



Fall 2003

The Forum: Fall 2003

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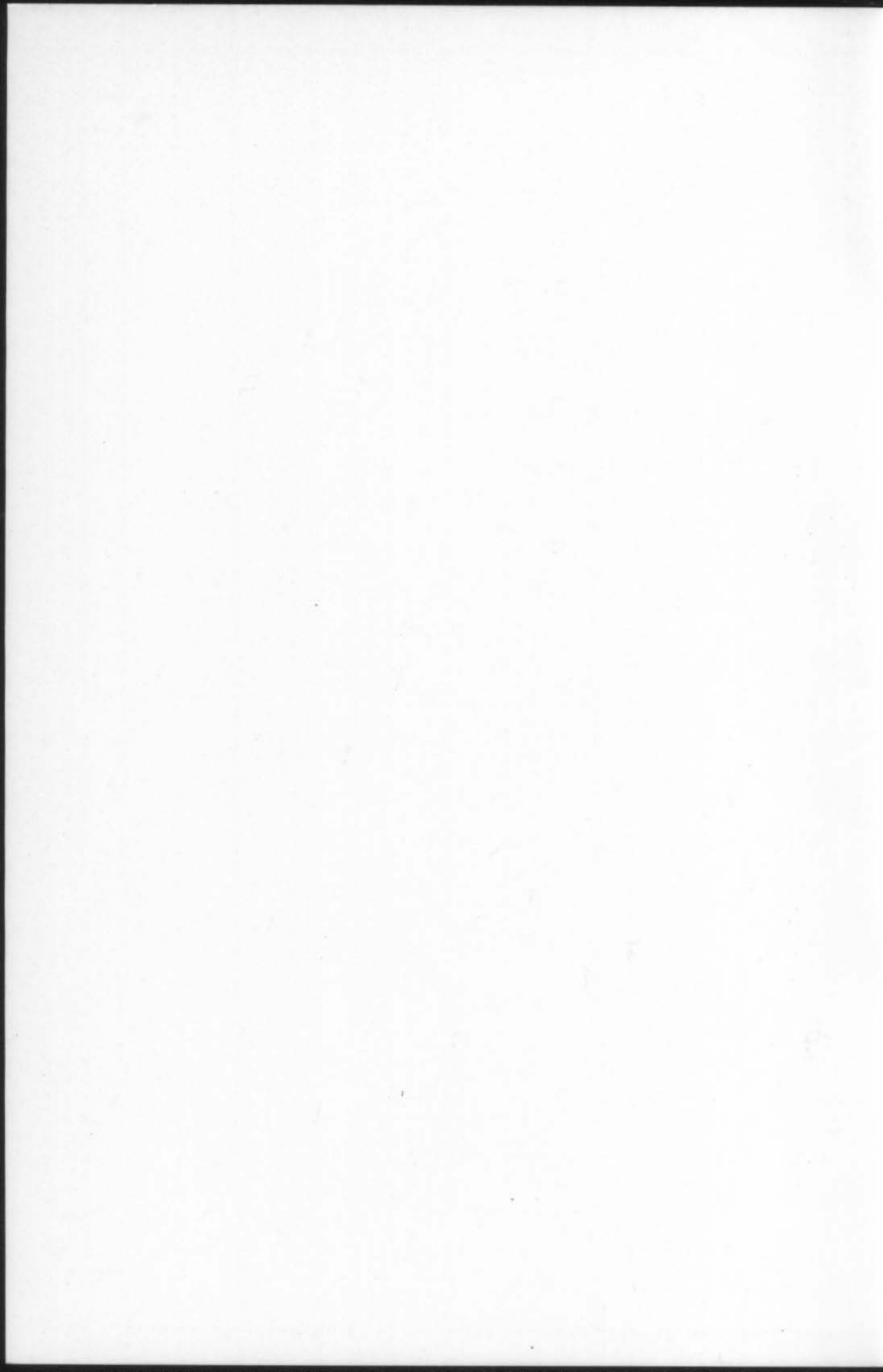
Erienne Graten, Bernie Thomas, Teresa Mathew, Katie Rau, Martine Nathasha Johnson, Margaret Mostad, Heather Monasky, Bethany Roel, Ashley Helle, Holly Noonan, and Rachel Bates

the Forum

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Bernie Thomas

The REAL American Idol

Mustachioed hero
Running through the minds
Of teenage boys
Who aspire to be pure no more
An inspiration to us all
This modern day Casanova
Breaks down the hollow barriers
Of age,
Weight,
And sexual appeal
With his hips
To bring us this
Anonymous lust flickering upon the screen.
Peppering the walls
Of triple X movie theaters
With his round, jolly physique
And Benjamin Franklin haircut
Arousing attentions
Flashing into the heavens
A supernova of pleasure
And pork and beans,
Making us realize
That if this man can succeed here
We all can be anything we choose.
Ron Jeremy,
We salute you.



