for happiness. Aristophanes follows Socrates in claiming that the erotic impulse is a drive to perfect ourselves, to shed what is bad about ourselves and possess what is good. But in contrast to Socrates, Aristophanes says we are driven to find another person to love in the "pursuit of wholeness"—we are looking to fill a void by completing ourselves and our beloved in the process, not just pass on things we already have. In other words, in Socrates' theory, the erotic drive is for the retention of goodness, while in Aristophanes' theory, it is for the acquisition of another's goodness and the sharing of our own.

Eroticism is not a one way street, but a cooperative effort for mutual advantage. Aristophanes theory of Eros is thus a deficiency theory, but unlike Socrates' view, the lack eroticism strives to address one that exists in the present. When we are attracted to another's beauty, it is not that we see her merely as a medium for passing on our own best traits, but as possessing what we ourselves lack and

The “pursuit of wholeness” Aristophanes mentioned earlier is based on the idea that we all have a void that we long to fill.

hoping to appropriate for ourselves through loving her.

This way of looking at Eros seems attractively different from Socrates, but it leaves us with many questions left unaddressed by Aristophanes’ relatively vague speech in *Symposium*. As Aristophanes himself says, “It’s impossible to describe the affection, warmth, and love” between lovers, and “they obviously have some other objective that their minds can’t formulate,” which in fact they can’t explain either (S 192c). He says we are driven by the “pursuit of wholeness” to seek out a lover, but the only reason he gives for us doing so is that we look to fill a void that each of us have that can only be filled by another person. In order to look to Aristophanes’ theory as a viable alternative to Socrates’ view, we need to know more about the kind of “lack” Eros seeks to address: if everyone lacks specific things or not, and love’s mechanism in seeking to address the lack. We need to know what role, if any, reproduction plays in his theory and if eroticism can manifest itself in spheres other than sexuality. Socrates is quick to disavow Aristophanes’ ideas, but interestingly enough, Aristophanes attempts to “get a word in” by the end of Socrates’ speech before getting interrupted by another character, Alcibiades (S 212C). Perhaps

Plato himself put that detail in the text to acknowledge some weaknesses in his own account, as though he wants the reader to consider imagining what Aristophanes might have said.

The 19th century German philosopher Schopenhauer may be able to help us fill in the gaps in Aristophanes’ arguments. Schopenhauer shares a belief similar to that of Socrates: love brings us to the method of procreation. This is the offspring Schopenhauer refers to as the “true end to the whole love story” (124). But just as Aristophanes believed love addresses the ills of “mankind” and not of the individual man, Schopenhauer insists that the subconscious drive for love has less to do with the individual himself and more to do with the “composition of the next generation” (123). When love meets its true end, it does not necessarily take into account our personal interest to maintain our possession of our good traits (as Socrates argues) but instead wants those good traits for a whole new being meant to incorporate the goodness from both parents. It’s not out of the question to suppose one of the main reasons that Plato views physical procreation as inferior is because in physical procreation, there is actual “mixing” and both parties each contribute their own traits which goes

against his theory of eroticism keeping only one's good traits himself. As Schopenhauer points out, "Every physical defect of the man, every divergence from the type, may, with regard to the child, be removed by the woman in reproduction, through the fact that she herself is blameless in these respects, or even exceeds in the opposite direction" (129). The resulting children from physical procreation are thus capable of being a perfection of both the father and the mother's good traits for the good of the species.

With it being established now that both parties in the pursuit of love share a contribution to the offspring, it is now more appropriate from now on to refer to both parties as lovers, instead of just a single lover and the beloved. The "pursuit of wholeness" Aristophanes mentioned earlier is based on the idea that we all have a void that we long to fill. This void can be explained when Schopenhauer says that "each one love what he lacks" (130). Again, we are establishing love as a form of the "deficiency theory" in vein to that of Plato's theory. But the key contrast in this argument is Schopenhauer's belief that the lacks of each individual is "established by his or her own individuality" (126). In other words, each person has desires and lacks that are unique to them as an individual. Love's end may go beyond the individual, but it is in the interest of the next gen-

eration to make sure his or her parents are not just successful in producing any child, but the best child possible. What determines attraction between lovers is distinguished by what Schopenhauer calls absolute and relative considerations. "Absolute considerations" can be compared closely to a Platonic attractive medium; beauty is viewed as a "guidance" toward which a lover will gravitate to people of great beauty. However, in the case of true lovers, Schopenhauer claims "each one will specifically regard as beautiful in another individual those perfections which he himself lacks... even those imperfections which are opposite to his own" (127). The "void" of each lover thus can only be completed by the other as if they were a puzzle piece, by meeting the specific lacks and complementing the other. It is here we can elaborate on the "pursuit of wholeness" which is actually lovers' pursuits for their perfect lovers that complement their strengths and weaknesses, and not just any beautiful medium (192e). The relationships that "fit" together well are the ones that Schopenhauer argues are the most passionate. Those that are the most passionate have filled in each other's unique lacks while sharing their goodness; these lovers are able to create the best possible offspring. Lovers in this relationship become more to each other than just a means to an end. They begin to look out for each other instead of just look-

...it is a cooperative activity between teachers and students creating something that was not there before in either party.

ing out for themselves. They want to have their offspring with each other, and continue looking after each other after their offspring come to fruition. Through lovers fulfilling their specific desires of “wholeness,” the unconscious desire to “purify” the species as a whole has succeeded. The resulting child is created by the parents cooperatively. Thus in the overall scheme of things, Schopenhauer argues that love does not take into account an individual’s desires; rather, love looks out for the species. Thus, Schopenhauer implies something very selfless about the nature of man.

Although Schopenhauer does not necessarily relate his ideas about physical procreation to what Plato calls “mental procreation,” the ideas can still be fruitfully applied to mental thought processes such as education. Plato would argue that educators are just selfishly using students as an attractive medium to impart their own ideas onto them. Schopenhauer would argue it was the case when describing physical procreation; the seemingly selfish aims are not the true ends in mental procreation. An educator ends up perfecting his ideas through his students’ objections and discussions. The educator incorporates what he learns from them into his

own ideas, just as his students incorporate the educator’s ideas into their own ideology.

Referring to an earlier reference made in Socrates’ speech, if famous poets from history had in fact successfully implanted their own narrow idea of what they thought was good into future generations in a Platonic view, then we wouldn’t have tons of scholars having a wide range of interpretations, including some that might even go against the poet’s original intentions. Instead, Schopenhauer would argue that the poets themselves intentionally write their works that way so they can be open to different interpretations and meanings that can be added to by future generations; the poem itself is not the “final product.” The poet understands that without the reader to write for, his efforts will be pointless. Since the poet values the reader and the reader values the poet, they will share their goodness in order to form new ideas and interpretations as their offspring. Individuals in scientific communities often draw upon work and research that is conducted by many different researchers, and together, their ideas lead to progress and new discoveries that would not have been possible without incorporating knowledge from fellow scientists. Even educators have to admit that through various projects, essays, and

discussions, students often take the core concepts taught by the teacher and apply them in a huge variety of different ways, including ways the educators themselves might have never thought of or intended. The educators themselves learn new things; in other words, they add to their goodness. Intimacy that the students and their teachers form together has the capacity to breed astounding ideas that come as a result of cooperation between the student and the teacher; they both still derive a sense of erotic satisfaction as their offspring comes to fruition from the results of their discussions, and they can share their findings to the world. Professor Rorty might seem set on excluding the student from his own ideas, but once he finds those students he thought he was looking for, the resulting offspring will be the best of both him and the students.

It seems to me that my formulized Shopenhauerian conception of education is more accurate than Plato's. I insist that education is best viewed not as the transplanting of one person's wisdom into another inferior person's mind. Rather, it is a cooperative activity between teachers and students creating something that was not there before in either party. These new ideas and wisdom that cooperative love enables us to have, enables progress. The perfected "offspring" of many great minds working together to achieve

happiness have brought on the arts, literature, technologies, and much more for the rest of humanity to admire and put to use. I do think that Plato is right in claiming striking parallels between education and sexuality, such that they are best viewed as two expressions of the same underlying erotic drive. But unlike Plato, I think this drive is best viewed as the drive to perfect both ourselves and our beloved through intimate interaction. I think this anti-Platonic, Aristophanic conception of Eros does more justice to our idea of love as unselfish and between equals and thus justifies the role of love in education.

