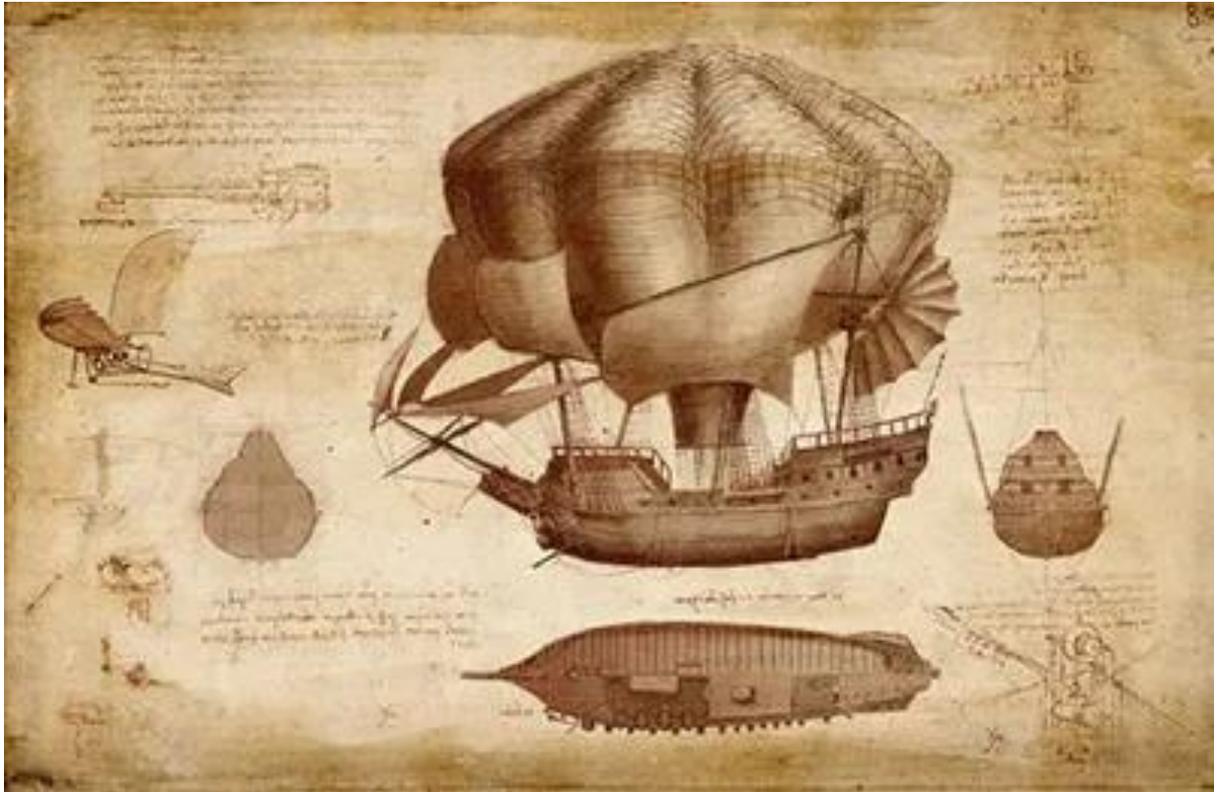


# MENTOR

JOHN ADAMS ACADEMY FACULTY ACADEMIC JOURNAL



Fostering Creativity and Entrepreneurial Spirit

*John Adams*   
ACADEMY<sup>®</sup>

**M**ENTOR is the faculty journal of John Adams Academy. The purpose of this journal is to uncover the alliance between the enduring pathways of Classical curricula and the timeless guideposts of our Ten Core Values. As educators and members of an intellectual community that inherits and relates a legacy of truth, wisdom, and beauty, we perceive the abundance in each contribution to the Great Conversation.

We take our name from the complementary sources of the Latin word *mens, mentis* (mind, thought, intention) and the Homeric character Mentor (Μέντωρ), to whom great Odysseus entrusted care of his home and family, and in the guise of whom the goddess Athena gave counsel to the young Telemachus. The former origin recalls our human tradition of sentience, the latter our divine duties of love and loyalty. Taken together, the essence of mentoring is sharing with others the beauty and truth that has fallen to us.

Each issue, *Mentor* invites all John Adams Academy faculty to examine how particular Core Values, on a rotating basis, are expressed within the very texts, histories, artifacts, mathematics, sciences etc. that we uncover with our scholars. Whether the themes be humble, aimed for the heart of the youngest child, or rich and complex and intended for the minds of the mature and wise, the legacy of the classics and the presence of Ten Core Values offer invaluable insight into life.

The John Adams Academies, founded in 2010, are Northern California's only tuition-free, TK-12 classical leadership education charter schools. Its main campus, located in Roseville, serves over 1400 scholars, and campuses that recently opened in Lincoln and El Dorado Hills serve an additional 800.

John Adams Academy is restoring America's heritage by developing servant-leaders who are keepers and defenders of the principles of freedom for which our Founding Fathers pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. By combining classical education with servant leadership training and core values, John Adams Academy develops scholars who are leaders in their homes, communities, and country. Through classics, mentoring, and modeling, scholars are inspired to prepare for their unique mission and will naturally hunger for oncoming responsibilities and future contributions in society.

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## Core Value #5 – Fostering Creativity and Entrepreneurial Spirit

*(As a contextual preface to these articles, the editor includes this extended definition of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit as it appears on the official John Adams Academy website).*

America is an idea, not a location. Implied in the title “American” is the notion that we are property owners, independent thinkers, and creators. People immigrated to America for different reasons. Some came to improve their material condition; others sought freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. Whatever the reason, the spirit of adventure and enterprise animated all. Here, in America, there was work to be done, churches to be founded, ground to be tilled, children to be reared, businesses to be launched, and schools to be established. Similarly, for our scholars, regardless of where they work or live, we want them to be creative and independent owners, workers, designers, authors, architects, and inventors of their own futures. We want them to be entrepreneurs, who, by their very nature, are thinkers, leaders, and statesmen, who know how to solve problems and improve the world around them. This is the spirit that we strive to foster in our scholars that also influences our parents and builds confidence in ourselves. Permeating our academy is the spirit of enterprise. Scholars study hard, parents volunteer their time, teachers create lessons and organize curricula and staff members implement programs and solve problems. It should be of no wonder then that we look forward to the day when John Adams Academies are established in hundreds of communities across America.

## America's Entrepreneur: Reflections on *The Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin

By Dr. Dean Foreman.



Dr. Forman, along with his wife Linda, Founded John Adams Academy in 2010. He currently serves as chairman of the Board of Trustees.

I recently reread the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Of all the founders, it was Benjamin Franklin who best captured the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of America through dedicated discovery, systematic self-improvement and living in an attitude of abundance and felicity. He noted, "Human felicity is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day."<sup>1</sup> What follows is a review of Benjamin Franklin's life that highlights a few of the principles that led to his felicity by recognizing the little advantages that occurred for him each day.

### **Dedicated Discovery**

Franklin was the youngest son of thirteen children. He had modest formal schooling to the age of ten. He learned early that all education is self-education. When compiling notes for his biography, one of his peers noted, "Your biography will not merely teach self-education, but the education of a wise man; and the wisest man will receive lights and improve his progress, by

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Harvard Classics, vol. 1, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corporation, 1960), 123.

seeing detailed the conduct of another wise man.”<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, the root of Franklin’s wisdom was in good books. By his early teen years, he truly owned his education, stating:

I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. . . . Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.<sup>3</sup>

His books were classics, such as Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Plutarch’s Lives*, Locke’s *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* and Xenophon’s *The Memorable Things of Socrates*.<sup>4</sup>

His love of learning and early education was informed by these great books. Reading and learning became his routine.

Each season of life found him making discoveries and creating his personal story by being anxiously engaged in building a future for himself, his community and his country.

Ambition was Franklin’s constant companion, a trait inherited from his father. A proverb his father often quoted him regarding hard work states, “Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.” Young Franklin took this council to heart, commenting,

I considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction, which encouraged me, though I did not think that I should ever literally stand before kings, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before five, and even had the honor of sitting with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner.<sup>5</sup>

Ambition and industry are indispensable virtues to a successful entrepreneur, and young Franklin took this lesson to heart. While getting his start in the printing business, an observer noted in the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 76.

young upstart that, “the industry of that Franklin. . . is superior to any thing I ever saw of the kind; I see him still at work when I go home from club, and he is at work again before his neighbors are out of bed.”<sup>6</sup>

Benjamin Franklin was a pragmatic creator and entrepreneur. His father was supportive yet constantly challenging his ideas. Those ideas came easily because of his great knack for identifying needs and existing voids, which he then would propose ways to fill. Frequently his discoveries were done in Socratic fashion. His father’s dinner table was one of the main sources of his inspiration. His father “liked to have, as often as he could, some sensible friend or neighbor to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse, which might tend to improve the minds of his children.”<sup>7</sup> Franklin received the full benefit of this educational family practice.

In addition to his zeal for knowledge and pursuit of meaningful work, part of Franklin’s discovery of passion for life involved religious devotion. He noted the basics of all true religion revolved around basic tenants, which principles he felt a strong resonance with and commitment to:

I never doubted, for instance, the existence of Deity; that he made the world, and governed it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man, that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter. These I esteemed the essentials of every religion.<sup>8</sup>

Religious belief, love of conversation, books and hard work were some of the defining discoveries of Franklin’s early life, which lead to a meaningful life of servant leadership.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 77.

### Systematic Self-Improvement

Franklin's dedicated self-improvement and the discovery and application of the principles of freedom and success allowed him to live his life in crescendo. As previously noted, his love for reading led to a gift for writing. In 1717 his brother James returned from England with a press to set up a printing business. Franklin became one of his first employees. It was there he developed a passion for prose and poetry. While employed with James he had access to many of the classical works that informed his education. He also became acquainted with a periodical called *The Spectator*. After reading it three times he was hooked on the beauty and power of writing: "I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it."<sup>9</sup> He also discovered the power of the press and in it the innate desire to lampoon or libel others.<sup>10</sup> He issued a warning to printers of future days to, "not pollute their presses and disgrace their profession by such infamous practices, but refuse steadily, as they may see by my example that such a course of conduct will not, on the whole, be injurious to their interests."<sup>11</sup>

Another personal discovery he made at this time revolved around temperance. At his first admission to the printing house he decided to work at the press for the bodily exercise. He immediately noticed while he was drinking water the others were quenching their thirst with beer. These men adhered to the idea that strong drink sustained strong labor. His observation to his co-workers was that there was more barley in bread than beer and thus a better sustainer of strength and work.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 31, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>12</sup> Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 44-45.