Teresa Mathew

Katie Rau

My Rat

I can hear him scratching and curiously exploring in the pasty-colored plastic cage as I prepare the necessary dissecting tools. A tall mountain of glassware, electrical equipment, desktops and sinks stands between us so I have to use my imagination as I visualize his furry, white little rat's body with beady pink eyes that stick out like hazy fluorescent light bulbs on a strangely shaped lamppost. I attach silvery ice-like blades to two different sizes of scalpels while he stretches his round body upwards and wraps his scaly claws around the sterile metal bars that are tightly clamped across the top of the cage. He falls back to the bottom upon realizing the futility of his escape attempts. The blades are sharp and I am sure to slip them onto the scalpel handles the way I was taught so as not to slice my own blood-filled flesh with their beveled edges. I hear him scamper to the other side of the cage and skid in the wood shavings that cover the floor of his entrapment. I have my torture table, or to be scientific about it, my dissecting grid, ready to serve its purpose. The white gauze pads are properly laid out to catch and soak up the blood that will soon spill; the scalpels, surgical pliers, and little spatulas stand like soldiers, proud and alert. The bucket of ice that houses the chilled beakers of artificial cerebral spinal fluid is to my left. The oxygen bubbles from the heavy tubes placed strategically in each beaker. We have to do our best to make this whole process as close to *in vivo* conditions as we can. As if the animals and their sterile deaths weren't real enough.

I leave my death camp and head reluctantly over to the haven of the ventilation hood where he rests quietly now, sleeping soundly atop his wood-chip bed in contented ignorance of the brutal reality that will consume his every motion and emotion in a few moments. This is the part I like the least. It's when they are the most real, the most alive, the closest to being human in my eyes. I watch his stomach rise and fall rhythmically as he inhales pure, clean air. I picture his normally functioning air exchange pathways that I will soon disrupt. His pink eyes are hidden under his almost transparent eyelids, and his ugly long tail is tucked neatly alongside him. I look away from him for a few moments in order to concentrate on my next ritual. I remove the brown glass bottle from the cabinet under the hood that contains the drug and record in the DEA

logbook that 1 cc will be used for the procedure. Next, I suck up the clear liquid into the syringe, grabbing a little extra air at the end. The bottle clangs against the side of the metal door as I place it back inside the cabinet, and instinctively my eyes quickly dart back into his cage to see if the noise has awakened him. It hasn't. Now I must prepare the chamber.

I remove the soiled paper towel lining (soiled by those who have come and gone before him) and replace it with fresh sheets. I wonder to myself why it seems as if I am the only one that ever cleans it. It's always filthy when I get to it. The clear plastic chamber is really not that big. It has a cylindrical shape with a lid that has a circular groove that fits snugly over the top in order to prevent the escape of the magical gas. It goes into the chamber as liquid, then quickly changes to its gaseous form and evaporates, filling both the container and the hungry lungs of whatever living creature the container holds. I position the lid so there is just enough room for my hand and the rat to enter from the top. It looks like an open coffin, so angelic and pristine. Sadly, I know it will soon be full of urine and excrement as the rat, in his frightened fight for life, loses control of his voluntary functions. When I move the metal lid of his cage slightly, he quickly awakens and runs to the opposite side. I tap the side of the cage to get him to wander back over so that I can grasp his tail and lift him up into one last chance for freedom before plunging him into his gas chamber. He responds to my tapping and bolts to the other side of the cage, and I grab his thick, collagen-packed tail with my gloved hand. As I lift him up out of the cage, his little body twists upward, but cannot reach my fingers. While lowering him into the plastic chamber, he claws onto the sides in revolt, but I manage to get him inside. In my attempt to cover the opening, I inadvertently catch one of his clawed arms between the side of the chamber and the lid. He squeals in pain, and my stomach turns a little bit as I lift the lid slightly and watch him immediately recoil his arm. I have him now.

I stand, with my syringe and its anaesthetizing isofluorine, like an executioner. My white lab coat and blue latex gloves cloak me in scientific immunity. We all need our masks. I deftly screw on the end of the syringe to the tiny tube that dangles from the outside of the chamber. I know I must wait until the rat has moved his head from the end of the tube or it will blind him. After he has situated himself away from the end of the tube, I slowly begin pushing the liquid into the chamber. The paper towel develops a dark wet spot, and then I see it disappear as the liquid evaporates, becoming the toxic fumes necessary to force a drugged sleep upon him. At first he realizes nothing and is not at all afraid of his surroundings, having been shuffled from cage to cage all his life. I am haunted by the phrase "they were bred for this...born to die" that I have been constantly reminded of by my superiors in a failed effort to drive the reality of the situation further from all of our hearts. He briefly explores his confines and finds nothing special so he sits calmly, leaning his body against the clear plastic side

and looking up at me with his shiny pink eyes. I look away and pretend to be busy cleaning the surface of the bench top and the digital scale I will soon place his anaesthetized body onto. The quarrelling desires of wanting to look and not wanting to look duke it out in my heart. After a few short seconds, victory is handed to the desire to look which leads me to abandon my cleaning and return to the spectacle within the chamber.