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REBEKAH GRACE KEAGY
RIVERSIDE

Lessons From My Mother

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD—POETRY



My mama said don't see bad as good,
And don't look at bad through rose-colored glasses.
For roses have sharp thorns that hurt when first touched,
Yet the pain is easily forgotten
While you watch the blood drip from your finger
And forget what it is to be healed and healthy.

My mama said don't let other's dysfunction
Become the function of your life.
Don't let the things that so easily entangle
Strangle you.

My mama said that when I meet a man
He should reach for my heart,
That way he knows where my passions lie
And what makes me cry out in pain.
If he goes grasping for something else first,
Then he is intending to self satisfy.
Cause my mama said not to use my body as a currency
But as a ministry.
To use my hands,
My feet,
My mind
To serve others in need,
Not to serve the self centered greed
That so easily entangles the heart.

My mama taught me how to build healthy relationships,
Not to jump on ships with drunken and delusional captains.

My mama taught me how to endure
Through the rough seas of life,
Not to look down at the dark,
Deadly,
And swirling seas below my feet,
But to look ahead at the bright light

Shining from the lighthouse
Where the Keeper awaits my arrival.

My mama taught me to love those who hate me,
For only then can I be free.
She taught me that when I do wrong,
Not only to ask for forgiveness from those I have wronged,
But to forgive myself,
For only then can I spread my wings
And not be ashamed to fly—
To touch the sky with the tips of my fingers
And know what freedom really feels like.

Cause my mama said
That when the world starts to crumble,
Stand up,
Yet be humble.
Do not apologize for illuminating the lies,
The hurt,
The pain
That hides in the darkest corners of the closets of little children
And adults alike.
Not to apologize for bringing truth to what is false.

My mama taught me that I am valuable,
And that my value is not dependent on the variables
That one day determine size zero equals beautiful
Because real beauty has zero to do with waist size.

My mama said not to get proud
To the point of ignorance,
To the point where I believe that I am indestructible,
Bullet proof against the bullets of life.
Because as soon as I think I am,
I throw away my armor.
She said this doesn't mean I should live in fear,

Just that I shouldn't live in pride-induced ignorance.
Now, anyone can fall,
And everyone will fall,
But the victor is the one who jumps back up,
Brushes off bloodied and bruised knees
And says, "That could have been worse,"
Not the one that stays down
And drowns in the self-pity of her own tears.

My mama said don't always take the freeways in life,
For life will go by too fast.
Take the side roads and the byways.
Make your own way in life.
You will then see the grandeur of the mountains,
The depths of the valleys and the canyons,
The blues and greens of the ocean,
And feel the salty air in your face and hair.
For the freeways bypass these.
They cause you to be distracted with the billboards surrounding
And the blaring horns pounding
On the drums of your ears,
The traffic that controls the flow of your life,
The signs that constantly tell you
You're just not good enough.

She said be at peace with your life.
Don't try to lease someone else's.
Be content with the quiet of life.
Don't get caught up with gossip and strife
By searching for dead bones in the backyards of others.

My mama said dedicate yourself not to what is false and fake,
But to what is genuine.
Focus on what is real and true,
Not on the lies and schemes that can trap you.

A NOTE ABOUT THE RIGORS of conversation. Johannsen has been droning on about the absolute human right granted by the laws of the universe. His words are large, spanning on average seven to ten letters. They somehow make his eyes more blue. I'm not sure what point he is getting at, but the sheer magnitude of the topic seems to be driving the dinner party wild. My wife Clara sits next to me. Johannsen across from us. His wife Tracy next to him. A giant turkey glistens in the center of the table.

"Think about the weather," Johannsen says, "here we have something totally unpredictable, ancient, and immeasurably powerful, yet there is a basic human component—and by component I mean the essential vitality that enhances us as human beings—which allows us the divine right to predict something as volatile as weather."

Clara nods aggressively; this means she is unclear what is being said.

"But the point of all this," Johannsen says, "is the futility of it. That's why rain is represented in percentages. Thirty percent, fifty percent chance of rain. Chance is an important word here. It sums up the absolution of everything. Isn't everything chance?" He pauses, bites into a drumstick. "What's your take on all of this?"

He looks at me as I have a forkful of turkey meat, mashed potatoes and a string bean shoved into my mouth. I chew loudly because I know that Clara hates it. The table is silent. My saliva and teeth make a sound akin to the churning of butter.

"Are you asking me if everything is chance?" I say.

"I'm asking if you agree," Johannsen says.

"I don't."

"Well, how stringent are your views? Are you willing to reevaluate?"

"I've never felt the need to reevaluate," I say.

"Are you a spiritual man?"

"He doesn't believe in anything," Clara says. "That's his problem. He floats belly up along Fate's current."

"Apt," Johannsen says. "I like that. 'Fate's current.'"

"I don't float on anything," I say. "I just don't believe in chance. It undermines things."

"Like what?" Johannsen asks.

Tracy puts her fork down and looks at me. Her eyes are the color of chamomile tea, huge swirling things that catch the light perfectly. Her skin glows. Her hair is up in a ponytail. A single strand gently arches over one eye. Clara looks at me. She is tired of my shit. Johannsen looks at me. They wait.

“...Thirty percent, fifty percent chance of rain. Chance is an important word here. It sums up the absolution of everything...”

“You can’t just have things happen into existence,” I say. “There’s a common thread that runs through everything, binds everything. There’s a formula. Mathematics. How all things sense danger and fear and protective-ness. The ceaseless struggle for life. The thriving of it. All would be wiped clean if it were chance. The dwellings of Petra. The Nile. Fifty-foot reptiles. The Appalachians which span across eight alpine countries, twelve hundred kilometers of pure rock. Micro or macro. The division of cells. Powerhouse galaxies with black hole cores a hundred trillion times the size of our sun. It’s all endless and connected. It’s not chance.”

Tracy moves the strand of hair away from her eye. Clara goes back to eating. Johannsen blinks. I’d barely said a word all night. I knew I had him shook.

“The Appalachians span across two countries and stretch about twenty-four hundred kilometers. I believe you meant the Alps,” He says.

I slam my fist into my plate, fork down. The plate shatters. Food splays everywhere. I don’t wait around to see the looks on all their faces.

For the next two weeks I slept alone. Clara and I were at a stalemate. She said she needed to be away from me, but she did not want to live elsewhere because her mother would pass judgement. Her sister would as well. Her friends would assume divorce. The percentage of our splitting would spike. Our couch is designed for two people to sit comfortably. You could sit three with elbows touching, but for a man of even average height, sleeping on the couch would lead to back spasms and long term nerve damage.

There was a talk we had after the dinner at Johannsen’s, just as there was always a talk we had after a dinner at the Johannsen’s. Clara needs space. I told her if she needs space she should take it. I don’t need space. Why am I the one providing it? I relented somewhat. There were three blow up mattresses in the camping isle at Target. I bought the second most expensive one and even included a foam pillow, the kind your head leaves dents in. I gave them to her, but kept the receipt.

I SLEEP WITH THE CEILING FAN ON EVEN IN THE WINTER. Our bed-

In that intermittent darkness I imagine I'm in a shuttle, slung from Earth's orbit in direct trajectory with the sun.

room window starts high. When moonlight leaks in, the fan blades cut through it, over my face. Momentary darkness, a blink with eyes wide open. In that intermittent darkness I imagine I'm in a shuttle, slung from Earth's orbit in direct trajectory with the sun. I'm hurling through an asteroid field. Massive slabs of rock sweep past the port window. I can see the Earth, a feeble blue blinking in the distance like an ornament. There. There is everything to ever exist, ever. There is all the history, all the Nobel prizes and wars, all the fossilized bones and holy books, broken hearts, ambitions, and a lonely cell phone somewhere waiting on a table for a call. All of it is meaningless. It could all never have existed and nothing would change. It could have all been chance. Johannsen's eyes haunt me like two ice planets.