About this time Franklin began publishing *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which helped to mold the American character and culture with many witty and wise sayings, here are a few:<sup>13</sup>

- "If you would keep your secret from an enemy, tell it not to a friend."<sup>14</sup>
- "Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it is hurtful."<sup>15</sup>
- "When there's marriage without love, there will be love without marriage."<sup>16</sup>
- "He does not possess wealth, it possesses him."<sup>17</sup>
- "Don't throw stones at your neighbors if your own windows are glass."<sup>18</sup>
- "What's more valuable than gold? Diamonds. Than Diamonds? Virtue"<sup>19</sup>

In his early years his search for truth was explored in a Socratic method with the establishment of a club for mutual improvement and discovery of truth called a Junto.<sup>20</sup>

The rules were that every member would produce one or more queries on any point of Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy to be discussed by the company....The JUNTO was, under the direction of a president, and to be conducted in the sincere spirit of inquiry after truth, without fondness for dispute, or desire of victory; and, to prevent warmth, all expressions of positiveness "sic" in opinions, or direct contradiction, were after some time made contraband, and prohibited under small pecuniary penalties.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *The Wit and Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin*, (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 1995), 79.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 57.

One of the great outcomes of this Junto was to require the participants to present a paper every three months to their peers for presentation and review. One of these papers led to the need and sound reason to establish a community fire company.<sup>22</sup>

After he gained a command of the English language through reading and writing he used this passion for books to found the Philadelphia Library in 1731. Here are a few of his other notable discoveries and initiatives:

- Invents the Franklin stove, 1742.
- Finds an academy that becomes the University of Pennsylvania, 1743.
- Experiments with a kite and discovers that lightening electrical discharge, 1752.

I rejoice and marvel at his perspective on discovery and public virtue.

Perhaps one of the crowning achievements of this era was developing, what he called, the thirteen virtues to success. He even made a chart to mark and track his progress, with each day of the week on the horizontal axis the thirteen virtues on the vertical axis. This system kept him focused on developing important virtues. It was during this time he noticed how difficult and painful it was to make new habits that formed character. He noted the difficulty of improvement and change with this story: A man buying an ax wanted the speckled surface to be as bright as the edge. The smith consented to grind it bright if he would turn the wheel of the grinding stone. The grinding was grueling. Fatigue set in, and the man suggested he would keep the ax as it was. “No,” said the smith, “turn on, turn on; we shall have it bright by-and-by; as yet, it is only speckled.” Franklin observed, “this may be the case with many, who having, for want of some such means as I employed, found the difficulty of obtaining good and breaking bad habits in

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 99.

other points of vice and virtue, have given up the struggle, and concluded a speckled ax was best.”<sup>23</sup>

Harkening back to the proverb Franklin’s father frequently repeated, Franklin believed “a man [should be] diligent in his calling” in life.<sup>24</sup> For Franklin, there were no self-appointed honors or offices, only moral obligations for the able to do what is required. This was embedded in his thinking for when one aspiring young man advised Franklin to resign as clerk of the assembly he replied,

I had read or heard of some public man who made it a rule never to ask for an office, and never to refuse one when offered to him. I approve, says I, of his rule, and will practice it with a small addition; I shall never ask, never refuse, nor ever resign an office.<sup>25</sup>

Isn’t that a beautiful concept? What a different world we would have if leaders were chosen for virtue not popularity. We serve at the pleasure of those who choose us and we them.

### **Felicity and Abundance Mentality**

The outcome of a selfless life spent in discovery and self-improvement is felicity. Felicity is the harvest of a life spent for others, where all our preparation, work and industry turn our actions to happiness and joy for others and self. Franklin knew well that when industry and frugality fill the seemingly empty or uneventful days on the calendar, we fill life’s bag with accomplishment. Or as he was fond of saying: “It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.”<sup>26</sup>

Work and industry are also the natural remedies for despair and depression:

When men are employed they are best contented; for on the days they worked they were good natured and cheerful, and, with the consciousness of having done a good day’s

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 91.

work, they spent the evening jollily; but on our idle days they were mutinous and quarrelsome, finding fault with their pork, the bread, etc. and in continual ill-humor.<sup>27</sup>

Franklin certainly lived up to his espoused work ethic. Here is a partial list of Franklin's public positions and accomplishments spanning 40-plus years: postmaster; discovered how to partially control lightning's electrical discharge; founder of a hospital, public library, fire department, insurance company, academy and university; and, finally, a military leader, statesman and ambassador who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

He believed his role was to create and bless others with his discoveries and gifts, refusing to employ patents for remuneration from his creations. At the pinnacle of his economic success he exhibited nobleness and humility. When the Reverend Whitefield came calling for an orphanage in Georgia Franklin suggested it should be built in Philadelphia. When the preacher George Whitfield refused his suggestion, Franklin reluctantly attended the preacher's sermon. He relates having been moved by his sermon,

...I perceived he (Whitefield) intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all.<sup>28</sup>

Franklin's public virtue became exemplary and legendary. Having produced and lived an abundant life he found joy and felicity with a variety of accolades, titles and names. Note the headstone Franklin put in place for his parents many years after their passing and who lived much more modest lives than he, yet no less plentiful. He knew they were responsible for

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-102.

inspiring his success. He then honored them with this marble stone in recognition of their virtues that inspired him:

Josiah Franklin, and Abiah his wife, lie here interred. They lived lovingly together in wedlock fifty-five years. Without an estate, or any gainful employment, By constant labor and industry, with God's blessing, They maintained a large family comfortably, and brought up thirteen children and seven grandchildren reputably. From this instance, reader, Be encouraged to diligence in thy calling, And distrust not Providence. He was a pious and prudent man; She, a discreet and virtuous woman. Their youngest son, In filial regard to their memory, Places this stone.<sup>29</sup>

Franklin's autobiography is heroic yet left unfinished—or was it? While the formal narrative stops in 1757, he was arguably just beginning the crescendo of his life. The inestimable value of his inventions and innovations are legendary. What price can we attach to his natural love of helping his community? In the final season of the Franklin's life he participated in the creation of the organic and enduring documents of the founding of The United States of America. Franklin served on the committee with Jefferson in the creation of the Declaration of Independence and he was the sage who kept the Constitutional Convention grounded and moving forward. These patriots declared independence from the greatest power on earth at that time and created the longest surviving written constitution in recorded history, making this country, perhaps, the greatest act of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit the world has ever known.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

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## “It Ain’t In the Book”: Tom Sawyer and the Creativity Paradox

By Ross Garner



Ross Garner joined John Adams Academy in 2018. He currently teaches 12<sup>th</sup> grade English.

There is no such thing as a new idea.

~Mark Twain

It is customary to associate creativity with originality. When we describe someone as “being creative” we tend to imply that their work has no precedent, that they do not copy or imitate others but march to the beat of their own drum. However, creativity, or the imaginative ability to think and create, is more complex than that.

Like every element of human action, creativity is governed by natural laws. One of these natural laws is that humans must learn and master established patterns, forms, customs, and conventions of human action before they create their own. A baby first practices making sounds and saying words his parents say to him before creating his own sentences, and an artist must practice drawing shapes, shades, and colors while imitating other great works before she can create her own original pieces. However, paired with this mastery of established thought and action is another natural law of creativity that seems to contradict the first. It is that humans tend to disrupt, change, or break from traditional patterns, forms, customs, or conventions once they have mastered them. In this sense, to “be creative” one must create something that stands in definable and sometimes defiant contrast to tradition. Creativity, then, is paradoxically defined as following tradition to break tradition; or the use of established patterns and forms to create new ones.

This phenomenon, which we shall call the creativity paradox, is uniquely portrayed in Mark Twain’s novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In this novel we are introduced to the book’s name sake, Tom, who is one of the most endearing characters in American literature. This iconic, all-American boy is mischievous but considerate, vain but good natured, romantic but resourceful. His vices are exasperating but his virtues are redeeming. Undergirding all of Tom’s virtues and vices is his impulsive, imaginative, creative approach to life. Whether he is playing

pirates, whitewashing a fence, or sitting in church, Tom's creativity is well employed and we admire (perhaps even envy) him for it. What is more, we, as humans, are attracted to Tom because we are attracted to puzzles. Tom's creativity is a puzzle, or a paradox, because it is traditional, conservative, and practical as well as inspired, progressive, and avant-garde. He lives by the book and tosses it out at the same time. This paradox is important to recognize because it gives a more accurate understanding of creativity and enables us to apply this human attribute more effectively in our own work and play.

### Conservative Creativity

The conservative nature of Tom's creativity is most clearly seen when he role-plays with his friends the scenes from stories they have read. One day, while playing hookey with his bosom friend, Joe Harper, they reenact a scene from the story of Robin Hood. With Tom acting as the bandit hero of Sherwood Forest and Joe the main antagonist, Guy of Guisborne, the two commenced their scripted play. "Hold!" cries Tom, "Who comes here into Sherwood without my pass?"<sup>1</sup> "Guy Guisborne wants no man's pass. Who art thou that—that—" Joe retorts and then stammers, forgetting his line. "Dares hold such language," Tom prompts Joe, keeping their talk "by the book" and getting their game back on track. The two then begin a lively fencing match with their wooden swords. When the battle begins to go badly for Tom, he shouts a little desperately, "Fall! Fall! Why don't you fall?"<sup>2</sup> To which Joe responds, "I sha'n't! Why don't you fall yourself? You're getting the worst of it." Ignoring this last comment, Tom explains, "I can't fall; that ain't the way it is in the book. The book says, 'Then with one back-handed stroke he slew poor Guy of Guisborne.' You're to turn around and let me hit you in the back." Faced with this ultimate authority, Joe reluctantly receives Tom's blow and falls down. Feeling some injustice of having to lose the fight he was winning just because the book said so, Joe jumps up and demands it is his turn to kill Tom. But Tom maintains, "Why, I can't do that, it ain't in the book."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, (Norwalk: The Heritage Press, 1995), 83.

<sup>2</sup> Twain, 84.

<sup>3</sup> Twain, 84.