My rat is now moving quickly around the edges of the chamber. The scene instantly reminds me of my dog when he chases his tail in circles, oddly confined to a small portion of the lawn. The rat reaches upward, sniffing the edges of the lid and sensing that the air outside is better than the air he is breathing. It's inevitable. They all do it. Their will to survive always amazes me, and it also makes me feel incredibly guilty for so callously stealing it away. This is the time that my choice to kill or to let live is the most potent and powerful. I could easily lift the lid, allowing clean, non-toxic air to rush into the container and the anaesthetizing air out to dissipate, freeing the rat from the death trap in which he struggles. It really wouldn't be that hard to simply say, "No, not today," and walk away from the situation, allowing the rat to live. But instead, I watch as his movements become wobbly and his balance off-centered. He jerks and twists, falling heavily against the side of the container. His breathing first quickens and then slows as he begins to lose the fight. He stretches up to the lid one last time and falls downward, unsuccessful in his last escape attempt, his little claws emitting a squeaking noise in their painfully long slide down the side. I look away for a moment in an effort to liberate myself from the situation and my role in it. Sometimes if you can't see what's happening, then you can blame something else for the outcome. Turning back toward the container, I see that his eyelids have covered his round bubble-like eyes and the rise and fall of his furry stomach has slowed even more. I remove the lid, and lift him out by the scruff of his neck, quickly weighing him on the scale and then moving him over to the sink where the blood-red guillotine waits. It's so much easier when they look dead. My body and mind have now entered "researcher-machine-mode" as I tuck his front limbs into my left hand and place his strikingly warm body under the shiny thick blade. With a quick swoosh I slam the handle controlling the blade down through his neck, right behind his downy soft ears with blood now squirting out of the wide orifice. The decapitated body thrashes because all of the nerves are firing at once, and I'm strangely proud because the thrashing indicates an ideal cut. With the phrase "like a chicken with its head cut off" running through my mind, I picture the headless rat body somehow jumping up out of the deep sink and taking a spin around the clean lab floors, leaving an incriminating trail of blood leading back to my feet. I cup the bleeding head in my hand and transport it to my dissection grid. I can hear the long, thick tail incessantly flopping back and forth in

the sink. His eyes are sticking out of their sockets, and I hate the fact I can feel them pushing back against me through my gloves (I'm always afraid they will pop under the pressure) as I begin the first incision to remove the fur that covers his head. The white gauze pads are now very red with blood. The thought of the ultimate good I will be doing with this slaughter is somewhat comforting, although it doesn't take the dull ache in my heart away. "It's a necessary evil," I tell myself. We can't experiment on humans, but we need better treatments for diseases, don't we? How else can it be done? Somewhere along the line something has to give. And the rats are continually (albeit against their own "will") giving in to us day in and day out. They are our laboratories, our jobs, and our answers to improvements in treatments, but they are also our struggles, our will to survive, and in many ways white furry pieces of ourselves. How many does it take to equal a human life?

As I refocus on the task at hand, I am struck by the fact that I have already removed his supple, butter-like brain and have divided it into right and left hemispheres. I'm ashamed that I can do this subconsciously, thinking poetic, philosophical, and ethical thoughts while I crack his skull and cut the fibrous meninges away. I look down at my blood and tissue covered gloves, the empty skull with the gaping hole that once held the brain, and the little piles and specks of bone and fat that cover the grid and wonder if it's all really worth it. I can distinctly remember refusing to kill spiders during my childhood, yet here I stand in the midst of my young adult years with a scalpel in my bloody hands removing the brain from a rat. When did the right to kill willingly sneak into my being? Am I really that much more "mature"? And now all of my concentration is needed to carefully remove the particular part of the brain required for my experiments, the hippocampus. My philosophically 'mature' collegiate thoughts stop as I focus on my pair of petite metal spatulas that will assist me in removing the necessary sections of his brain. Shortly after both U-shaped portions are removed, I begin slicing them into 400 micrometer sections. I sit in my mostly white lab coat, splattered lightly with rat's blood, and slice away, hoping that this rat's life and death have not been in vain and that the slices of his brain will be viable and actually useful for the experiment. It's just a routine procedure on a routine-like day. Every job has a part that one doesn't like, just routine-like, necessary evil.

Martine Natasha Johnson

Tsunamis & Stagnation

The rain's pounding outside my window and I can hear the trains switching tracks a few blocks south of here. When the streetlights turn on along his avenue they flicker from east to west and I wish that just once he would take their cue. I can't help but wonder if he's playing his guitar, just down the avenue, listening to the rain pound outside his window, watching the streetlights flicker their way toward me.