IF I WAKE UP EARLY ENOUGH I catch Clara in time for breakfast. She used to cook bacon and eat it wrapped in a tortilla with some smeared cream cheese, but now she eats fig jam on toast with a side of strawberries. I've noticed she has stopped using adjectives when talking to me. It's never good morning, or good

night, she never says she's doing great. If I ask her how she's doing she says, "I'm doing." Also, the word love has been left out of things. But that's ok. That word should be used sparingly anyway. There is a quota for that word, a limit. Once it has been reached the word loses meaning, drips down the wall like a piece of wet tissue. I watch Clara eat. She reminds me of a single cow grazing in an expanse of pasture, mountains feint in the distance with white tips, gunmetal clouds looming overhead.

"I'm going out after work," She says.
"All of PACU?"

"Where are you guys going?"

"I don't know."

After Clara leaves I turn on the TV, flip to a nature channel discussing the birds of wild China. In the Guangxi province, men with gold teeth use trained cormorants to catch fish from the Li River. They tie a string around the bird's neck so it won't swallow the fish. Then the fishermen dance to prod the birds into hunting. These birds don't fly, they swim. They nosedive into the water and hunt fish, like sharks. The cormorants keep track of how many

fish they catch. Once they reach seven they refuse work until they're fed.

Outside, a man harasses the pavement with a leaf blower. The sound makes me want to rip my brain from its stem. I turn off the TV and get to work. I got fired a few years ago and stumbled into a job writing fake reviews for real brands. Vacuums, batteries, car mats, pepper shakers, headphones, window cleaners, board games, coffee mugs, computers, bicycles, curtains. The list is endless. Most the products I've never experienced but on occasion I have been sent samples to try out. The last one was a microwave I still use. I've done two hundred and forty reviews this year, my most prolific year. Today the product is Leroy's Hot True Southern Hot Sauce, the habanero flavor. Sometimes competing brands outbid each other to have me write negative reviews about their opposition. I've never tried Leroy's Hot True Southern Hot Sauce, but today it is the worst hot sauce in the world, not spicy with an overload of sodium and an aftertaste like chlorine.

The phone rings. Johannsen's voice booms beautifully from the other side.

"How are you?" he asks.

"What do you care?" I say. "What do you want?"

"Is Clara there?" he asks.

"No."

Johannsen sighs. He says, "Ok. I'm coming over. I have to speak to you."

"About what?"

Johannsen hangs up. I entertain the notion of leaving the house, taking my bike and riding along the highway, inches from traffic, swerving onto the sidewalk where pedestrians part for me like the sea for Moses, or riding on the bridge that arcs over the interstate, leaping off the edge into the windshield of a semitruck en route from Tempe. My chest burns in a specific place every time I think about death. I believe it is the exact spot my soul will seep from my body the moment my brain shuts down.

The doorbell rings; I open the door. Johannsen's smile burns white. His broad shoulders sweep past me and I am left staring into the empty hallway of my apartment complex. Johannsen opens the fridge and takes out a beer,

I believe it is the exact spot my soul will seep
from my body the moment my brain shuts down.

“...Things are happening and we’re living through them. This being one of the hazards of residing on the coast.”

then realizes he needs one more. He hands me the second beer and we drink. “What a day,” he says. “What a world we live in.”

I choose not to say anything. There are certain questions he yearns to hear. I refuse to ask any of them. His right eyebrow bends and his face contorts into the spian concern.

“Where’s Clara?” he asks.

“She’s at work,” I say. “Get to the point.”

Johannsen sits by the window. The blinds cast bars across his face. He is probably the only person in the world who wears white linen in the winter.

“The point,” Johannsen says, “is plate tectonics. The transfer of heat. The plates beneath our feet are about to drag across each other. The magnitude of the resulting collision will break the Richter.”

“Where did you get this information?” I ask.

“It’s not information. It’s fact. Things are happening and we’re living through them. This being one of the hazards of residing on the coast.”

“When is this supposed to happen?”

“Any moment now,” Johannsen says. “The ground will open up and swallow us.”

Johannsen stayed a short while longer, discussing the key principles of plate tectonics, the subdivision of the outer layers of the Earth, the thickness of the continental crust. When he left I sat down and waited for something to happen. I called Clara but she did not answer.

THE CEILING FAN PULSES LIKE A BEATING HEART. Now I’m past the asteroid field, floating by Mercury. The planet’s surface looks like the bottom of a worn frying pan. The sun is a massive burning thing, bigger now than I have ever seen it. Its depiction is always a tint of yellow or orange, a golden ball of flame. In truth its heat is white. There are no other planets visible. No stars. No color. Just the blinding white of the sun drawing me toward its rage.

IN THE MORNING I GO FOR A RUN. Clara is not home yet. I run with the hood of my sweater pulled over my head. The air is pure, clear. I exhale plumes of vapor. I run until my stomach churns and

a sharp pain sticks into the place below my ribs. On the way back I take a wrong turn onto a street that is one block south. I go to the spot where my apartment should be. There's a different apartment building there, a light tint of green with an unkempt lawn. An SUV is parked outside. There's a stretching feeling, an endless echo of same and same. This is a different street but all the houses look the same. The trees loom over the parked cars in the same way. The concrete is cracked and jagged just the same. If I follow the walkway to the front door of this apartment, I could knock and find a version of myself answering the door. A version with Clara in the background eating a tortilla with two strips of maple bacon.

CLARA DID NOT COME HOME. Her phone went dead. Her mother is psychotic. Her father is dead. One of her sisters lives in Greece. The other lives in between a bridge and a liquor store.

Two days passed before I called the police. A detective named Robert Enriquez answered the phone and asked if he could come to the apartment to

ask me a few questions. He barely fit through the doorframe, almost seven feet tall with the complexion of an Indian Chief.

"Take a seat," he said.

I listened. That's the kind of man he was, the kind that could tell you to sit in your home. He sat on the floor—because that was the only place he fit—and drank a cup of coffee and stared at me with eyes that wanted a confession to something I did not do.

When was the last time you saw her?

What was she wearing?

Where did she go?

What did she say?

Were you having problems?

The questions compounded until my answers were automatic.

Two days ago.

Her work scrubs.

To work then out somewhere.

She was going out somewhere.

We may have been but you would have to ask her.

"I think it's odd," Enriquez says, "how absolutely numb you are. I've been doing this job for more than twenty years. You learn things. You shun etiquette to

The questions compounded until my
answers were automatic.

The apartment is silent. A shade of blue tints everything.

get to the truth. Really, I shouldn't say a fucking thing to you about my intuitions. But there are things I do not like that are at play here."

He got to his feet and walked over to the blow up mattress, the sheets still ruffled, a long strand of hair resting on the pillow top. Enriquez picked up the hair with two fingers and held it up to the light.

"Was Clara sleeping on this mattress?" Enriquez asked.

"Yes."

"And were you in the bedroom? Or not here at all?"

I told him I guess we were having problems, but that it wasn't up to me. She chose for us to have problems. I told him about Johannsen and Johannsen's wife and the physics of chance and plate tectonics. Enriquez nodded as if it all made sense to him. He took out a small vial of white stuff, undid the cap, lifted it to his nostril and sniffed.

"Where does your wife work?" Enriquez said.

"At county," I said.

"What does she do there?"

"She works in PACU."

"I knew a girl who was an anesthesiologist," Enriquez said. "She fucked like a champion. But she was batshit. She tried pulling off my finger nails while I was sleeping."

"Why?"

"Because she was batshit. She jumped off a bridge and killed herself. Not on impact. She had a heart attack midair. Do you understand?"

Enriquez screwed the vial shut and slipped it into his front pocket. He asked me why I waited two days to call him. I did not have an answer. He wrote his number down on a sticky note, then left.

The apartment is silent. A shade of blue tints everything. I have maybe twenty minutes at best to reflect on what has happened. Then the sun will set. There is nothing more terrifying than decisions made after the sun goes down. I turn on the TV. I flip through channels until I land on channel 7, KCBN evening news. A short blonde woman stands in front of a building, the letters R-A-N-D in neon above her head. This is one of the companies Johannsen works for. The blonde woman does a short tour of the office, then starts in-

interviewing people. Johannsen is the second person she talks to. A banner flashes across the screen, labeling Johannsen an expert. They discuss a breakthrough.