Tom's insistence to play by the book is really quite remarkable. Though part of his devotion to the script may be attributable to his simply not wanting to be beaten rather than his conservative reluctance to change the story, this passage shows how the basis of Tom's play is dependent on an established story (i.e. form or pattern). He and Joe are not making up their own story of noble bandits and corrupt nobles, they are playing out someone else's creative idea, and this borrowed idea is considered good or important enough to maintain its accuracy.

Another example of Tom's reliance on tradition in his creativity is when he, Joe, and Huckleberry Finn decide to run away and become pirates. Feeling abused and mistreated by family and friends, the three set out melodramatically to punish society in some way for its cruelty. At first, Joe suggests a hermetic life, "living on crusts in a remote cave, and dying, some time, of cold and want and grief", believing that would cause their abusers to really feel sorry and repent of their mistreatment of the boys.<sup>4</sup> But Tom talked him out of being a hermit in favor of piracy. As pirates "you don't have to get up, mornings, and you don't have to go to school, and wash, and all that blame foolishness" Tom explains.<sup>5</sup> In fact, "a pirate don't have to do *anything*, Joe, when he's ashore, but a hermit *he* has to be praying considerable...[and] got to sleep on the hardest place he can find, and put sackcloth and ashes on his head, and stand out in the rain". It is unclear what source Tom draws these definitions of pirates and hermits from, but he furnishes his companions with them as if he is stating common knowledge. When Huckleberry asks why hermits have to do that, Tom replies, "I duno. But they've *got* to do it. Hermits always do. You'd have to do that if you was a hermit." Huckleberry balks at the idea, however, saying, "Dern'd if I would", to which Tom responds, "Why, Huck, you'd *have* to. How'd you get around it?"

After settling that matter, Tom then gives each of the boys new pirate names "from his favorite literature": "Huck Finn the Red-Handed," "Joe Harper the Terror of the Seas," and "Tom Sawyer, the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main."<sup>6</sup> Tom's knowledge of traditional character and literature gives him power over his playmates, which he definitely uses to his

<sup>4</sup> Twain, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Twain, 121.

<sup>6</sup> Twain, 117.

advantage. Furthermore, this knowledge of established patterns of behavior for hermits and pirates furnish the boys' imaginations with the material they need to play. Without this knowledge, the boys might have invented some new game, but it is clear these ready-made ideas are what they naturally gravitate towards.

While these are fictional examples, Mark Twain's commitment to literary realism and any reader's own experience as a child validates the observation that a child's creativity tends to be defined and influenced by stories, roles, and forms they have been introduced to in life. In the preface to his book, Twain admits that Tom Sawyer is not an actual boy, however, Twain asserts that Tom "is drawn from life...[and] is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew", and "most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred".<sup>7</sup> Twain claims creative license to combining real events with some invented ones and then explains that one of his motives in telling this story is to "pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in." With this explanation, one cannot help but be drawn into Tom's adolescent world and remember one's own antics. I, for one, am reminded as I read of playing a number of make-believe games with friends growing up, including: cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, and Sith and Jedi based on books or movies we had seen, complete with memorized monologues and death reenactments. We felt no shame in recreating the plots we read or saw, and found great pleasure in doing so. What is more, those childhood reenactments felt like authentic creative expressions and I believe they were just as vital to our creative development as any original creation.

With Twain's fictional examples of childlike creativity and corroborating personal anecdotal experience, it is clear that the premise of all human creativity is a foundation of established patterns and ideas that we draw from for our own creation. Later in his life, Twain states this explicitly in his autobiography after a long career of writing. Though an extremely prolific writer and coiner of many witty sayings, Twain insists (in his contrary and cynical way) that

there is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations

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<sup>7</sup> Twain, Preface.

indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages.<sup>8</sup>

Upon first reading, one may be inclined to brush this thought aside as a disillusioned rant. But after further reflection and read within the context of some of Twain's work, it becomes clear that he is not just being cynical—rather, he has insightfully struck upon the foundational principle of creativity: the recognition that man's creative work and play depend on existing matter, patterns, and ideas. There is no *ex nihilo* creation for man.

I belabor this first law of creativity because it is generally overlooked and undervalued. Furthermore, it needs more attention because this element of creativity is not always exciting or interesting. The re-creation of a child is playful and fun, but as children grow and become more capable their play grows more complex, which requires more patience and technical skill. They participate in intense creative play, like ballroom dance or oil painting, that requires significant endurance and discipline to master. It even necessitates a degree of drudgery, repeating a dance step or drawing the human form over and over until they cannot get it wrong. This process is a prerequisite for a master creator—Mark Twain had to master basics of language and storytelling, like grammar and dialogue, before he could write *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. They are essential linguistic building blocks that he did not create but which he used to build a literary masterpiece. This is not to say that the child's pure, playful approach to creativity is unimportant, but it is clear that the playful creativity cannot be expressed until there is something to play with, which requires more technical strength and development as the level of difficulty increases.

### **Progressive Creativity**

With the foundation of creativity firmly established on the mastery of existing patterns and ideas, we can now talk about the second natural law or the progressive element of creativity. This is the more intuitive and generally accepted view of creativity, which is the human propensity to invent new things and ideas that disrupt or stand in definable contrast to what came before. Twain commented extensively on this law of creativity in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as well.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Twain, *Autobiography of Mark Twain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1906).

In perhaps the most eulogized scene in the book, Tom employ's his creativity when tasked with whitewashing a fence on a Saturday morning. After playing hooky from school the day before, Tom's Aunt Polly equips him with a bucket of paint and a brush, and sets him to his arduous task. Upon surveying the "thirty yards of board fence nine feed high", "all the gladness left [Tom] and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit...Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden."<sup>9</sup>

This depressed spirit is an important premise to Tom's creativity. Dissatisfaction with one's circumstances, the inefficiency of one's task, or the ugliness of some work is often the motivating reason for taking creative action. If humans had never grown tired of jolting wagon treks, they would have never created railroads and automobiles. If we never grew bored of bare furnishings for a room, we would not have interior designers. Despair caused by dislike of one's circumstances and surroundings is a primary spark of creativity.

And so, "at this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon [Tom]", which Twain describes with some hyperbole as "nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration."<sup>10</sup> The revelation being, of course, that if he pretended to like the work and made it difficult for others to qualify for, he might be able get others to do the work for him. "Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?" Tom asks the first hapless boy who stops to gloat over him. Having set the hook, Tom begins to reel the boy in, bragging "Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence—right here on the street you know...I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done."<sup>11</sup> And with that the boy and a dozen others like him were caught, trading their childhood wealth of apple cores, marbles, and firecrackers for the privilege of whitewashing a portion of the fence.

Granted, Tom's inspiration is perhaps more cunning than creative, and a morally correct or true creativity would have been to engineer some contraption to more efficiently apply the paint. But, in spite of Tom's devious methods, this example still reveals the principle of progressive creativity, for who ever heard of a boy getting other boys to pay him for the

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<sup>9</sup> Twain, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Twain, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Twain, 27.

opportunity to do his chores? This unique or creative way to go about a mundane task stands in defiant contrast to the sad history of dejected boys who did their chores or were whipped for neglecting them.

Twain uses this example to highlight another law of human action related to creativity: that "Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do."<sup>12</sup> This observation is important because all too often a person's creative work is hijacked by either short-term academic or economic necessity, or an overly onerous solemnity towards their work, and the joy of having created something good is tainted or replaced by performing for a grade, wage, or egotism. In Genesis when God created the world it was enough for Him that His work "was good" (Genesis: 1:10, 12, 18). He was not creating for some external reward nor is there any sign that He over solemnized the process. The divine purpose was simply to create something good, a good that would perpetuate itself and be enjoyed by others. People, therefore, express their divine nature—their most virtuous self—when they create good things because they choose and find satisfaction in it, rather than when they do it grudgingly. It is for this reason Twain uses the word "inspiration" to describe the creative moment, for when people find an elegant solution to a problem or create something beautiful, they are expressing the spark of divinity in them, and the Divine, in turn, is expressing Himself through them. Tom Sawyer discovered this law of human action and manipulated it to his advantage (which may be a normal phase of maturing), but he and all people would do well to develop the higher form of creativity of doing meaningful work that feels more like play because it is done with a will.

Striving for high and noble creative expression, however, does not exclude all behavior that may be deemed mischievous. In fact, an important indicator of progressive creativity is that it is not well behaved; it does not conform to established forms of human thought and action. Tom is a model specimen of this principle. In the first chapter of Tom's adventures, we learn that he is "not the Model Boy of the village. He knew the model boy very well though—and he loathed him!"<sup>13</sup> For Tom, so many aspects of civilized life are irksome. Wearing shoes, studying his lessons for church, and attending school instead of going swimming are all burdens to this

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<sup>12</sup> Twain, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Twain, 17.

boy who lives to enjoy every moment of every day as well as he can. Tom has little patience or interest in restrictive social forms, and the little respect he does feel for them is born of fear of punishment.

In church one Sunday, Tom's patience and progressive creativity are tested by the worship service's predictable program and vain nature. After the opening hymn, the preacher prays before the congregation; "a good, generous prayer", going into specific and minute detail in ascending order of significance.<sup>14</sup> He began by praying for the church, then the little children of the church; "for the other churches of the village; for the village itself; for the county; for the state; for the state officers; for the United States; for the churches of the United States", and so on and so forth, ending with a protestant condemnation of European and Oriental monarchies and a blessing on the year's future harvest that it might be abundant.<sup>15</sup> Tom did not enjoy this exhaustive prayer, and "he kept tally of the details...[for] he knew the ground of old, and the clergyman's regular route over it—and when a little trifle of new matter was interlarded, his ear detected it and his whole nature resented it".<sup>16</sup> Twain's depiction of this conventional prayer as a lengthy inventory makes one think of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount when he condemns vain repetitions in prayer by those who "think they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7), and it seems no insignificant allusion to Iroht's teachings that a child is the one who sees through this showy public prayer.

Having suffered through the stale and overworked prayer, Tom approaches the sermon with a similar attitude of resentment. As the preacher "droned along monotonously through an argument" that put many members of the congregation to sleep, Tom counts the pages to keep as a reference for next week's sermon, as he considered any extensions or "additions [to the service] unfair, and scoundrelly."<sup>17</sup> To save himself from boredom, Tom entertains himself and his neighbors by producing a pinch-bug from a container in his pocket and letting it out on the floor of the isle. Presently, an unattended dog investigates the beetle and grows too curious. The dog lets out a yelp, being pinched by Tom's bug, and goes tearing around the church,

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<sup>14</sup> Twain, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Twain, 53.