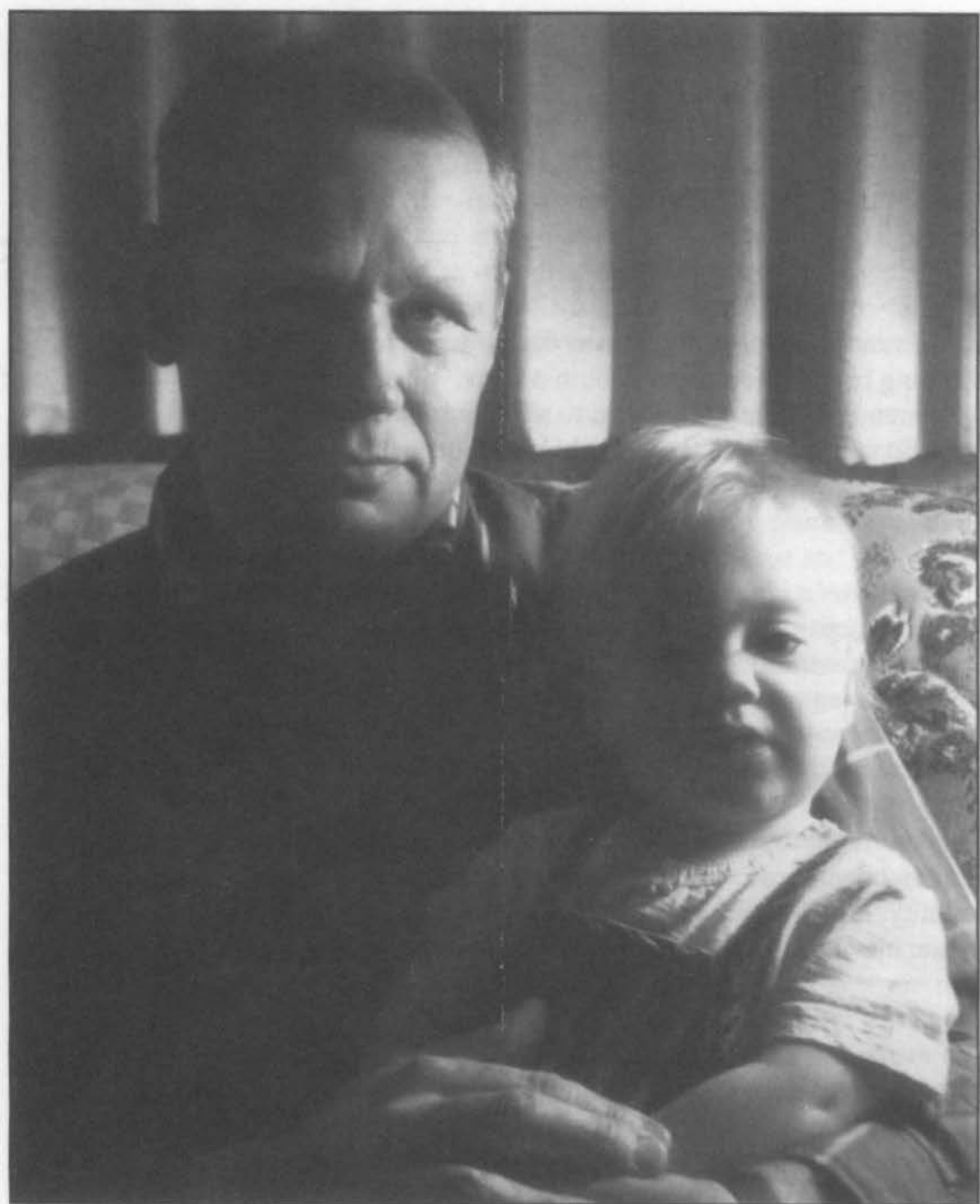
He's just sixteen blocks away; I have never lived so near to someone and felt so separate from him. But when we're sitting so close to each other on the same side of a spacious booth, his aura envelopes me. Frozen; suspended, we struggle between what we want and what we need. And then he says goodnight; he rises, beer in hand; I falter, then fall headfirst into the space between what could have been and what will never be.

I've been living two years in the shell of the Bohemian I used to be, but somehow he can extract the profundity I have repressed like profanity, like drawing water from a well. He is brilliant, sophisticated, artistic, clever, intriguing--and when I am near him, I am all those things again.

With every kiss he breaks me; builds me. Every time I see him he hurts me; heals me. When he squeezes my icy fist inside his warm palm he renews my skepticism; restores my faith. But when he's sixteen block away, I stagnate.

And there is nothing worse than stagnation.

I'd rather die in a tsunami than live in a turtle-shaped wading pool.



Margaret Mostad

Heather Monasky

Untitled

Justify what I do, please.
A truism is just as false as any bullshit, as long as
we milk it the right way.
Anxiety attacks again; this time,
it revolves around pomade. And momma, she
won't admit to her distemper. It's endemic now.
But my worries' virulence won't die down, it's topped
with the maraschino cherry of
let's-not-think-sex-is-fun-ism.
Right now, go to your room and orchestrate
your mind to delineate right from wrong,
you wretched adolescent you.
But I grit my teeth, the sign of relenting, since my
actions always come down to the
same state of my head.
This is my own advice.
I'm a desperado, though. So my advice is recorded but
my head won't settle on it.

Bethany Roel

Love Is...

*A brief survey of popular modern music,
the messages it conveys about love,
and how those same messages appear in classic literature*

Music has been an important factor in almost every major society and civilization since the beginning of time. For nearly as long a time it has been associated with various emotions, and one in particular: love. The ancient Greeks believed in the concept of *affect*: that certain types of music could literally create certain emotional states in the listeners. While this belief is much less common now, many musical artists do seem to use their tunes and lyrics to instill certain values, ideas, and beliefs in their audiences. In this paper I shall make a brief survey of some of the more common thoughts about love that popular modern musicians seem to convey through their lyrics and show how these themes appear in classic literature as well.

The six definitions of love I examined that are found in modern popular music and classic books alike—love as sexual, sacred, destructive, healing, indiscriminate, and particular—hardly scratch the surface of the many metaphors and descriptions of love that exist in these and other sources. However, they appear to be some of the more prominent ones, as a random sampling of music from a popular local radio station showed. I listened to XL93, a Grand Forks radio station that plays the latest hits, for an hour at a time in the afternoon and early morning and kept track of and analyzed the songs that were played.