"What this does is bridge the gap," Johannsen says. "It shows that you cannot have things simply happen into existence. Everything is connected, threaded together within this eloquent system. All the sounds in the world, the color. How all things can sense danger and fear and protectiveness in the ceaseless struggle for life. The thriving of it. All would be wiped clean if it were chance."

"Does this discredit evolution?" The reporter asks.

"Let me ask you something," Johannsen says. "Have you ever seen the dwellings of Petra, or the Nile river, or been to the Alps? Because I have, Jennifer. And I can tell you there is something that stirs inside of you when you see these places. Evolution is inherent in their composition. But we are not talking about evolution. We are talking about the absence of chance."

*THE CEILING FAN WHIRLS LIKE
THE BLADES INSIDE A JET ENGINE.*

I eject from the craft. Some malfunction with the left wing. I soar through space, arms and legs splayed out like a starfish. All communication has gone black. I focus on oxygen, rationed breathing. The sun is fast approaching. It is the most colossal thing imaginable. It makes my heart beat off rhythm. I look left and right and up and down, all directions. It makes no difference. All I see is stretching sun. It pulls me in, closer, closer, closer still. Faster. Rushing to its core. Unable to move or breathe. Bones grow boulder heavy. Closer and closer, still. It grows. A part of me now. Back to my celestial roots. Disintegration into stardust. I touch its surface with an open palm. My soul seeps out my body from the space between two ribs.

"...But we are not talking about evolution.
We are talking about the absence of chance."

The Rabbit from the Shadow

HALEY ALATORRE
FICTION/NONFICTION
RIVERSIDE

ALL OF THE PHARMACIES IN THE CITY have the same sign on their doors reading “Out of Stock.” My bottle of antipsychotics is empty.

It was probably the pirates. Yup, I’m sure they stole all the meds to sell to the giants who hoard them like precious stones. Oh well, there’s nothing left for me to do at the Walgreens apothecary, so I’ll go home and get ready for a long night. I merge into the river of saddened, pill-less people heading Downtown. The richest, pill-less people venture Uptown towards their Olympus abodes to wait the night out in style, while us poor folk travel down, down, down to hide ourselves until sunrise because, well, Hallucinations hate sunrise. “Love nighttime, hate sunshine”: that was the rhyme children learned in preparation for the day their Hallucinations came around.

Towering above the steadily flowing river of people are the impossibly tall, spired, department stores packed together like a handful of pencils whose lead tips could poke the bottoms of God’s feet. Each department floor of these buildings hold nearly a thousand tiny vendors and stalls selling everything from nectar popsicles, the latest CD by the Muses, the new Nike shoe inspired by Hermes, and even Yggdrasil Chia Pets (not that anyone actually buys those anymore). As I turn down my street and away from all of the people, the buildings, and the Starbucks at the corner, I swear that the siren on the Starbucks advertisement is giving me dirty looks again for not buying her coffee. Too expensive, my friend, too expensive.

It’s just past sunset now and I’m finally back in my modest apartment decorated with coupons magnetized to the fridge and long, dark curtains. Through my straitjacket-white apartment wall I hear the drunken shouts and slurs from the unmarried man who lives next door.

“Hurry up, ya damned Hallucination,” comes his muffled voice. “I’m nice ‘n drunk ‘n ready for ya now!”

Well, clearly he’s already taken his limit of whiskey shots. That’s good though; he’ll be passed out by the time his Hallucination comes around to try and talk him into doing something stupid. Like drinking Drano or jumping out of his living room window. Through my own open window, the smell of my other neighbor’s special brew of honey, tea, and gin wafts to my nose and I’m instantly jealous. What a perfect potion for ignoring a spiteful Hallucination and sleeping the night off in peace. Just like sunrise, Hallucinations hate being ignored; they’re conceited like that.

So, before my own Hallucination comes around to bother me again, I’ll go ahead and brew up some (cheap) coffee. Yuck, it tastes like burnt mud. I bet the Starbucks siren would give me the I-told-you-so look if she could see my face. I hope I can keep this coffee down. I don’t feel so good now that the last of my meds are wearing off. But I’ll resist taking any potions until my Hallucination appears. I have something important to ask it before I allow myself to rest.

The starless sky is completely inked with blackness. Everyone in the city ought to be

“Wake up, you useless human—how dare you sleep! I’m not done with you yet!”

knocked out in an alcohol induced, quiet slumber. Through my apartment wall, I can hear my unmarried neighbor’s Hallucination whine in a nasally voice.

“Wake up, you useless human—how dare you sleep! I’m not done with you yet!”

It’s been a few hours since I got home, and I’m wasting away into a listless, twitching mess on the couch; the sour, sickly taste of stomach acid sits heavily on my tongue. My insides burn like lit brimstone and I fiercely, violently, crave for my meds. I grip my empty bottle of antipsychotics praying for the pills to magically appear inside it. But, alas, such magic doesn’t exist, at least not yet. I toss and roll about on the couch in an increasing fit of agony until my blurry eyes catch a dim, whitish light flutter across my open window. A will-o’-wisp; how pretty. One, three, then twenty of them pass by like a flock of lazy shooting stars. They’re probably in search of alley cats to play with and burnt-out street lights to re-light simply by brushing up against the dead bulbs—

It’s right now, without warning, my withdrawal symptoms disappear. Bam, just like that. My stomach settles down, my shaking stops, and my clear, bright eyes catch the shadow casted by the living room TV. The shadow twitches. Twitch, twitch. Twitch—and then hopping out from the shadow comes an impossibly gigantic black Rabbit about four feet tall. It has a long, mangy

tail akin to that of a wolf, and long, floppy ears. But it’s the eyes that make me flinch and my skin prickle. Red eyes. Red eyes much too round and much too bright; the color is strikingly haunting against the blackness of its fur. The Rabbit sits on its haunches and stares at me blankly. Its mouth opens to show me white, square teeth, and it speaks.

“So,” says the Rabbit, “you have something to ask me, don’t you? Well, hurry up and ask me then.”

“Before I ask my better question,” I say without hesitation, “why are you a Rabbit today? Why not a Panther, or a Spider? You were a Spider last time.”

“Yes, I was,” says the Rabbit, its voice thoughtful, “but I didn’t like being a Spider. Too many legs to keep track of. Besides, this is more frightening, no? Oh, and did you see my long tail? Wonderfully absurd, isn’t it?”

“Not really,” I say. “If I squint, you look less like a rabbit and more like a dog. Really, you just look like a fat, fluffy Chow Chow.”

“Have you a question for me,” says the Rabbit hotly, “or are we going to play games until sunrise?”

I don’t reply immediately. I practice the words in my head before I finally say:

“Do you love me?”

The Rabbit’s whiskers twitch. It doesn’t reply. It hops closer to me. We’re eye level with each

Red eyes much too round and much too bright; the color is strikingly haunting against the blackness of its fur.

other. I can't help but stare into its eyes, like I always do. My Hallucination's eyes are always red. Always. And those red-red eyes beckon me, coax me, to gaze into their inhumanness. I feel like whatever I'm made up of as a human doesn't really matter anymore. What I am means nothing. I am nothing but a manifestation of compulsion to look stupidly into the redness. The Rabbit's redness is my grotesque past and tainted future. In those eyes, I see my own reflect in their glossiness, and I find myself disgusted by my own face. As I look past my face, I see nothing lovely or forgiving in my reflection. I see everything that I regret having done.

Like a series of red-tainted short films, I see myself cheating on a math test in fourth grade, on which I got a perfect score. I see myself at seventeen lying to my parents about having snuck out one night. They believed me when I said that I hadn't. I see myself snickering at this mentally sick, homeless man who shouts to himself about the angel of death whispering to him at nighttime and then vanishing at sunrise. He was found dead the next day; his Hallucination convinced him to drown himself in the riverbed. I see myself alive but struggling to remain so, held fast by my seat belt in the car accident that I caused. That was the night I killed my baby brother.

"Do you love me?" I ask again. My eyes—they can't look away from the proof of death before

me. It's there, in the backseat: the small Scooby-Doo T-shirt now wet with redness.

"Of course I love you," says the Rabbit's voice from somewhere close by. "I love you very, very much. How silly of you to ask."