<sup>17</sup> Twain, 53.

interrupting the sermon and causing the congregation to nearly suffocate with suppressed laughter.<sup>18</sup> Tom is cheered by this diversion and decides there is "some satisfaction about divine service when there was a bit of variety in it." *Variety* is the product of progressive creativity. It can and should be more constructive than simply providing comic relief, but it may never be able to escape its association with rebelliousness. This spirit of nonconformity animates progressive creativity. It is perpetually rejecting the status quo in search of novelty, which often leads to some kind of trouble.

In this sense, it is what "ain't in the book" that is important. Time is always creating original circumstances; there was never a day when the exact combination of events, ideas, and people came in contact with each other. Yes, some general things do not change, like the sun rising and people being born and dying, but even with these constants there is the variability of where the sun is rising on the horizon and what personalities are coming in or going out of this world. In this sense, each moment is a creative moment in the grand scheme of things because it is a new combination of things, people, and ideas. Living in and for these moments, taking full advantage of them, is a defining attribute of progressive creativity and relies on a recognition that so much of creativity cannot be taught from a book, but simply expressed and experienced in the moment.

### **The Extremes of the Paradox**

At this point, it is time to consider the concerns of conservative and progressive thinkers regarding the creativity paradox theory. For instance, it probably disturbs conservatives that creativity is inherently disruptive by nature. Unchecked by established forms and social norms, this mode of creativity could be taken to the extreme of nonconformity for nonconformity's sake, producing ugly art and meaningless gadgets. And on the other hand, progressives may be scandalized by the notion that creativity depends upon, and is restricted by, form and social norms. For without originality, we are doomed to a dull life of joyless imitation. Both of these sides have valid concerns, but their resolution does not require simply choosing one over the other, rather it lies in delicately balancing the extremes of this paradox.

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<sup>18</sup> Twain, 55.

Consider the conservative's concern first. In the world of postmodern art, there are many examples of progressive creativity pushed to an extreme. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* is one of the first and perhaps most infamous examples of non-conformist art: a bathroom urinal laid flat and signed "R. Mutt". While the progressive element of creativity does require innovations and even revolutions, this degree of spurning of traditional forms seems to have crossed a line. True creativity requires one to stay within certain parameters of creation. To simply pick up a new or used piece of plumbing equipment, arrange it some other way than its intended use, and put an autograph on it hardly fits within any kind of definition of creativity. All it does is show the person's disdain for tradition without giving reasons for rejecting it or offering a more compelling alternative form. Nonconformity for nonconformity's sake is like writing obscenities on the wall of whatever institution one hates. It is not a compelling argument; it is simply a weak and angry protest.

Taking up the progressive's side now, if people only ever lived and worked within existing forms, they would be a thoughtless and insincere race. Like the religious community depicted in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, their expressions of belief would be full of platitudes and lack of variety inherent in real, personal, spiritual experience. Twain includes one sketch from this religious community of a young German boy who is the pride of the community because he is so good, having memorized three thousand Bible verses. At a special event, he is called upon to recite this vast repertoire of rote spirituality, "but the strain upon his mental faculties was too great, and he was little better than an idiot from that day forth."<sup>19</sup> Twain seems to suggest with this brief aside that too much imitation leads to intellectual suicide, and so it does. People must imbue old forms with new meaning through their unique perspective or circumstance, otherwise they are worthless and even fatal to one's creativity.

And so, creativity is a balance between the faithful use of traditional forms and the progressive development and disruption of those forms. It is, as Twain suggests in his kaleidoscope analogy, impossible to have a truly new idea, but it is imperative to reordered old ideas to create new meaning. "They are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages", but it is mankind's creative prerogative to "keep on turning [the mental kaleidoscope] making new combinations indefinitely.

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<sup>19</sup> Twain, 43.

### Conclusion

Creativity is paradoxical. It requires learning and mastering traditional forms while disrupting those very forms to create new ones. The conservative side of creativity is necessary and, to a certain extent, unavoidable. It requires every would-be creator to learn and master a tradition of patterns and forms established by those who came before, which serves as a tried and true foundation from which to build. Creativity's progressive side works from this conservative base, but is characterized by its experimental and sometimes irreverent use of form to create new hybrids. These new combinations stand in clear contrast to old forms, but can always be traced back to their traditional roots. Both conservative and progressive creativity have tendencies towards dangerous extremes, which must be checked and guarded against if true creativity is to be preserved. The first tends towards a certain rigidity and insincerity because it overvalues the traditional form and allows no variation from it. The later tends towards valueless expressions that seek only to disrupt, or rather disturb, traditional forms without adding real quality.

As educators, we need to be aware of this paradox. Because most of our instruction informs creativity's conservative nature, we may need to guard more carefully against becoming over formulaic, but we do not need to indulge scholars in their formless creations. We ought to teach them good, true, and beautiful forms, but model and encourage progressive creativity as well.

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## Sub Creation and Imaginative Brilliance: A Conversation on Creativity

Horatio: Welcome everyone. We are going to get started with this conversation on creativity. We don't have to talk about the paper, we can just talk about creativity in general, its essence, what it is and why it is important. We can discuss any questions we have and use the paper inasmuch as it is a common text.

Iroh: So, is the paper's point that creativity is what happens after the skill or methods have been developed? How did the author phrase it?

Horatio: The paper says that creativity is paradoxical in the sense that it first requires a set of skills, experiences, and knowledge to work with before you can then create new experiences and ideas of your own.

Iroh: So a non-creative foundation is required for a creative expression? So, my first question is, "Really? Is that true?"

Rusticus: My first thought is, "That's not necessarily true." I've never thought of this before, but all this distinction making we've been doing in logic has kind of poisoned my mind.

All: Haha.

Rusticus: Learning the art is not creativity itself. The creative expression is the creative application of the art. So, for example, learning skills and the techniques and the art of painting is not the creativity, the creativity is something that can then use the art of painting to create paintings. If that makes sense. The creative action does require an art, but that part of it is not the creativity.

Myshkin: So creativity itself is something that stands on its own maybe, or is separate from the use of materials. Is that kind of what you're saying?

*Editor's note: In effort to model what they teach, what follows is a transcription of an informal discussion among a few staff members regarding the definition and nature of "creativity." This experiment with the dialectic is a more open-ended way of discovering what is true than a formal essay and is an important element in a classical education. All participants read the previous article "It Ain't in the Book": The Creativity Paradox' before having this discussion. (Names have been changed).*

Balthazar: It's not the creating as a process that is creativity, but more of a mental phenomenon or disposition?

Rusticus: Yes, so I would say the creation of a painting or any other thing does require both an art and what we would call creativity.

Iroh: Is that different from what the paper is saying? That sounds like what the paper is saying.

Rusticus: Yes, I don't think the paper is wrong, but I do think we tend to conflate the two—that we conflate creativity with an art that we use to create creative works.

Iroh: So, when you say *art* are you saying, simply, *method*?

Titania: Are we confusing fine arts with other ways that we can express creativity? It seems like the point Rusticus is trying to make is that if we are following a locked-step pattern, that is not necessarily a bad thing, but it's not necessarily creative either.

Rusticus: Yes, I don't think I have a very good definition of creativity in my head. I think what you can create with a skill is limited to the amount of skill you have. So, my ability to build a cabinet, for example, or the creative approaches I can take to a project is limited to my skill with hand tools for wood working. It is limited to my ability with the tools. Creativity seems to be dependent on one's ability with the tools plus something else.

Iroh: So, there is a commensurate relationship between the art and the skill? As one increases, the possibility of the other also increases?

Rusticus: Yes, the potential of my creativity increases as my mastery of the art increases. And consider the converse of this principle. I think there are times we have this gut feeling about when something is not creative even though the artist is someone who is good at manipulating paint and paint colors. It takes me back to the time when I insulted the artist in the art gallery as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader. My 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher thought it would be wise to take a group of 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys to an art gallery and let them admire the fine art, and of course it was totally lost on us. We had a football game the next day and that made it even worse. But she did give us all-you-can-eat pizza afterwards and we ate that pizza place out of house and home.

But I remember seeing this painting in the gallery of a bunch of squares of different colors. And they were all the same shape of square. Squares upon squares upon squares. And 12-year-old me

said, "What's the point of all these? This doesn't look like art." And I didn't realize the artist was actually there talking to my art teacher standing behind me. The two of them commenced to lecture me about how the practice of using line and color was art and therefore creative. Eventually, they got absorbed enough in the conversation I was able to slip out. Anyways, I was not sold that just because the painter was demonstrating great skill in painting and practicing the theory of painting that that was creative.

Iroh: Sorry, I couldn't hear a word you were saying, because while you were talking I kept having this thought: "As art is to creativity, so tangents are to Rusticus' points." You can't get to a point without all of these tangential points.

Rusticus: You're right! That's why I can't write.

Iroh: No, I love it, it contextualizes your point beautifully.

Rusticus: I know I have a problem with tangents, I actually had a hard time finishing the thought because I had the picture of the server's face at the pizza place afterwards. We ate so many pizzas it got to a point where she had this look on her face that said, "Another pizza?!" We were in an upstairs party room and they were bringing them up on a dumb-waiter. We'd just pull this thing and the pizzas would keep coming up.

Iroh: Like a giant Pez dispenser.

Rusticus: It was like a giant Pez dispenser.

All: Haha.

Myshkin: That's amazing.

Iroh: That was creative, imagining the dumb-waiter as a giant Pez dispenser.

Myshkin: See, but to have that creative expression you had to have an image in your mind of what a Pez dispenser was and what it dispenses and then apply that to the pizza itself. So bringing it back to the point, I think you do have to have those raw materials before you can have creative expression.

Iroh: But there was no art, other than Pez dispensers and dumb waiters existing. I have no artistic relationship to those things.

Augustine: You have the art of speech and articulation.

Iroh: Ok, so that's what the art would be?

Augustine: I guess.

Balthazar: So it's just making novel connections then?

Myshkin: I think so. I think creativity is just making new connections between old things. At least, my personal creative expression, which as limited as it is, when I would come up with stories or characters or events or scenes in my mind or in writing or in drawing, it would be taking things I'd experienced already: stories I'd read, or movies I'd seen, or video games I'd played, and combining those in new ways to come up with something different than what had come before. For me that was creativity.