Love is sexual. This appears to be the most common theme found in current musical hits. The song I chose to exemplify this statement is Justin Timberlake's "Rock Your Body." "Rock Your Body" contains the lyrics "I came to romance with you/You're searching for love forever more/It's time to take a chance/If love is here [it's] on the [dance] floor, girl." These words show that the singer knows that the girl is in search of a loving, lasting relationship and seem to imply that that may be a possibility between him and her. However, in the song the singer contradicts this idea by saying, "Are you feeling me?/Let's do something/Let's make a bet/Cause I gotta have you naked by the end of this song." Does getting someone na-

ked in the span of four minutes and some seconds constitute a loving, lasting relationship? Justin Timberlake appears to think so, and unfortunately many of his fans may as well, thanks to his musical influence. Helen Fisher asserts in her book *Anatomy of Love* that the sole purpose of relationships is to procreate and that love is simply a means to that same end.

Love is sacred/spiritual. Strong religious connotations run through Evanescence's "Bring Me to Life." This song seems to imply that love is something ethereal, numinous, and transcendent. These ideas are especially obvious in the first verse:

How can you see into my eyes
Like open doors
Leading you down into my core
Where I've become so numb
Without a soul
My spirit's sleeping somewhere cold
Until you find it there and lead it back home.

The thought of finding someone or something else who knows you better than you do yourself and the concept of the soul being lost until it is led by some mystical force to where it is supposed to be are both notions that are concordant with Christianity. Although this is indeed a secular song, many Christians consider it to be a lightly veiled reference to a love for God rather than a mortal love. The writers of this song apparently feel that there is little difference between those two types of love, and this idea is conveyed through the wording of their music. A tangential but similar concept is evident in the book *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich; the character Marie is constantly equated with, and even referred to as, a saint, and many very definitely Catholic images pervade her love life and her life in general.

Many paradoxical conceptions of love can also be found in modern popular music. The two most prominent ones that I found in my research are *love is healing* versus *love is destructive* and *love is particular* versus *love is indiscriminate*. In the following pages I shall examine some of the contradictory messages that modern music sends to listeners.

Love is destructive/harmful. Love is portrayed in many songs as being a devastating and detrimental force that can lead to nothing good. One example of this thought can be seen in Matchbox 20's "Disease," wherein the singer maintains that the object of the song "left a stain on every one of [his] good days" and that she "drove [him] to the fire/and left [him] there to burn." These images obviously portray love in a very negative light. This aspect of modern music actually ties in with the book *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez, in which love is depicted as a

disease—similar to the choleric plague—for which there is little or no cure.

Love is healing. While love can definitely burn, it can also soothe. This is another common theme found in modern popular music; I shall use 3 Doors Down's "When I'm Gone" to illustrate it. The lyrics of this song tell the story of a person struggling under the burdens of secrets, lies, and darkness. The singer pleads with the person toward whom the song is directed to "Hold me when I'm here/Right me when I'm wrong/Hold me when I'm scared/And love me when I'm gone." My interpretation from these and other lyrics is that this person is feeling unwanted and yearns for the object of the song to reach out and support him with love so that he will not feel so alone. This line of thinking can also be seen in the novel *The English Patient* in the (physically and emotionally) healing relationship between the nurse, Hana, and her patient, Almásy.

Love is indiscriminate. This first side of the second paradox apparent in popular music today is exemplified by the song "I'm With You" by Avril Lavigne. In the lyrics, Avril explains that she's tired of being lonely and simply wants someone—anyone—to love her and take her away from her life. The chorus goes as follows:

It's a damn cold night
Tryin' to figure out this life
Won't you take me by the hand, take me somewhere new
I don't know who you are, but I'm
I'm with you

The character Florentino in *Love in the Time of Cholera* has been denied the love of Fermina, the woman he adores, for various reasons, and so seeks love elsewhere. He has over six hundred serious relationships in the span of fifty years. Florentino seeks to fill the void left by his first love, and though he claims he never loved anyone but Fermina, he mourned over the loss of other relationships as well. I believe he simply redirected his first love toward most or at least some of his subsequent lovers.

Love is particular. The opposite of the previously mentioned "love is" statement can be seen in songs such as "If You're Not the One" by Daniel Bedingfield. The chorus contains the lyrics, "If I'm not made for you then why does my heart tell me that I am?" This song is a lament over the person whom Daniel believes to be his soulmate, a questioning plea for understanding as to why he can think of no one but this girl and why they cannot be together.

The idea of soulmates is a powerful and compelling one, but it can also be frightening. If there is only one perfect person in the world for everyone, what are one's chances of finding him/her? Or what if that person is inaccessible for some other reason? These questions are explored in Emily

Brönte's novel *Wuthering Heights*, in the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. Events and other characters always seem to be conspiring to keep these two apparent soulmates apart, but they always find their way back to each other—even after death.

As previously mentioned, the most common theme found in these songs and writings alike was *love is sexual*. At least ten of the forty-five songs in my sample had strong or moderate sexual subject matter. This was followed by the *love is particular* idea in eight songs, *love is destructive* in seven songs, *love is spiritual* in five songs, and *love is indiscriminate* in four songs. The *love is healing* concept appeared the least, being definitely obvious in only three of the forty-five songs.