I feel the Rabbit's whiskers brush against my closed fist in a loving nuzzle. But I don't care about its affection when all I see is this redness around me. It's so potent and bright that it burns my eyes and they get teary. I can't look away from the car accident.

From a memory from earlier that day, I see myself holding my baby brother's hand. I remember the feeling of his sticky, cotton-candied fingers as we held hands. It was his fifth birthday. In his other hand, he held his favorite stuffed toy: a dingy-with-dirt white bunny rabbit with floppy ears. It was only about eight o'clock at night, but I was so tired; I spent the past three days working overtime to afford that birthday outing at the circus. I see us both get into my car, and I wish—oh, how I wish!—to yell at myself to stop! Stop, you moron, stop! You're too damn tired to drive him back to Mom and Dad's house! I watch the car drive away. It's only now, in retrospect, that I see the green light turn red. All I see is red.

My car was totaled. The other driver and I survived.

"You don't love me," I hear my own voice say, knowing that the Rabbit is listening. "What you

show me isn't love, and I can't even defend myself against you without my meds."

"I simply show you what you've already done," comes the Rabbit's voice. "I give you a dose of tough love to turn you into a better person. How can you become better if you don't face these memories? Those meds you take—they don't defend you from your mistakes. They don't defend you from me. They just cover everything like a flimsy, soft blanket."

No, no, no, that's not right. This isn't right. This isn't helpful. How can this be? How can visiting these memories over and over again improve anything?

"You don't love me," I say through clenched teeth, tasting salt water upon my lips. Am I crying? When did I start crying? "If you did, you wouldn't show me this. You know who I am—what I've done—and you know that I can't forget these things. How can I become a better person if you don't leave me alone?"

The Rabbit gives no reply, and its silence pisses me off. I clench my teeth harder, hearing them grind together, and I clench my fists—wait a second. What am I holding? The empty pill bottle. When did I bring this into the redness? Why am I still holding onto this? My own question stuns me. Why? Why do I need to keep this?

I don't need this anymore. It's empty and not helpful. And neither is this Rabbit. The red car

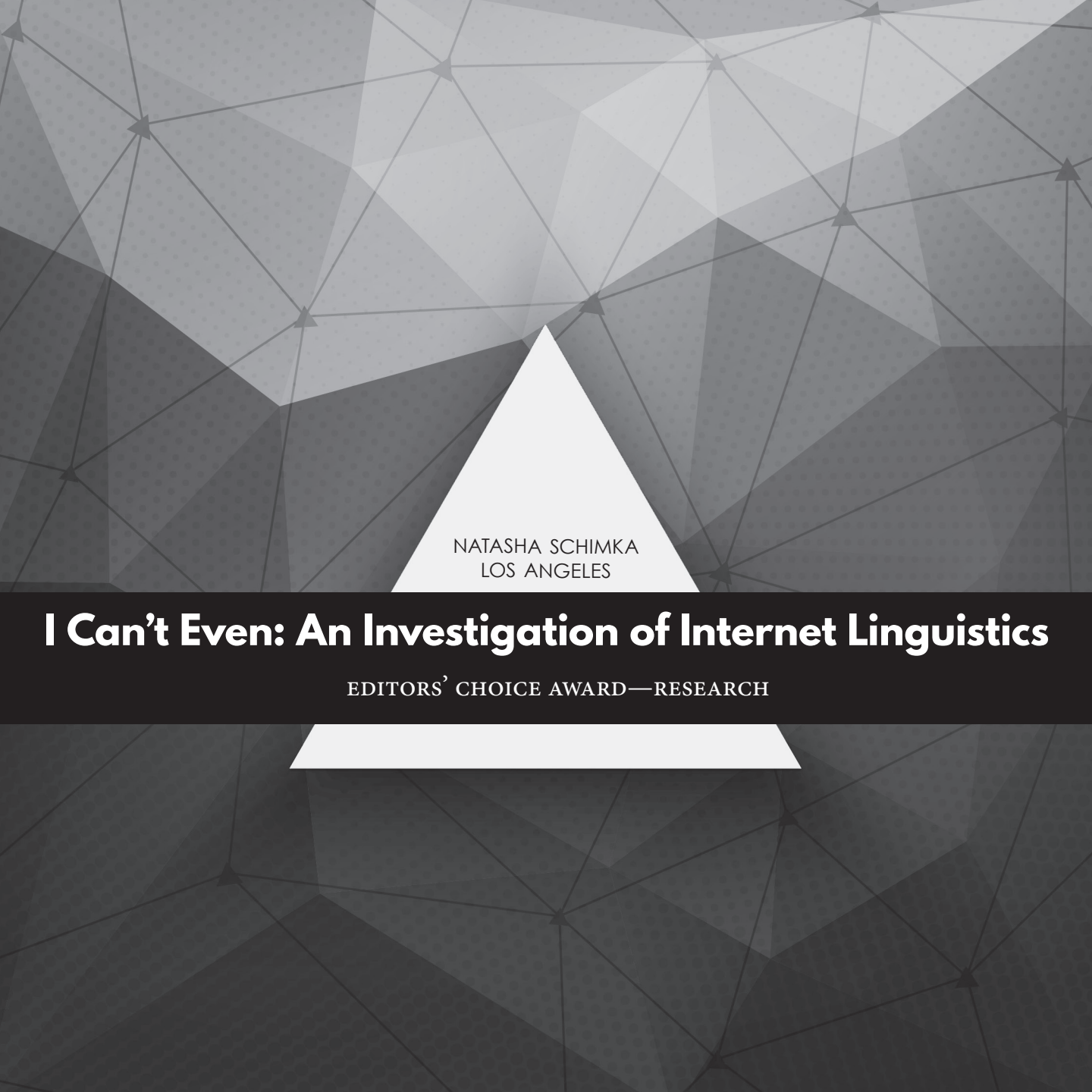
accident suddenly looks very, very real. Cautiously, as if I'm trying to tip-toe across a crumbling, fragile bridge, I step closer to my totaled car. My baby brother's dingy bunny rabbit peeks at me from the backseat. Its plastic, red eyes glare at me, and I glare right back.

The Rabbit remains silent as the redness and the car accident fade away.

I'm back in my straitjacket apartment. The black Rabbit sits in front of the couch. My hand whips out to grab the Rabbit's long, floppy ears. The Rabbit only stares at me with monotonous and unfeeling eyes as I lift it up by the ears, not caring if it feels pain. With a rush of confidence at holding the Rabbit hostage, I carry it across my apartment and out to the hallway outside, its absurdly long tail brushing the floor in my wake. I sit the Rabbit down in the hallway, and look into its red eyes one last time. They look so unappealing now. I close and lock the door.

Stomping across the length of my apartment, I fully intend to close my open window and lock it tight just in case the Rabbit gets clever and tries to get back in when I'm not looking. I grab a wad of dark curtain, and just when I'm about to draw them shut a tiny, dim will-o'-wisp flutters by. A straggler that got separated from the rest of the flock. How tragically lovely.

Why am I still holding onto this?
My own question stuns me.



NATASHA SCHIMKA
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I Can't Even: An Investigation of Internet Linguistics

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD—RESEARCH



ABSTRACT

LINGUISTIC INQUIRY HAS PREDOMINANTLY FIXATED on data we have observed for centuries and not less academic vernacular, such as slang. However, the advent of the Internet spawned a treasure trove of never-before-studied, never-before-seen linguistic phenomena mediated by never-before-invented technology. To address how technology has shaped discourse, a new linguistic discipline is needed that will boldly go where no one has gone before—applied Internet linguistics. Its main proponent, David Crystal, suggests three angles of study: sociolinguistics, education, and stylistics (Crystal). Following his lead, I analyze the colloquialism “I can’t even,” prominent in Internet communities such as Tumblr; diverging from his suggested approaches, I concentrate on applying traditional syntactical analysis to a nontraditional phrase to discern its underlying structure. Speakers of this particular Internet dialect believe that “even” operates as an intransitive verb signifying the handling of intense emotions; I posit that “I can’t even” is instead constructed by ellipsis because “even” does not pattern like a verb. This analysis prevails over null complement anaphora, a process which elides the complement of a predicate but fails to explain how the precise meaning of “I can’t even” arises. In the process, I differentiate the elliptical “I can’t even” from its playfully-derived counterpart, “I’m unable to can,” in which I postulate that “can” was reinterpreted as a verb as a result of the consensus among speakers that “even” in “I can’t even” is a verb.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PHENOMENON

“I CAN’T EVEN” TRANSLATES TO SOMETHING LIKE “I can’t even fully express my appreciation for this link/picture/story/book/show,” “I can’t even understand what’s happening because this event is filling me with such emotion,” or “I can’t even handle the emotions this situation raises.” Notably, regardless of the exact syntactic content of the phrase following “I can’t even,” the interpretation is the same: it’s a form of aposiopesis culminating from an acute emotional reaction, whether positive or negative.