Titania: That's also because there's not really new material. And that is something that I think C.S. Lewis gets into in *The Abolition of Man*, though for different reasons. You can't invent a new color and you can't think up some fantastical beast that isn't a combination of some things that already are. If we could truly create something absolutely fresh then we would probably do it, but since we can't, it's all about new combinations.

There's something I remember seeing, one of those stupid text posts on the internet, but it was true in a way. It said something like, "You know, every book ever is just a remix of the alphabet." And, while it's not wrong, there's more to it than that. And it's clever, but it's obviously not just a remix of the alphabet, but there has to be some raw material there that you did not invent that you're putting together in new ways. And obviously just putting together letters does not make the book, but in some respect, you do need something as fundamental as twenty-six letters in an alphabet, or more if you're in some other language, but there's still a finite number of letters and this is what you can use to make new things.

Rusticus: And someone once said, if there aren't those limitations there can't be creativity. For example, if you are writing a script and anything can fit in the story, then there is no creativity because you can just come up with any *deus ex machina* (god from the machine) to solve any problem. That requires no creativity.

Myshkin: Oh, like modern movies.

Rusticus: Yes. I mean, if anything can happen to solve whatever problem, there is no creativity.

Balthazar: Because creativity is creating a *thing*, so the boundaries are in that *thing* to be created.

Augustine: And J.R.R. Tolkien would have called all of that sub-creation. It is not creation per say, but sub-creation. To take what is already and put it together in a new and noble way.

Myshkin: Yes. That distinction is in the Hebrew language. To create something out of nothing is represented in the verb *bara*, which is represented in God's creation of the universe. But to take preexisting material and make something out of it is represented by the verb *asa*. So there is this distinction in the language between the two forms of creation, and only God participates in the first, creating things that are completely new or didn't exist to begin with, and humans can only participate in the other in creating things that already exist.

Balthazar: What significance is there for us in this idea of creating out of nothing, this Hebrew *bara*, out of invisible things as it talks about? Is there any significance for us in seeing that and learning about that, if it is impossible for us to participate in that type of creative process?

Rusticus: Not entirely. And I think this might be where the distinction lies. When we talk about creativity, maybe we're not talking about the act of creation, what we're talking about is the ability to come up with new imaginative solutions to old problems. So, when we talk about the creativity of somebody's art, it is a creation and there was a degree of creativity in that sense, but we don't see it as creative because it's not a different way of solving that problem. It's like when we think of an entrepreneur—someone who comes up with a new way of solving a problem that business solves. And we call that creative. It's the novel and imaginative. We may not create out of nothing, but maybe we do come up with a new sub-creation that wasn't there before.

Iroh: Is there a quality that is attached to that? When you were talking, I was asking myself, "So it just needs to be new and then it is creative?"

Rusticus: No, because there a lot of examples of new music, new movies, new books, that aren't very good.

Titania: Novelty is not all of it.

Iroh: Yeah, so that's my question. Is it just novelty, or is there a certain quality about it that is also requisite to be called creativity?

Rusticus: Yes.

Iroh: Can we talk about that?

Rusticus: Yes.

Titania: Something can be new in different respects. A song might be new in the sense that it's come out this year and technically that exact combination of this singer, and those notes, and those instruments has never existed before. But it might sound pretty much like something that came out last year or a hundred years ago, with the same chord progression or general style. So, it seems like we need to distinguish what we mean by *new*. If we just go by a simple standard of new combinations then everything is new, right? I mean, these eight people have never existed in this room at this time before. But if we mean something stricter, then what is our stricter way of something being new? We do need a stricter definition.

Iroh: A way of being new or a way of being creative?

Titania: Well, if we are saying creativity relies on some kind of newness, but not all kinds of newness, we need to define one part of our definition of creativity that we're working on.

Augustine: It's creative by analogy. And the danger is that if we are our own priests, prophets, and kings we can be our own makers as well. And I think that's a danger today in the loose way we talk about creativity.

Iroh: What do you mean by "creative by analogy"?

Augustine: Yeah, so we have univocal, equivocal, and analogy, these are three ways of using words. Univocal means to use a word in the same sense. Like I read a book and here's a book. Equivocal is to use the same word but have two different meanings, saying, "There's a book," and "He got booked into jail." And analogy is like saying, "God loves us and we love God." But the use of the word *love* is not equal or used in the exact same sense. It's not equivocal, and it's also not univocal, it's by analogy that we can make comparisons.

Iroh: So it's the same kind, but not the same degree?

Augustine: No, it would be more like similarities.

Titania: There is a real similarity there. It isn't pure equivocation. I like to think of equivocal and analogical as existing on a spectrum: are you getting closer to there being no relation or to there being a real relation, but there still being a clear difference?

Iroh: Ok, that makes sense.

Augustine: Like the two Hebrew words Myshkin talked about.

Rusticus: And difference in degree can be one of those differences, but it isn't the only difference.

I think what we are really looking for when somebody makes this act of sub-creation, whether they are following the art, which is why when someone steps completely out of the bounds of the art we say that isn't even art any more. I mean, you could have a computer randomly throw a bunch of words on a page to see if makes and story, but it does not. You can't program creative expression.

Titania: Or the learning algorithm that takes however many movie scripts from that year and writes a new movie script and has people perform it. Now, the show is terrible and is a stupid YouTube thing, but it proves that you need some kind of human element to help all this make sense.

Rusticus: So in this act of sub-creation we want the art to be followed, but we want an excellence in it. And I think what is different about the novelty is we want an excellent use of the art. I don't like the word *use*. I guess the best that I can come up with is that the artist has problems he faces and we want to see an excellent overcoming of those obstacles. So we want to see that when someone writes a new story, not just that it's new, but that this author described this in an excellent way that we've never seen before. But it's because it's excellent, not just because it's different. What we want to see is an excellent use of the human imagination to solve a problem that others have faced as well.

Tolkien talks about this in *On Fairie Stories* when he talks about how genre matters. If a book is a historical novel, we have to see the historical novel nature of it. And if we don't see the historical nature of it then we see it as gibberish. And music, there's the notes and the patterns, but we want to see an artist come along and do something with those notes in an excellent way

that we haven't seen before. So I think that is why it is not just the newness, it's to see the brilliant use of the human imagination in solving and creating.

Augustine: I think there is a distinction between the excellence of the art and imagination and what we call creativity itself.

Rusticus: Yes.

Balthazar: So there is an act of creativity logically prior to the creating?

Augustine: Well, there's an excellence in the art and then there's being imaginative. And, for sure, the excellence of the art makes the production of the imagination more excellent, but they are not one and the same thing.

Rusticus: Yes. So there is a furniture maker making a new dresser. What makes it a piece of art as a dresser? IKEA doesn't make art as a dresser. Every dresser is the same. But if you have a master wood worker who knows what the dresser needs, and the dresser needs a front plate but he carves it in such a way that makes you stop and say, "Wow, that is an excellent carving." Then it becomes art.

Augustine: Do you mean fine art? IKEA does bad art, don't they?

Rusticus: Yes, but that's not creativity. They are applying the art of manufacturing furniture, but they are not using it in a way that displays a human brilliance and excellence. That's why I think that when we talk about creativity we are looking for that application of human brilliance that then makes it a fine art, which makes us stop and say one thing is creativity and another is not.

Titania: Well, maybe in a lesser respect. And obviously IKEA is not the art of furniture, but there is something impressive in not only distribution, but also in their ability to pack down those items into flat packs and take this entire six-foot desk or dresser into a transportable package.

Rusticus: Oh, yes, the art of mass production and marketing and selling glued together sawdust to Americans. There is an art there that makes you stop and think.

Titania: So, it is not the art of furniture, but there is something actually very creative in IKEA, but it is not the furniture itself.

Rusticus: And I can admire how successful their business is, but I do not admire their furniture. So, maybe when we talk about creativity we are not talking about the creation itself. And this is where I think Tom Sawyer does match that. Tom Sawyer comes up with a novel and brilliant way to manipulate other boys into doing his chores, and that is what we admire and why we call it creativity. It is the excellence of his imagination and problem solving.

Augustine: Let me counter you with Leonardo da Vinci. We would give him credit for being enormously imaginative and creative for his idea of a helicopter, but it was impossible to build at the time.

Rusticus: Yeah, and that is why we would say he had great imagination, but not a great creation.

Titania: Because there had to be an actual production in order for it to be creative?

Rusticus: And that is where I think our distinctions are not clear. In our modern language we use the word creativity in place of imaginative brilliance.

Iroh: Make the distinction again for me.

Rusticus: So, when we say, "Oh, that painting is not creative." No, someone created a painting and they followed the skills of the painter do it. What we are really saying is that they did not show any imaginative brilliance when they did that creation.

Iroh: So you're saying creativity is technically just the act of creation.

Titania: But how we tend to use it is in place of *imaginative brilliance + production*.

Rusticus: And I think this is Augustine's point about Leonardo da Vinci and the art of helicopter building. Da Vinci exhibited imaginative brilliance, but the thing doesn't fly. They tried his cork screw model, it doesn't work. So yeah, there was imaginative brilliance there, but you can't really build it. So what we are really looking for is that creative brilliance combined with successful production.

Iroh: I've heard it said of Tesla, whether it is true or not, that he could run through experiments in his mind from beginning to end, top to bottom. And they would break down in his mind and then he would reorder the experiments, run it again, and it was all mental exercise.

Rusticus: And that is how Einstein did his experiments too.

Iroh: So what he was doing, that doesn't reach the level of creativity because nothing was created?

Rusticus: Yes, did he create something? I wouldn't say it was creativity. But there was imaginative brilliance there.

Iroh: But my reaction is, "Well, he did create something. He organized, he established, he ran through a simulation. Just because it's mental doesn't seem to disqualify it." Something in my heart says not to kick that out of the creative category.

Rusticus: Well, we only know about that because he must have told somebody, then something was created.

Iroh: As soon as he said it?

Rusticus: If he doesn't write it down or tell anybody of his experiments, then no one else would know about it and we wouldn't be talking about it now.

Iroh: So if something is created in the forest and no one is there to see it, was it really created?

All: Haha.

Balthazar: So we started shifting from art to fine art, manifestations of imaginative brilliance and creativity, now we're moving in a different direction with the helicopter and Tesla and his experiments. What does creativity look like in a non-art setting? Are any of our definitions or distinctions changed or refined or reapplied or misapplied in a non-art manifestation of creativity? In general problem solving?