While there are many ways to describe and think about love, a majority of the most common ones appear in our culture's music and literature. This finding begs the question: Do these love concepts surface so frequently in media such as music and literature because they are how our culture views love, or does our culture view love in the ways that it does due to the influence of these media? The ancient Greeks would definitely agree with the latter statement; this question has no simple answer but could be of great import to our society and is worth exploring.

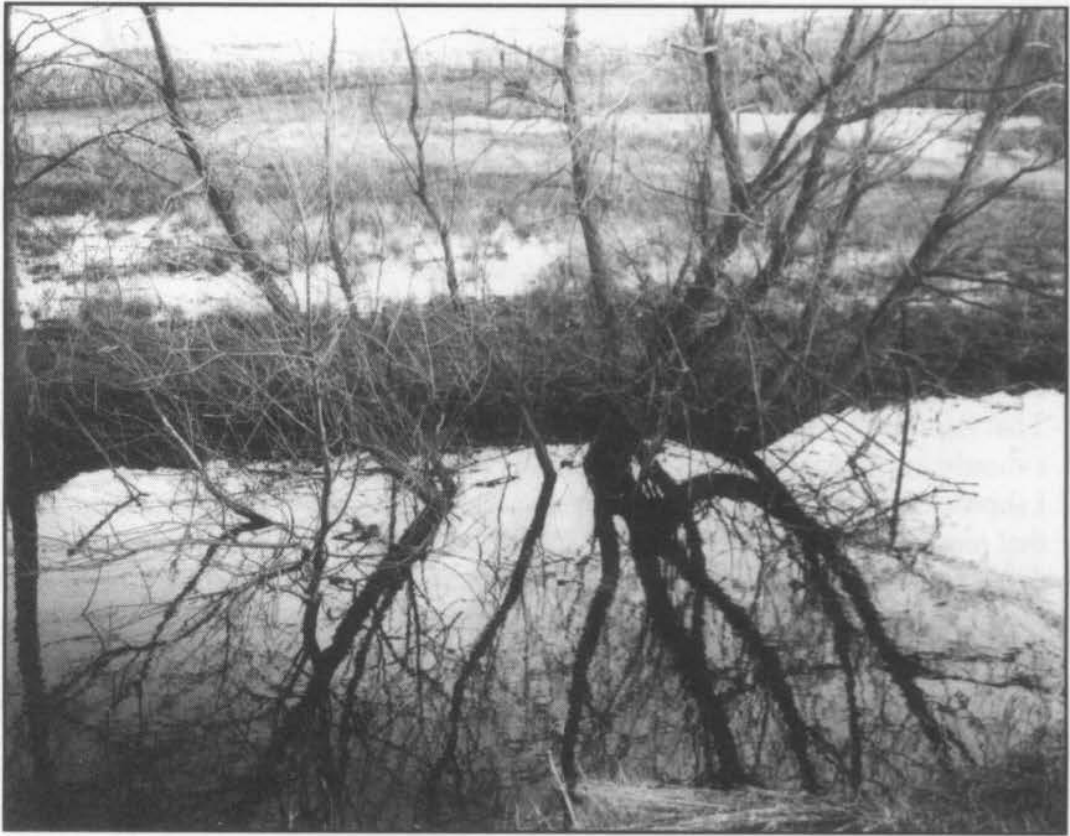
Ashley Helle

Untitled

Nakedness under a towel,
Furiously scribbling
To put my mad thoughts
Down on paper.

Yet to do so
Eliminates the madness,
Making an eerie sense
I'm not sure I want.

No turning back,
There they are,
For the world to see,
To judge.



Holly Noonan

Rachel Bates

Untitled

it's been three days since you touched me
So I bought pink socks to signify my womanhood
I talked to you about my fears, my overwhelming sense of urgency about
the intrusion upon my sanctified bed of war, blood, and lies--
the insecurity i feel in making decisions,
for i am just a woman.
I am just a woman who wears pink.

I saw my friend.
That friend who believes i should be burned.
i should be scorned.
I should be sacrificed by her all-loving god for my all-human sin.
that sin which originates from my tortuous body,
my body which bears the burden of lies,
the burden of tumultuous confusion emanating through
every breath that
i take.
those lies of my body make you my pain,
the pain that haunts me as i remember our minds and bodies as one,
all the way down to my feet which in their brilliance convey that color
through which I am stigmatized.

my heart is my weapon,
my masochistic betrayal of lust.
it shoots down through my pores,
this acid of pain that's only neutralized by your touch.
along with your touch comes those intoxicating
photographs of my
memory,
deep into my body like an IV drip numbing my pain.
it's been three days since you touched me.
it's been three days since you numbed the pain down to my pink clad
toes.

Katie Rau

Parts and Purposes of a Neuron

Whether it rests on a shelf in powerful-smelling formaldehyde fixative, or whether it floats almost freely in our hardened protective skulls, suspended in the life-supporting ooze scientists have termed cerebral spinal fluid it is a wonder to behold. The glorious lobes, ventricles, tissues and cells we collectively refer to as the brain amazes even the most gifted of researchers and thinkers. From the tiniest functional unit, the neuron, to the one of the most complex and highest functioning systems, the cerebral cortex, the mysteries borne by the human brain continually blossom as spring flowers upon the green bed of science. And what an exciting time to be wanderers in the meadow.