Although there are several variations of this phrase, “I can’t even” (ICE) is the most definitive and is what I’ll use to refer to this general construction. Some common alternatives are listed below (sofiel, McCulloch).

- (1) I literally cannot even.
- (2) I’m unable to even.
- (3) I have lost all ability to even.

...I contend that the “can” form necessitates a disparate analysis because it produces a new verb and noun pair...

In another phrase similar to ICE, ‘even’ is essentially exchanged with ‘can’ (sofriel, McCulloch):

- (4) I’m unable to can.
- (5) I have lost the ability to can.
- (6) I seem to have temporarily misplaced my ability to can.

ICE and this “can” form seem similar—and certainly relate in their origin, the “can” form being a tongue-in-cheek derivation of ICE—but I contend that the “can” form necessitates a disparate analysis because it produces a new verb and noun pair to provide the phrase’s meaning of “handle these emotions,” rather than elides some material. This distinction demonstrates the benefit of considering either approach, verbification or ellipsis, to interpret these phenomena, as ICE cannot be conveniently explained by verbification while its “can” derivative cannot be conveniently explained by ellipsis.

2. NULL COMPLEMENT ANAPHORA AS A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION

HANKAMER AND SAG POINT OUT that certain anaphoric expressions can exist without an antecedent; instead, they are controlled through context. For example, in the grammatical sentence “Her_i hands are trembling,” ‘her’ is a pronoun which must refer to another entity, but is not c-commanded by anything in the sentence which could be co-referential with it. Compare this to a sentence like “Anyone_i who eats that will lose their hair,” where “their” is syntactically controlled and properly bound by “anyone.” Some anaphoric processes are *required* to be syntactically controlled and would be ungrammatical otherwise. For others, syntactic and pragmatic control are possible (Hankamer & Sag). All the example sentences in this section are taken from Hankamer & Sag 1976, unless otherwise stated.

In #7a, verb phrase (VP) ellipsis is ungrammatical in a purely pragmatic context but becomes grammatical if the antecedent is linguistic, like in #8a. By contrast, the elliptical process which leaves behind the “do it” in #7b and #8b can be pragmatically controlled and is grammatical in both cases. (As per linguistic tradition, an asterisk marks an ungrammatical utterance.)

- (7) [Hankamer attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop]
- a) Sag: *It's not clear that you'll be able to ~~stuff the ball through the hoop~~.
 - b) Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to do it.
- (8) Hankamer: I'm going to stuff this ball through this hoop.
- a) Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to ~~stuff the ball through the hoop~~.
 - b) Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to do it.
 - c) *Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to do it ~~stuff the ball through the hoop~~.

Hankamer and Sag separate anaphora into two types based on this differentiation: surface anaphora, which requires an explicit antecedent and involves deletion, and deep anaphora, which can be contextually and even non-linguistically controlled. They remark that when a structure shows evidence for deletion, it can never be pragmatically controlled. Evidence for deletion is when there is a clear syntactic antecedent for ellipsis. For example, the VP “stuff the ball through the hoop” is stated in #8 and then that entire VP is deleted in #8a. In #8b, it can't simply be that that same VP was deleted because #8c, the underlying structure before such a VP would be deleted, is ungrammatical.

In the case of ICE, which will be scrutinized in depth later, this contrast in anaphoric processes is crucial because ICE is a deep anaphora with no evidence of deletion. In #9, the problem is not that deletion would be ungrammatical as in #8c, but that deletion is impossible because deletion must relate to an antecedent. What is the antecedent in this sentence? It could only be the concept of ~~spoiling the ending~~, yet that is not syntactically related to the improper handling of emotions.

- (9) They just ~~spoiled the ending~~ for me. I can't even ~~handle these emotions~~.

Hankamer and Sag also mention several deep anaphoric processes, one of which is null complement anaphora, or NCA. This seemed like a prime candidate to explain ICE because, as the name suggests, NCA occurs when the complement of a verb is made null.

What differentiates NCA from a surface anaphoric process like VP-ellipsis is that there is no syntactically parallel antecedent; “stuff the ball through the hoop” is not being deleted from a sentence which previously mentioned the phrase “stuff the ball through the hoop.” In #10–11, the complements of “objected” and “approve” must be recovered from context. Although they both relate back their respective antecedents of projects and gorilla kissing, they do so in a way which is a rewording of the antecedent rather than an exact replica; see the

If one can't even, then they are experiencing, not controlling or causing, a state of emotional incoherence.

ungrammaticality of #10b and #11b, which contain an exact replica, compared with the grammatical ellipses of #10a and #10b, which contain a rewording of the antecedent.

- (10a) The committee considered the new project but in the end, the majority objected to the new project.
- (10b) *The committee considered the new project but in the end, the majority objected the new project.
- (11a) Sue was attempting to kiss a gorilla, and Harry didn't approve of Sue kissing the gorilla.
- (11b) *Sue was attempting to kiss a gorilla, and Harry didn't approve kiss a gorilla.

As a deep anaphor, NCA can also be pragmatically controlled, as seen in #12 (Hankamer & Sag).

- (12) adapted from Hankamer & Sag 1976
 - [Indulgent father feeds baby chocolate bar for dinner]
 - Mother: I don't approve. (NCA)
 - Mother: Don't do it. (do-it anaphora, a deep anaphora)
 - Mother: *Don't do. (VP-ellipsis)

3. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF ICE

AT FIRST GLANCE, AN ANALYSIS OF "EVEN" as a verb seems fruitful. From this perspective, "I can't even" translates word-for-word to "I can't even," where 'even' is the action of handling intense emotions. It would be an intransitive verb that assigns only one theta role, that of experiencer, to the subject, much like "die" or "fall." It cannot assign an agent theta role because that would violate the connotation of ICE. If one can't even, then they are experiencing, not controlling or causing, a state of emotional incoherence.

The main argument against "even" being a verb is that "even" cannot hold a tense affix, as seen in #13–14. There is no reason to believe "even" is a special verb which does not require tense because every verb within a tensed clause in English, including semi-recently invented ones like google, facebook, and chillax, takes tense. For the subsequent example sentences which are less common or incorrect usages of "even," I added a gloss to indicate what those

sentences would mean; and to ensure that I have the correct understanding of ICE, I have consulted three other speakers of this dialect to confirm that our grammaticality judgments are the same.

- (13) *I evened way too much today.
(meaning: I handled a lot of emotional turmoil thrown at me and it was exhausting.)
- (14) *I'll even tomorrow once I get some sleep.
(meaning: I'll be able to handle emotional turmoil tomorrow once I'm rested.)

A counterargument is that #13–14 are ungrammatical to begin with because “even” is a negative polarity item (NPI). “I can’t even” becomes ungrammatical if “even” is not licensed by negation, as seen in #15. If ICE can’t be in a positive sentence, then because “even” is a main verb (i.e. it cannot precede negation like auxiliaries and modals can; see #16), “even” will never receive a tense because the tense affix will always hop onto a higher auxiliary verb/modal before “not,” like “do” or “can.” However, ICE can be grammatical in certain positive sentences like #17, so #15’s ungrammaticality cannot be explained by ICE needing to be licensed by negation. If “even” is a verb which does not act like an NPI, then there is no reason it cannot take tense; this suggests “even” is not a verb.

- (15) *I can even.
- (16) *I even not.
- (17) I have regained my ability to even.