Titania: Our definition seems to also work in non-art settings. Imaginations seems to be necessary (in varying degrees) in all fields to solve particular problems. I'm thinking of a personal example: over Thanksgiving break, my dad and I put in a water heater and the problem was the place the water heater needed to go was about four feet off the ground. We were having a difficult time figuring how to get it up there. We tried to lift it but we didn't have straps high enough to get it up there. But what we ended up figuring out is that we could buy cinderblocks, and we could tip it six inches this way and put a cinderblock under it, and six inches that way and put another one under it, and we kind of walked it up that way. But it required the pressure of not wanting to spend much money and we had to finish it by the end of the day or there would

be no hot water, so we had to figure out something. That seems to be a non-fine arts example, but it does seem to work.

Balthazar: I like that. So, if we are pulling from our experience and everything we are creating is just reiterations of what we have seen, then what were you, in that situation, reiterating? What were the preexisting ideas and concepts that you used?

Titania: I think the idea of stable platforms, of something that would hold the weight of what we were trying to move. Knowledge of the angle we could tip that to, and how high we could lift something like that. So, understanding the physical principles that we were dealing with.

Balthazar: So we are talking about some deep intuitive understandings of leverage. It isn't like you saw someone do the cinderblock trick before, it's that you understood leverage and surface tension and these math problems that make up existence that are really deep, preexisting matter.

Rusticus: And that is a really brilliant, novel way to solve the problem

Balthazar: Because what I was thinking in my mind before this awesome example is, "What would it look like to create a beautiful solution to climate change?" Or any other social problem.

Titania: Simplicity is part of it. There is something beautiful in reducing friction in a system, reducing the waste of energy. The simpler you can make it, the simpler you can reduce the issue down to its basic elements and the applied energy to resolve the issue, the better. I think that plays a big part in what makes a great solution to something.

Rusticus: And I think the amount of brilliance is in the level of difficulty required in coming to it—the simple solution in the face of a difficult problem. If it is a really simple problem to solve, if the problem was getting the water heater up an eight of an inch off the ground, it wouldn't be that cool. But if you lift it up four feet, that's more impressive. Your solution was efficient, simple, and effective. Some people come up with beautiful solutions that don't actually work. If the problem seems insurmountable and you solve it in an efficient, simple and effective way, that's beautiful and you're in awe of those things.

Balthazar: So the monumental task of moving the water heater those four feet makes the solution more impressive, beautiful and simple. If you only had to do the trick one time, it isn't as impressive, but the fact that you had to sustain this process over a certain amount of time and

distance makes it noteworthy. So the monumental nature of the task has rendered your simple solution more beautiful because the simplicity still applied in the greater circumstance. The simplicity is highlighted.

Iroh: This is what I took away from that story: is that you weren't locked into a program. And all of life is this way. All of human existence is not locked into some prescribed method.

Titania: So, using something other than what it's made for, but that it works well for? Cinder blocks are meant to build walls, but I repurposed them to gradually elevate a water heater.

Iroh: And had you ever seen anyone do what you did or some variation of that?

Titania: No. I just had one cinder block and thought it would hold the weight of the thing, and just thought we needed nine more.

Iroh: So, someone has probably done that before. And there are probably a dozen other ways that are equally inventive that you could have come up with.

Titania: Yes, we tried to suspend it from the ceiling. That was one of the options.

Iroh: So, creativity is this piece of humanity that is outside prescription, outside program, seemingly. And that seems like a really unique characteristic. Maybe because it is so ubiquitous we lose the impact and heaviness of it because we do this all the time, but it is kind of an amazing thing.

Rusticus: Yeah. And it impresses us. That is why we are so desperate to figure out how they built the pyramids. Whatever they did, that was creative genius, how they moved those 14-ton blocks a couple hundred feet.

Titania: There seems to be one blind spot regarding this principle of creativity and that is how people think about computers. As computers get bigger and the algorithms become more complicated they get impressive on one level, but if you think about it they can only ever spit out some variation of what has happened before, and they won't get to something truly creative. And it doesn't seem like many people have thought about the implications of that.

Another illustration of this principle is in the movie *Amadeus*. The story is told by Salieri who was the court musician before Mozart. And, of course, Mozart has that creativity we've been

talking about—the imaginative brilliance—and Salieri, on the other hand, is competent and produces good music but not great music and he feels threatened. He has the art of music, but there is something additional in the imaginative brilliance that Mozart has that he doesn't.

Horatio: This imaginative brilliance has kept coming up, and I know imagination is its own discussion, but what is this imagination that seems to be the determining factor of creativity?

Rusticus: I would define it as the ability to see the solution among all of the different possibilities and have enough knowledge to make it happen.

Horatio: So imagination is the ability to see a synthesis of solutions?

Rusticus: Imagination is the ability to see many options and then to recognize which ones would work and which would be most efficient and simplest. Both of those things combined, I think, make up imagination.

Horatio: So, it is an ability to see the possibilities and make good choices from that?

Titania: Well, the more expert you become in something the more thoroughly you know the extent of that art and the more you know all of the available options to you. That's why in the book *The Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell has this hypothesis that you become a true expert when you've done 10,000 hours. And he brings that up for Mozart and lots of concert violinists. Because after that much time spent imitating, you finally get to the master creativity level because you've spent so long getting the forms of that art down.

Rusticus: That's why I think creativity is the art itself, plus the imaginative brilliance we've talked about.

## Innocence

(An imitation of G.K. Chesterton's *The Great Minimum*)

By Kathleen Rodda

They are blessed who have breathed as we have breathed,  
They are blessed who have sung as we have sung;  
They are blessed who through all the night have dreamed  
And slept undisturbed, by dark death unstung.

They are blessed who have seen the stormy sky,  
Watched it open, then run home in the rain.  
They are blessed who have watched the days go by  
Free from the loss and terror of these slain.

To have felt the rage of a passionate fire  
Kindled by injustice and its black hand,  
Yet been helpless to stop its deadly desire;  
They are blessed who will never understand.

To have avoided the keen pain of treachery  
By the one whom should be trusted the most  
They are blessed who are spared awful memory,  
They are blessed who of intact hearts may boast.

In an age of attentive, neglectful cares  
Where man serves peace to set a place for strife  
In a disordered world of perfectly round squares  
They are blessed who have kept both the faith and life.

Oh, it is something to have ignorance  
Yes, it is something to live in blind bliss  
Let man seek then, in ugly dissonance,  
A lesson. They are blessed who shun the Abyss.



Kathleen Rodda began attending John Adams Academy in 2016 and is a member of the graduating class of 2020. She plans to attend the University of Dallas, TX in the fall, where she will major in Philosophy and Business.

## Reminisce

(An imitation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *The Lady's Yes*)

By Kathleen Rodda

Thy silence holds the echoes  
Of a bygone place and time  
Where once we danced as fellows—  
Together, reason and rhyme.

Innocent yet expectant,  
A pair not fully matured  
We were guarded, hesitant  
But still one, still self-assured.

Jests we traded, laughs we shared  
Errs we suffered then forgave  
While our hearts went undeclared  
As we both were too afraid.

Yet in the quiet we spoke  
With a glance, a pause, a smile  
Little signs that did evoke  
Agreement to wait awhile.

So the years have passed us by  
And days have kept our longing  
But now time demands reply  
Are we outgrown or growing?

“Outgrown,” comes thy brief answer  
“Outgrown,” I echo, and pause  
Then love, deep in its candor  
Wells up from what there once was  
“Thank thee for each memory  
Our chapter is written now.  
Go with God, and be happy—  
Happy, as silence allows.”

## Answers

(An imitation of a Shakespearean sonnet)

By Kathleen Rodda

Reason used to mean reflection on all  
Seen and unseen, both emotion and thought  
Now science reigns, both rigid and sterile  
While data and method make all things naught.  
And so it is fashionable to hold  
That science is the answer to all life  
While pure reason is outdated and old  
A mark of medieval thinking and strife.  
Sadly, thus has man gone empirical  
While searching for meaning in existence  
Which is really quite egotistical  
Given how key theory is to science  
Inevitably though, man shall see the sign  
And recognize that science cannot explain the Divine.

## Humanity

By Eliza Trentman

We which fill each room we enter  
 Are humanity. A collect of complication—  
 Hearts lost in gloom, others bringing light—  
 We are the souls which engender each nation.

The broken ones need not feel ashamed  
 For their cracks and bruises fair.  
 Helpless and hopeless they feel left to themselves,  
 But there are lovers who care

To say, “Sit your anger down.”  
 Demanding its real name,  
 they find underneath its mask,  
 deep grief to blame.

Those who love endlessly are perhaps  
 The most skilled of artists.  
 Loving through others transformation  
 They offer their hearts to be tarnished.



Eliza Trentman began attending John Adams when she was in 6th grade and is part of the 2020 graduating class. After graduation she will be studying Psychology and Finance at Brigham Young University.