For thousands of years, most likely since the dawn of conscious thought, humans have posed the questions, "What am I and how have I come to know myself?" How is it that we are now able to reach out and turn the mirror upon ourselves, to fix our relentless gaze upon what was once invisible? And now that we have this ability, what do we see?

Using a not-so-sophisticated light microscope, one is able to view neurons, the brain's basic and fundamental functional unit, growing and conducting their daily business in a Corning 100mm dish. The pinkish liquid in this sample that surrounds the cells is called media, their life-blood. It provides all of the essential amino acids, growth factors, and other support molecules needed for the cells to survive outside a body. The environment in the dish, although artificial, is one unique way that we are able to look at pieces of our gray matter, pieces that are indeed very real and alive. I have performed countless checks on the conditions of the cells grown in the laboratory, and over and over again, as I count or classify them, I have found myself wondering just what they are up to down there in their clear plastic abode. Are they sending out their needy, lanky arms (neurites) in hopes of making a connection with a neighbor? Are they talking to each other, as neurons in our human brains do using their own special language of electrical impulses?

At the core of their morphology, neurons can be thought of as a basic two-story home. All neurons share many characteristics such as DNA, all have specialized compartments that allow the specific breaking down and building up of the necessary molecules for metabolism and other cell

processes, and most, if not all, are involved in some way or another in communication. However, if our basic neuron can be described as a two-story home, we can't forget that homes can also have balconies jutting out from bedroom windows, different colors of paint on the siding, back porches or verandas, clothes lines in the backyard, a long winding drive extending out into the world from the front door, and/or a basement. Where the neuron is located in the brain and what function it is carrying out determine what types of properties the neuron will possess in addition to its fundamental two-story structure.

Most neurons have a structure called an axon, which can be described as a thin process projecting from the cell in a particular direction, most analogous to a long winding driveway from the front door of our neural house, the cell body. The axon is a curious protrusion that sends out messages, or action potentials, to other cells. Axons and the way in which they transmit information are crucial in the communication system of the neuron. Without a way to send out and respond to messages, all incoming signals the neuron receives would be stopped dead in their tracks with no way to continue. The axon is intricately suited for its specialized transmission job. Most axons are cloaked in a substance called myelin, a type of milky-white insulation (or a wind-break along the road) for the axon fibers. In the body, axons covered in myelin look like a series of hot-dog buns lined up end to end in a single row with little gaps in between each one. The gaps are present so the message can jump from gap (technically termed a Node of Ranvier) to gap. This, in turn, allows the axon to send its message much more quickly than if the hot-dogs of myelin along the length of the axon were absent. The specializations of neuronal cells never cease to amaze and awe!

If the axon is the main driveway from the house, the back-road dirt paths leading up to the residence are the dendrites. In contrast to the neuron's single large axon, dendrites are usually very numerous. They radiate around the neuron like giant trees on a globe, with branches and processes reaching up, out, and around the complex sky of the neuron's body. Dendrites are the "delivery boys" of the neuron. They come running up to the house from every dirt path around the county bringing news of happenings in far away lands such as the hippocampus or the frontal lobe. A neuron knows what is going on around it and thus can react appropriately because of the information presented by the dendrites. It seems as though the roads leading to and from our neuronal house are just as important as the house itself.

The soma, the cell body, the processing center, the house, the strangely-shaped little blob visible under the light microscope...feel free to use whichever image you like. They all represent the same structure, what I like to think of as a supernova in the universal blackness of consciousness. The cell body of a neuron is an incredible conglomerate of

protein globs, nucleic acid helices, protective membranes with receptors placed on the exterior and interior like little bumps on a log, specific chemicals and molecules, and all of the other necessities for a day in the life of a micro-scaled being. Under high enough magnification and with the use of specific dyes and antibodies, the minute world of the cell is possible to see. And what a sight it is. In the neuron's cell body, more specifically in a region termed the nucleus, we find all the DNA that any other type of cell possesses. The difference between a hepatocyte (liver cell) or an osteocyte (bone cell) and a neuron lies only in the varied expression of their respective DNA. Many years ago, when you began as an embryo, your brain commenced its formation as the primitive cells started to fashion what is termed the neural tube. Through countless cellular divisions and cycles, seemingly magical growth factors and oodles of energy, your brain and the cells it held became the most intricate series of connections and webs that our time has ever seen. In theory, one could start all over again by simply extracting the DNA of a neuron, or any other cell for the matter, and expanding it under the right conditions. The knowledge that is contained in the cell body of a neuron is immense, immense enough to hold the blueprints and instructions for every cell and protein your body will ever need. Most of it (DNA) is tightly bound in carefully bundled yarn-like complexes of proteins called histone proteins. A cell only uses a small percentage of its DNA on a regular basis, leaving us to ponder what the rest of the DNA is up to within our cells.

The cell body of the neuron is peppered with little bubbles filled with chemicals, or neurotransmitters, whose function is to respond to the incoming stimuli in a full-scale effort to keep the message, or action potential, going. When information comes in through our 'back road' dendrites or from the axons of other neurons, certain chemicals change within the receiving cell in accordance with the nature of the information. This begins a cascade of changes in the molecules of a cell. Just like dominos lined up in a series, the signals bump up against each other continually, effecting alterations in the chemical pathways of the cell. Once the signal has started, it can be tough to stop. So, whether the news that the delivery boys brought the cell is good or bad, a change is usually made and transmitted. In addition to the defining packets of neurotransmitter molecules, the cell body of a neuron contains all of the necessary machinery to 'eat', 'drink' and rid itself of wastes. The cell body really is a *body* and functions in many ways exactly like our human bodies do.