My conjecture is that #15 is ungrammatical because if someone *can* even—meaning they *can* express their emotions—then there is no reason to use the phrase, which by definition is used in contexts when they *cannot* express their emotions. By comparison, #17 does not violate any emotionality or meaning requirements of “even;” this is odd, because both #15 and #17 imply that emotions are being handled properly. It may be that the inclusion of ‘can’ as a modal in #15 emphasizes the notion of emotions being manageable too much, whereas #17 implies that a person was once overwhelmed by emotions, even if they are not anymore.

“Even” also does not pattern like other intransitive verbs. Other than being in a finite clause like “I can’t even,” ICE can also be within a non-finite clause, like “I’ve lost the ability to even.” If “even” is a verb, then it should be found in other infinitival phrases, like subject raising or subject control. #18–19 show that it can’t be.

Ultimately, an interpretation of “even” as a verb leads to several complications.

(18) *I am eager to even.

(Meaning: I can’t wait until I can actually express what I’m feeling when I’m less incomprehensible.)

(19) *I’m unlikely to even after reading the ending of this book.

(Meaning: It’s not likely I’ll be able to handle the emotional trauma this book will inflict upon me.)

By “it can’t,” I mean #18–19 are descriptively ungrammatical and no speaker would utter them. Although it may be contended that #18–19 are ungrammatical because they violate ICE’s requirement of incoherence by sounding too composed and formal, as “likely” and “eager” are not words frequently used in colloquial speech, it’s relatively commonplace that ICE takes a humorously serious and precise tone. Unlike the simplistic “I can’t even,” it is hard to imagine that #20–21 could be said from a state of emotional incoherence, yet they are still grammatical.

(20) The world seemed to have lost the ability to even (McCulloch 2015).

(21) I have lost all ability to even (McCulloch 2015).

Ultimately, an interpretation of “even” as a verb leads to several complications. Its distinct unverbness suggests an alternate analysis is needed; ellipsis fulfills this. To start, ICE meets the definition of ellipsis. Ellipsis is, in the most basic terminology, a situation where words appear to be missing from a sentence. ICE compresses the entire meaning of “I can’t even handle these overwhelming emotions” into the three words “I can’t even.” These absent words are necessarily recoverable, whether from previous linguistic and syntactic structure or pure pragmatics; otherwise, ICE would be complete gibberish (Merchant). Interestingly, while speakers of this dialect understood ICE immediately when they first encountered it, to speakers outside this dialect, ICE is gibberish, based on the reactions I received when I asked several older individuals to parse the phrase (a fact I’ll return to later).

Any investigation of ICE must expound how it retains its distinct meaning if the meaning is not inherently within the mental lexicon as a verb. #22–24 illustrate that only an emotional reaction may be elided to create the aposiopesis ICE, even though the phrase “I can’t even”

may be correctly combined with other VPs in other contexts. “I can’t even” alone must refer to ICE.

- (22) *I can’t even ~~figure out what’s happening~~.
- (23) *I can’t even ~~see them from here~~.
- (24) I can’t even ~~handle all this~~.

What separates ICE from other modes of ellipsis like sluicing or VP-ellipsis is the nature of that context. VP-ellipsis and sluicing involve an equivalent antecedent that must have a structure parallel to the elided content (Merchant); intrinsically, they are surface anaphora. The highest clause in each sentence below establishes the linguistic and syntactic antecedent of ellipsis, namely John playing some instrument. What is elided takes the identical form of its antecedent; in #25a, it’s “John can play,” and in #26a, it’s “can play the guitar.” Anything other than an identical, parallel form, is ungrammatical, as seen in #25b and #26b.

- (25a) John can play something, but I don’t know what ~~John can play~~ (Merchant).
- (25b) *John can play something, but I don’t know what ~~John likes to play~~.
- (26a) John can play the guitar and Mary can ~~play the guitar~~, too (Merchant).
- (26b) *John can play the guitar and Mary can ~~play the trumpet~~, too.

But unlike the sluicing and VP-ellipsis in the above examples, ICE does not require a linguistic antecedent (#27–28) or even a parallel antecedent (#29); the only stipulation is that the antecedent must generate an emotional reaction in the reader. Otherwise, it is ungrammatical, as in #27.

- (27) [A calm person sits on a calm bus]
Person: *I can’t even.
- (28) [A person watches the newest heartbreaking episode of *Game of Thrones*]
Person: I can’t even.
- (29a) Person: My favorite character just died on *Game of Thrones* and I can’t even.
- (29b) Person: *My favorite character just died on *Game of Thrones* and I can’t even favorite character just died.

There are multiple ways to interpret the meaning of ICE (“I can’t handle these emotions,” “I can’t express how these emotions are affecting me,” etc.). Therefore, it is impossible to construct a single phrase which is being elided, and it is equally impossible to extract some structure parallel to an antecedent that may not be linguistic. Even in #29a, where there is a linguistic antecedent, ICE is not a response to the antecedent’s syntactic structure in the same way

Any native speaker of English effortlessly deciphers each sentence and what the null complements of each verb are.

sluicing and VP-ellipsis are. If it were, this would mean that within ICE itself there is some information about a favorite character dying, which #29b proves to not be the case. Rather, ICE is derived from the semantic meaning behind a favorite character dying, which causes the person watching the show to become distraught and unable to speak. By Hankamer and Sag's terminology, ICE is a deep anaphora because it demands a non-syntactic antecedent, whether pragmatic or semantic.

I originally attempted to analyze ICE as a null complement anaphora, but this evaluation is not entirely accurate. Sag and Hankamer's examples show that the null complement is always related syntactically to the antecedent. If we revisit some of these, we can see that "objected" in #10 *must* refer to the new proposal and "approve" in #11 *must* refer to Sue's attempt to kiss a gorilla.

- (10) The committee considered the new proposal but in the end, over half
objected ~~to the proposal~~.
- (11) Sue was attempting to kiss a gorilla, and Harry didn't approve ~~of it~~.

With ICE, the elided content after 'even' has no syntactic relation to its antecedent, only a semantic one; ICE is the response to the emotional interpretation of a previous linguistic or pragmatic situation. Like VP-ellipsis and sluicing, NCA is still bound within the syntax. ICE is not. In addition, there is no generational difference in the interpretation of #9a and #9b, unlike with ICE. Any native speaker of English effortlessly deciphers each sentence and what the null complements of each verb are. ICE, on the other hand, is generationally dependent. This suggests an important semantic and cultural aspect of ICE which cannot exist entirely within the syntax.

Lastly, I will address one potentially contentious aspect of the ellipsis analysis. While the prototypical form "I can't even" of ICE is easily understood as ellipsis, ellipsis may not appear to be as readily applicable to other variants of ICE, such as "I have lost all ability to even" and "I have regained my ability to even." Generally speaking, the adverb "even" is an NPI, as discussed earlier. But in ICE, it is free-choice "even." Free choice "even" may be preceded by "almost" while NPI "even" may not. Because free-choice "even" may be used as emphasis rather than as an NPI, #32 is an acceptable elliptical construction.

- (30) Not even one person ate the pizza. **(Almost) even one person ate the pizza.*

- (31) I didn't even want to go. I (almost) even wanted to go.
 (32) I have regained my ability to (almost) even ~~handle these emotions~~.

By distinguishing ICE, formed by an elliptical process, from a very similar construction that replaces "even" with "can," I demonstrate how ICE does *not* work. Several "can" phrases possess nearly identical ICE counterparts: "I'm unable to even" vs. "I'm unable to can," "I have lost the ability to even" vs. "I have lost the ability to can," etc.. This "can" form of ICE faces the same obstacles verbal ICE did in that the "can" form cannot take tense affixes or exist in other infinitival clauses.

- (33) *I canned way too much today.
 (34) *I'll can again tomorrow.
 (35) *I'm unlikely to can after reading the ending of this book.

"Can" may also be used as a noun. This is ungrammatical for "even."

- (36a) I am all out of can (McCulloch).
 (36b) *I am all out of even.
 (37a) For the rest of my life I will have to take medicine to help me deal with my can deficiency (McCulloch 2015).
 (37b) *For the rest of my life I will have to take medicine to help me deal with my even deficiency.