We ponder the power and inner workings of the brain with nothing else but the brain itself. Although my last sentence almost screams circularity in a philosophical argument, something deep inside of me says that yes, maybe we can actually know something about the very thing we are so unequivocally awed by, even though that entity (the brain) is performing the work on itself.

Heather Monasky

Untitled

My cleavage is ordained from on high.
But it's my mind that's my throne.
Cuz I won't touch with a ten-foot pole the attitude
that I'm gonna submit to my husband.
That'd be the first step in my undoing.
Cuz there are no degrees, minutes, or seconds often –
It's 1st, equal or last.
And to trust my will to his impartiality,
Just cuz he's a man? Screw that, Focus on the Family.
Cuz you stuff god down the barrel of a gun,
and after him you stuff his only son.
And you say the safety's on, but you keep it pointed on us women.
Well I do accept the reality and/or rebellion you don't.
So Susie Shellenberger, who's vain now?
And who's more powerful, cuz that's what this is about.
We don't use the phrase "common woman" cuz it's a bit too sultry.

(line 9 is taken from Ani Difranco's "To the Teeth")



Erienne Graten

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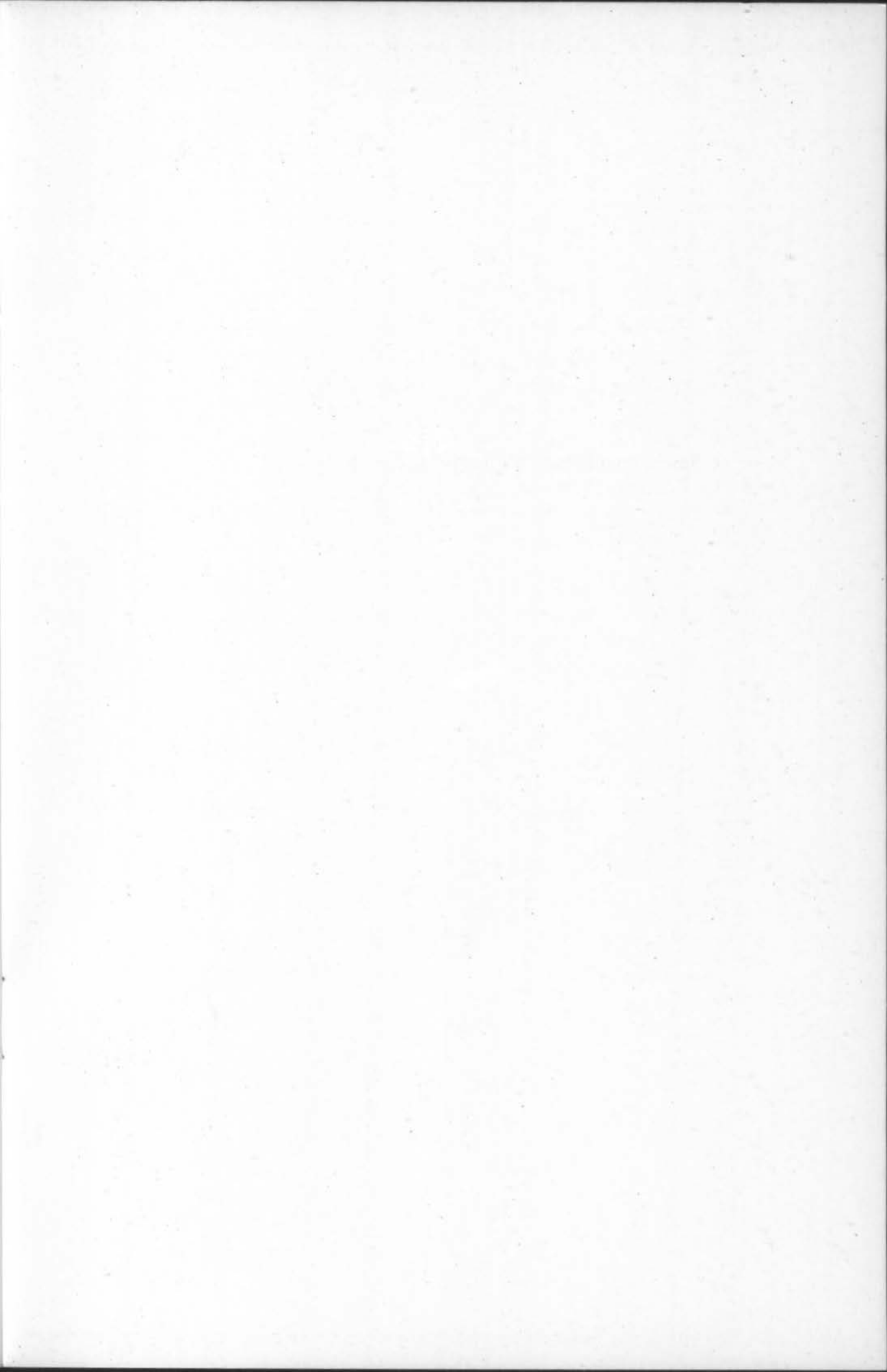
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