The main distinction between "can" and "even" in these types of phrases is ICE's ability to be explained by ellipsis. If the "can" form is ellipsis, it must contain some sort of gap; this is true. However, there is no intuitive way to elide the VP complement. A basic, unspoken presumption about ellipsis is that the elided content must have had been grammatical within the sentence in the beginning. #38a shows that it never could have been.

- (38a) I just finished the series. *I'm unable to can handle all this.
 (38b) I just finished the series. I'm unable to even handle all this.

The "can" form must be a special case of a verb because its nature cannot be readily explicated by ellipsis like ICE can. The benefit of the ellipsis analysis of ICE is that 1) it is entirely possible and that 2) it is less problematic than considering "even" a verb; by Occam's Razor, ellipsis is a logical solution. However, without ellipsis as a lens of understanding for the "can" derivative, I am forced to accept "can" as a verb/noun pair with unverb-like qualities.

Language is constantly evolving, especially Internet language, which characteristically strives for meta humor of itself.

The “can” form was derived from ICE and not the other way around. KnowYourMeme, an open encyclopedia for Internet memes, contains an entry for ICE but not the “can” form; from sometime around 2010, an entry for ICE (but not the “can” form) was written on Urban-Dictionary, a slang dictionary; the first acknowledgment of the “can” form originates in an article about both phrases in 2013, which denotes the “can” form as being a playful alternation of ICE (“I Can’t Even”). For this reason, I speculate that the “can” form arises from a restructuring of ICE. Language is constantly evolving, especially Internet language, which characteristically strives for meta humor of itself. For example, after recognizing that the word “forever” contains the sound of the number four, some sarcastically comment that something will last “5ever” (one more than 4ever). Because the belief that “even” is a verb is widespread—the KnowYourMeme entry even instructs readers to interpret “even” within ICE as a verb—when individuals attempt to use ICE in new ways and essentially test its limits, they do this under the assumption that “even” is a verb (“I Can’t Even,” McCulloch). Therefore, when the elided meaning of “even” was replaced with the general substitute “can” (an actual verb), they utilized it as if it were a verb; and as a verb, it is simple to become a noun and vice versa, which may explain why “can” may function as a noun while “even” may not. However, for whatever reason (possibly because “can” already exists as a modal, and it is too awkward to transform it into a main verb, possibly as a carryover from “even” not being a verb to begin with), “can” is never tensed.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

MERCHANT RAISES TWO QUESTIONS about ellipsis that the field of linguistics has yet to solve. I will address both in an attempt to see if ICE as an elliptical process brings anything new to the table.

The first question is whether syntactic structure exists beneath ellipses. Merchant lists evidence both for and against this viewpoint, but the trouble of testing for underlying structure in ICE is that it is more slang than a generalized phenomenon. It is so small and so contained that it’s difficult to test linguistically for things like quantifier float or A-bar movement. For example, VP-ellipsis, gapping, and certain kinds of sluicing and fragment answers obey island constraints but it is not possible (or, at least, very difficult; I have not thought of any)

to form ICE within an island. Some languages like English allow preposition stranding after wh-movement in sluicing, but wh-movement does not occur in ICE (or, at least, it is never used in a way that causes wh-movement) (Merchant). Without using any linguistic tests, it is safe to say that ICE does require some sort of underlying structure. It stipulates that only a specific type of phrase be elided, namely an emotional reaction, and it stipulates that an individual must be unable to handle that emotional reaction. However, because ICE consists of a variety of dissimilar phrasal complements varying from “handle these emotions” to “express myself in proper English,” and because this phrase is incomprehensible to those without the cultural knowledge to translate it, the underlying structure is likely more semantic than syntactic.

The second question is how an anaphora relates to its antecedent. ICE relates to its antecedent fairly differently than other forms of ellipsis. In VP-ellipsis, the antecedent is a parallel, syntactic replica of the elided material; this is definitely not the case for ICE. Both NCA and ICE are analogous in that they allow for a pragmatic antecedent but when given linguistic context, NCA still relates back to the antecedent syntactically, just not word-for-word. ICE is unique in that regardless of what the antecedent is (provided it evokes intense emotions), ICE is always a reaction to it rather a shortened restatement of it.

Aside from advancing our knowledge of ellipsis, examining novel constructions like ICE is essential to understanding how systems of communication progress and how we interpret innovative forms of English; I end this paper with the hope that more focus will be given to the rapid evolution of language in the near future, especially in relation to the Internet.

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Bannockburn Apartment Seen From The Back Field 2015

TIMOTHY BACA
ARTWORK/PHOTOGRAPHY
RIVERSIDE





THIS PHOTOGRAPH IS FROM AN ONGOING SERIES that explores the interaction between varied 20th century architecture, mechanically altered landscape, and organic asymmetrical growth. This image is concerned with the offset angle of the roof, tall strips of windows, smooth trunk trees, and the hay weeds of the back field. It was near 5 PM, and I carried a heavy black tripod through the weeds, gathering itchy thorns in my socks. Effective lighting outlined the companion tree. The wind blew in cycles; it would stay still only to pick up every minute or so. The wind picked up again, I readied my thumb on the shutter release—a gentle breath was always sure to follow a gust.

When I am out walking, I am impressed and imposed upon by each different massive living system of shapes. I am equally seized by animated leaves and branches that bow in the wind, misshapen, rough, and intelligently organized. It would seem at first that these two disparate elements would oppose one another—the human hand dominating the uncomplaining trees—but I seek in this series to display structures where both contribute equally and support one another. The buildings are designed with their environment in mind, while nature is nature. When the plants are too unruly, they are chopped back. If the designer is particularly misanthropic, the whole of the area surrounding the building will be excised in favor of docile skinny saplings. If maintenance is not kept up, the lines of the building will be obstructed by dead leaves and spider webs. A game of balance. As these pictures aim to show, it is truly impressive when the vast, powerful lines of modern design comfortably nestle in the slow curves of nature.

The title for my photograph is simple and points directly to the form of the piece, keeping focus away from any type of narrative or metaphor.

Two Haikus and A Non Sequitur

EMILIO RAMIREZ
POETRY
IRVINE

Rainy green mountain
Why are you so yellow now?
Did your tears run dry?



A morning shadow,
Elope with me, red tulip
The sun god returns



Icarus fell, but you still ascend
flying through clouds of thoughts
—my thoughts are full of clouds,
a cumulonimbus chair rises at the end.

Can I fly with you,
so I may sit in the chair
over there, where the air is most rare.
I happen to have déjà vu.

One day I saw you in a coffee shop
—latte macchiato with no whipped cream—
Out the door into the busy stream
you went, and I followed up to a traffic stop.

You were on the other side
and I didn't see the angry hand,
so I stepped into no man's land
just in time for me and the milk truck to coincide.

COLOPHON

The 10th volume of Audeamus was printed by the Printing and Reprographics Department at UCR. A copy was given to all published authors; various individuals, departments, and organizations, within the University of California system; and attendees of the 2016 Western Regional Honors Council Conference.

The journal is 7.5" by 7.5". The cover is printed on 100# silk coated paper. The interior is printed on 80# matte coated paper.

The journal was created using Adobe Illustrator CC, Adobe InDesign CC, and Adobe Photoshop CC.

The typefaces used are Ailerons, Century Gothic, League Spartan, and Minion Pro. The body copy is set in Minion Pro 10/12.

If you have any questions, please contact us. Send us a letter. Send us an email. Visit our office. Our contact information is pressed somewhere on the first few pages, next to a mustachioed man named Mr. Cornelius Albert Bumbledeer.

We hope you enjoyed Audeamus Volume X as much as we enjoyed producing it.

Fun facts about Audeamus X:

- » There were 6 distinct cover designs with a total of 108 variations
- » The 6th and final cover required 47 variations to print
- » There were 9 InDesign documents varying in typography, layout, and graphics
- » 155 PDFs were created and shared with all published authors and the Audeamus board during the editorial process
- » All 477 files, a total of 5,883,937,019 bytes, take residence on 1 SSD, 2 HDDs, and 3 cloud providers
- » Out of the 113 submissions (26 research, 35 fiction/nonfiction, 9 art, 43 poetry), the top 40 pieces were reviewed on Reading Day—only 13 pieces, or 11.5%, made it to the final publication



10TH ANNIVERSARY