## A Second Opinion

by

Chevalier Diamanté

*E avvegna che, sì come d'un callo,  
Per la freddura ciascun sentimento  
Cessato avesse del mio viso stallo,  
Già mi pareva sentire alquanto vento;  
Per ch'io: "Maestro mio, questo chi move?  
Non è qua giù ogne vapore spento?"  
Ond'elli a me, "Avaccio sarai dove  
Di ciò ti farà l'occhio la risposta,  
Veggendo la cagion che 'l fiata piove."*

—Dante Alighieri *Inferno*, Canto XXXIII, Trans. Henry Francis Cary

The cherry-trees amongst either side of the bricklaid path leading to the front of the manor-house were in full bloom when my Hansom Cab arrived. I set down the latest news reports of the summary trial, sentence, and immediate pardoning of the Ford Brothers which I had been reading with interest; they had betrayed and murdered that infamous rascal Jesse James in cold blood only the week prior, and had both been let off scot-free—what uncivil barbarity I had forgotten the States to harbour. The footman at the gate opened my door, and I stepped out onto those familiar bricks, a steady breeze jarred the trees ever so gently, causing a dustlike shower of pink and white petals to slowly flurry, as if seen underwater through the unrippled crystalline surface of some mountain lake, upon the ghostly unseen breath which bore them across the property. I was immensely pleased at that old childhood scene, but not because it hearkened back to that gay era of extreme, gilded youth's almost-mythical carefree frivolity, but rather, because I felt nothing whatsoever. I was pleased that the sight, though imminently familiar, and conjuring forth all the memories of those distant years, even those I had forgotten, elicited no detectable immediate emotional response, and this pleasure I felt only in retrospection upon my absence of feeling. For a great many years, the very sight of a cherry-tree in bloom, indisseverable in my mind from the memory of my juvenescence, and of my laughter-filled springtime strolls with Evangeline, and of all my imagined prospects of a future with her at my side, what had been my vain, naïve, abortive phantasies of a gaily-married life together in that manor at the end of those blossom-strewn bricks, projected with all the unthinking, futile, foolish, and yet obstinate vigour

*Editor's Note: The staff member responsible for this short story desires to remain anonymous; Chevalier Diamanté is a pen name. Also, all spellings are intentionally British English.*

Now though the cold had from my face dislodg'd  
Each feeling, as 't were callous, yet me seem'd  
Some breath of wind I felt. "Whence cometh this,"  
Said I, "my master? Is not here below  
All vapour quench'd?"—"Thou shalt be speedily,"  
He answer'd, "where thine eye shall tell thee whence  
The cause descrying of this airy shower.

of youth—the merest sight of a cherry-tree in bloom, real or painted or imagined, had served only to bring upon me an all-overpowering malaise and inescapable depression, lasting anywhere from hours to weeks, but so thoroughly dampening my spirits that I longed only for death to release me from my suffering, a suffering to which I seemed at the same time to be hopelessly addicted. A single blossom from a tree, or anything reminiscent thereof, caused an immediate, overwhelming pang of the sharpest regret and most intense grief, dulling all my senses, suspending all my thoughts, retarding my force of will, and making the simplest of daily operations and life functions conductible only with an immense strain. At that moment, however, as the sight greeted my eyes, I at last felt nothing but the cool spring air washing over my cool exterior, and felt my lips involuntarily contract in the direction of a smirk of satisfaction at this assurance of my immunity—but an assurance which was not yet entirely conclusive.

The footman, aiding me down the steps of the cabriolet, ushered me forward as he took my valises from the coachman, and I paid the fare for the conveyance from Baltimore, where my steamer had docked the evening before. I began toward the door, reassured by the tap of the end of my walking-stick that these were the very same bricks from my youth, and no illusion of a diseased mind—no, it was all too vivid for me to have imagined; countless dreams had not been able to quite duplicate the likeness of these stones, this lawn, these trees, this house—the innumerable, taunting, haunting midnight reveries of an aching and singularly-fixated subconscious mind, flashing magic-lantern shapes projected out of the vault of Mnemosyne upon the billowing smoke-cloud and imbued with the fabulous, dreamy aethereality of unconscious phantasmagoria had not been able to recreate their like. As I approached the staircase to the grand doorway of that house, still exhibiting all the aristocratic elegance of the colonial century of its construction, as gleaming white as my hazy, heavenly memories of it had served, the footman deftly coted my course, my heavy Parisian valises in either of his hands, and ascended the porch, where at a slight rap, the doors drew open to allow our admittance. We passed within, and the footman hurried up an elaborately-balustraded wide staircase, and as I handed my visiting-card to the other domestic attendant responsible for our admission, and he bore it off silently into the recesses of the house, I noted nearby on a small stand a familiar, ornate silver dish, cradling a heap of similar cards, sent or left by concerned acquaintances and relatives, no doubt (little thought did I give to the fact that it would soon be filled with all manner of somber black cardstocks with paper laces and that all the succeeding visiting-cards which so recently had

been inscribed with “*p.f.*” for the next several weeks would be edged with somberest black and inscribed with “*p.c.*”). After being escorted through the parlour, I entered a large, familiar drawing-room, furnished with ancient, tufted Persian rugs on which I recall spending many an hour of fireside reading or laughter-riddled conversation; the mantle, tables, chairs, heavy velvet curtains, even the framings on the walls, the intricate neoclassical painting of the young shepherd-boy Paris and his slender oread (Enone beside her mountain-stream—all these furnishings exactly as I remembered leaving them. The smell—ah, that incomparable, indescribable old smell compounded of the commingled aromas of antique hardwood furniture and dense cloth impregnated with the token scents of a century of revolving seasons and wear—what a smell, a sensory-stimulant that seemed almost convertible with the very *hyle* of boyhood—struck my nose with the jarring tumult of an Atlantis-inundating tremor; yet *still* there was no noticeably deep emotional disturbance, but merely the same satisfaction that I had before experienced outside.

I was asked to wait a while in this room, and I took the opportunity afforded by the absence of the servants to circumambulate the room, observing in minute detail all the old furnishings, reminiscing, smelling and touching everything, with slight trepidation at first, and then with a rolling vigour as I assured myself that I was still impervious to any elicitation of nostalgia or fomentation of wistfulness. I was surrounded with provocations that in an earlier time would have driven me into such immovable stupors of depressive melancholia and unsoundness of mind, but not the slightest discernable wavelet of listlessness or suffocated anguish rippled across that deep, lightless, subterranean lake of my innermost heart. I nearly laughed, as those famed lines of Coleridge echoed as if through that black, cavernous interior in the mental recitation of my boyhood voice; verses which I had favoured, which I had memorised forever in this very room, poring over the old volumes of poetry; it was a recitation which I had often performed on command, at Evangeline’s tender request, as it seemed to so delight her to envision me with “flashing eyes and floating hair,” as I gesticulated, adding more flair to each recitation, as if laying the mortar and bricks of that airy dome myself with an invisible trowel, and she would gaze up beside me, eyes wide with wonder, as if she could see Xanadu being constructed before her. —“It was a miracle of rare device, / A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!”

My anaesthetised opium-dream was interrupted by the opening and shutting of a door farther away in the house, and I heard a commotion in the nearby hall. Peering through a grand door-frame crowned with arcets and a familiar old marble bust, to which Eva and I had often addressed our answers to imagined sphinx-riddles in childhood, I was met with the sight which I had been anticipating, not quite with anxiety or dread, but an almost restless eagerness as of one awaiting a court-summons: Eduard, tall, broad-shouldered, dark-haired, well-built, and as handsome as I remember him—perhaps even more so, now that he had a touch of melancholy about him (who does not love to admire a becoming reflection of oneself, however slight?) stood engaged in hushed conversation with one of the servants, a look of saddened exasperation on his face. He wrung his hands with subtle deliberation and sighed some words, to which the servant nodded, then replied quietly, and looked in my direction. Eduard turned, finally aware of my presence, as his back had been turned obliquely to the doorway through which I had been gazing. He entered the drawing-room and bade me sit on a large old divan, taking a seat next to me. While he spoke hushedly, I removed my gloves and pocketed them with a slow motion (I have never been able to brook calluses blemishing my soft hands, and have taken to wearing gloves whenever out-of-doors or physically applying myself) which allowed me something on which to divert my attention so as to alleviate the almost-tangible tension in the supercharged air, which seemed as compressed as a carriage-spring. He briefed me upon the critical condition of Evangeline's health, replying to my rare clarifying queries as I raised them

Eduard, since the earliest onset of consumptive symptoms, had been endeavouring with every available equipage and skill of his art to cure her of the disease, to halt its progression, to relieve her of its effects, but it had taken a turn for the worse with the recent partial collapse of her dextral lung, attended with violent coughing-fits and a debilitating weakness of the entire body. I shall refrain from going into too much detail regarding the condition, mainly for reasons of brevity and lack of necessity, as well as the esoteric nature of her pneumothoracic complications to those who have had no initiation into the medical profession. It may suffice to state, however, that the cause of her immediate worsening was due to the usual internal perturbations in the chest cavity that, in such cases, are potentially remediable only by the performance of a risky aero-thoracic surgery commonly known as "the pneumothorax technique," essentially consisting of a forced collapsing of the infected lung in an effort to induce healing of the lesions of the disease. Eduard had performed the first part of this surgery with his

own hand and at his own expense, but unforeseen complications had arisen and had drastically degraded Evangeline's health even further. Indeed, it had only been just before I left Europe that the estimable Doctor Robert Koch had announced at last the identification of the micro-organism responsible for Eva's terrible illness, surely an ironic coincidence. In any case, the young lady in question, fearing the worst, in spite of Eduard's best efforts to convince her that she was on the verge of steady convalescence, had insisted that he send for me and that I make every haste by clipper or steamer to appear at her bedside, be it for some arraignment, or amendment, or simply to bid me farewell; and thus I had complied. Her condition had worsened so quickly even over the duration of my travel hither that they had feared that I would answer my summons at the foot of a freshly-packed grave—indeed, such a projection had not been far off from the truth.

At any rate, the girl was still above ground when I reached the house, save metaphorically for one foot firmly planted in the grave, and after running me through the facts of Eva's health, I was ushered carefully into the ailing maiden's room for my audience with her. The disease had pinned her to the bed like an occupying army suppressing a native populace, and yet her visual features, aside from betraying some weakness, were miraculously unravished. A nurse and one of Eduard's apprentices sat beside her, keeping steady watch, and such was her condition that when Eduard and I entered the room, the nursemaid had to direct Eva's attention to us. Her physical presentation I feared would shock me and melt my adamant constitution, but although I was surprised to find her merely a grown-up version of the Evangeline with whom I had been familiar, and even so, still girlish in appearance, in spite of her illness, it was little more than an unexpected fascination marked by the curiosity of a medical examiner. During her enfeebled interview with me, I stood rigidly composed at the foot of her bed, and she peered weakly through her half-shut eyes in a way that made me wonder if she could see me at all, and yet I could sense the gentle notes of that sugary tenderness to which I had been so pathetically addicted as a youth:

She was pleased to see me again, pleased that I had been able to make it—It had indeed been a long time since we last saw one another—what a sorry state for a reunion. How had I gotten on in Europe?—Very well indeed. Did I much like it there? Was I settled?—Yes, I had established myself in Paris and found the continent quite to my liking. She wished to know why I had not written—oh, but I could hardly be blamed, as my medical pursuits had been very demanding of my attention—further, there were my constant changes of address which made

correspondence difficult—of course, of course. Did I intend to continue my practice in Europe, or to return to the States?—Most likely to remain in Europe. Was this due to any hard feelings on our account?—Perish the thought. I would not be able to stay for the wedding, supposing it comes off?—Oh, no, affairs in Europe were too pressing; I would have to return as soon as possible. Surely, there was no bitterness or resentment between us?—Why ever would she think such a thing?—Apologies if there were any ill-will yet remaining—No, none due at all, my dear, but (if it better equips you to meet your Maker) all the same, anything is forgiven. Such were the general proceedings until our strained colloquy, interspersed with debilitating little outbursts of sanguiferous coughing on her part, was at last brought to an abrupt close by the exhaustion incurred by her speaking, which even in itself was too strenuous a muscular movement, and by the unfortunate effect that it had on her lungs. The demoiselle succumbed to her rising tide of astheny, and her weighty eyelids, fringed with the dark lashes of childhood elfdom, fell shut with the darkly-pregnant gravity of a verdictive gavel. As Eduard and I exited the room, he confided to me his intent to operate before the morrow was over. That evening, as Eduard fretted and paced in the sitting-room until his assistants bade him recuperate his senses and muscles for the delicate surgery that would be required of them, I lay awake in my old room upstairs, mulling over the last two decades of my existence:

I had been a naturally hyper-sensitive child from birth, good-natured, in love with the world, seldom holding grudges of any notable magnitude for any inordinately-long duration of time, and was only very occasionally vindictive. Rather, I was a bright-eyed adorer of nature and beauty, who was as easily mesmerised by the droplets of rainwater on the delicately-veined petals of a flower or the fuzzy globes of pollen on the legs of a bee as I was the sublimity of a foundation-quaking thunderstorm or the variegated hues of an incarnadine and goldenrod sunset. I loved the finer imitations of natural beauty that I encountered in the works of poets and artists, and had been graciously possessed of an extensive collection by my parents, in addition to the already-expansive library of Evangeline's family abode, in which the unfortunate and premature expiration of my parents had left me the ward to Eva's dotting parents, my god-parents. I spent in entrancement as many long hours indoors by the light of a candle, poring over page upon page of verse as I did investigating in wonderment the floræ and faunæ of the outdoor world, the hills, the waterways, the awe-striking stars and constellations of heaven, the clouds, the sun, the moon, the ocean, the crops and flowers and trees and all the plants of the forest or garden alike, all the

birds and fowls of the aerial region, the creatures of day and night, quadrupeds and beasts of farm and field, all the creeping things of the earth.

Yet in all of nature, and in all of my literary studies of beauty, not a one of the furnishings of heaven or earth, neither moon, nor sun, nor star, nor anything seen by moonlight, or sunlight, or starlight, nor work of art or poesy illuminated by candle-glow, nor any other creation in all the sensible physical world did I find so entrancing, so enrapturing, as little Evangeline, pale, irradiant moon-glow awash upon her paler, purer face, beams of scintillant stars lent tribute-like to play in the dazzling irises of her more-scintillating eyes, liquescent gold of aureate sunrays soaking themselves into the yet-warmer tresses of her chestnut curls, lovely little Evangeline, delicate and pristine as some grounded angel, seated peaceably beside me on the tufted Persian rug, running her thin, precious, alabastrine little fingers caressingly along the pleats of her frocks, the shimmering firelight of the hearth making a maddening, intoxicating dance out of the shadows of that Psyche-like face of hers, turning her corkscrew-coils of luxuriant, cedar hair into glimmerous strands of twisted flame and spun gold. My Eva, my sweet Eva, cooing to me in that irreplaceable, inimitable tone of hers, my darling, nymphine Evangeline, strolling naiad-like beside me by the bank of the brook, my fair Evangeline, taking my hands in hers and whispering to me in the sun-screening shade of the swaying locks of the white willow, my life, my solace, my happiness embodied in human form, whose heartbeat I could feel, upon whose breath I lived, the summation and ultimate manifestation of all beauty to me, smiling at me amidst a blizzard of cherry-blossoms shaken by the gentle tempest of the thousand-fold conjoined exhalations of invisible forest deities in the springtime of youth—or so, all of this I told myself in my delusional juvenescence, and all of this I readily and fondly believed in the fiction-inebriated fancy with which youth is too often infected from the onset and saturated like a deadly contagion.

Oh, sad, sorry day—*O, hora execratissima* — it was when she spurned me and my professed love; so world-shatteringly tragic and cataclysmic that I will not here try to begin to recount. It will suffice to say that for me, the stars fell in an instant from the sky, the sun sank into the sea, and the moon became as sanguineous as the reddest blood. I reacted to Evangeline's dismissal of my unquenchable affection, in favour of Eduard's, as if it were the final ebbing of my very life-breath, never to be inhaled again; every nerve-point in my body had screamed out and struggled through the course of a long, muffled, muted asphyxiation, until each and every

one of those frayed sensors was rendered stone-cold and dead, denied what since childhood had been their sole source of vitiating, the beaming, radiant sun of life and light toward which they had affixed their gaze, delighted and nourished by no other. Thereafter had set in the long, anguished, descent into perpetual hyperborean winter, whipped at first by biting, icy, Thulean blizzards under the ever-waning light of ever-waxing declinations of heliacal circuits and ever-dimming, ever-weakening solar effulgence, and then settled at last, irretrievably, into the unthawable, wholly-azoic frigidity of permafrost and sunless æternal midnight. Yet this transformation in me was accomplished over no brief course of the seasons, but over a plurality of years; in the earliest throes of my inconsolable personal grief and private torment, in the twilight of my childhood as it faded imperceptibly into adolescence, I had endured the worst imaginable interior agony of soul—waking was the most abject bleakness and sleep was no boon; nor the sky, nor the earth, nor all the stars and creatures in them were any balsam to my pangs, no anodyne to my sufferings, no alleviant to my tortured, grief-stricken spirit, and I ached all the more with the fullness of this realisation, that none of creation could offer me a satisfactory draught of nepenthe for my doomed, misfortunate, irredeemable passion. Those were the agonious, torturous sunrises haloed in hellfire, breaking in upon the Hadean night which returned again, cold and devouring, gnashing at the heels of infernal sunsets, days when did “All earth and all air seem only burning fire”. I tried my mind and hand alike at all sciences and all arts, at every undertaking of human ingenuity and divertissement of human will, but none could “take off mine edge”. At last, in the midst of my teenage years, I determined to apply myself to the medical profession, and lay upon it all the concentration of mind and will with singular fixity, as the final and most deliberate effort to bring myself off of my deranged monomania.

Perhaps it was some unvoiced, inborne notion of “physician, heal thyself” that compelled me, possessed me, to supplant my former obsession with that of attaining supremacy in the medical field. Whatever the underlying cause, I know well that I found much to be admired in the gleaming, polished sterility of the operating-theatre, much to be imitated in the keenly-whetted and sanitised steel of the instruments on the tray, much to be learned from the calculation, subtle delicacy, and minute dexterity required of the hand, and much to be emulated in the aseptic, procedural rigidity of surgical operations. My dear, departed parents had left me the sole heir of their sizeable fortune, only to be invested in my education until I came to full adulthood, and thus I made ready use of this foresight, fleeing with my listlessness and

grievances to Europe to become trained in the arts of the physician. I would content myself with nothing less than the most prestigious, most ancient, and best schooling for this *idée fixe* of mine, rejecting entirely any settlement for the universities of the New World; this was born partly out of a desire to distance myself as much as possible from the origins and reminders of my grief, but there was also present a genuine desire to develop my skills as a medical practitioner to the highest pinnacle of human capability. My fascination was authentic, and the more I studied, the more engrossed I became, the more desirous of attaining the extent of the art. My hunger for knowledge became insatiable, and I rose quickly but quietly to the top of every class, ingratiating myself with every learned professor and doctor whom I encountered in an effort to cull from them every minute detail relating to the arts of healing, the human body, and the preservation of life. I established myself first in the University of Geneva, and steeped myself in the medicinal tradition for which Switzerland has long been acclaimed, after which I visited Oxford and toured the German universities in an effort to acquire every parcel of science relative to the profession, from the oldest and most forgotten insights of mediaeval study to newest facets of anatomical and medicinal science that the most modern research had most recently thrown into light.

With increasing eagerness and with rapidly-diminishing revulsion did I lay my hands upon cadavers and dissect corpse upon corpse, learning in the most exhaustive and painstakingly-scrutinous detail the minutest workings of every part and region of the human body. My doctorate, I finally acquired at the Medical University of Vienna, graduating with all possible honour and acclaim, but after which I nevertheless did not slow in my strident and indefatigable efforts, returning with the fruits of my tireless studies to Switzerland, then to Padua and Rome, and finally, to the University of Montpellier in France, where I eventually was to settle. I took a particular interest in the emerging germ theory of the time, finally meeting Pasteur in person at the French Academy of Sciences, after having devoured the published details of his research, as well as that of Koch, and other leading theorists of this developing science for which France was the centre-stage. That nation was still smarting from the yet-recent war with Germany that had thrown the continent into such absolute chaos during the later period of my childhood, and the population of the newly-established and still-juvanescent Third Republic was pervaded by an overwhelming bitterness and begrudging resentment which not unduly earned itself the appellation of *Revanchism*, and which sentiment I found most familiar; indeed, such an atmosphere could hardly have been conducive to anything but the further entrenchment and

nourishment of similar, long-borne feelings within myself, and I could not help but notice some apparent correlation between the French scramble for far-ranging colonial dominance and international prowess, born out of the nation's frustrated love for itself which had been ignominiously wounded and shamefully humiliated in the late German victory, and my own actions as a medical professional, which would never have occurred without the sorry vanquishment of my childhood ideals.

At this time, I was finally practicing the arts which I still was so unflagging in honing, and the singular focus of my method as well as the breadth of the scope of my knowledge, which I am hardly boastful in asserting to be unsurpassed, quickly recommended me as one of the foremost practitioners of the medical profession in Europe, even, I daresay, the entire western world. Some words on my motivation are perhaps in order, however: whereas Eduard, in his pursuit of the same knowledge, was not only desirous of saving lives, but was also allured by the promise of fame and eminency, I was obsessed primarily with the power inherent in the art; I was invigorated in a manner that had until that point eluded me, with an all-pervasive thrill that arose from holding in my handsome, articulate pianist's hands the ultimate and complete power of life or death, of being the sole wielder of that vast force, able to grant or to revoke the preservative influence at will, to issue or repeal death-warrants, to pardon those upon whom had descended a seemingly-unrepealable sentence, or to pass my own, just as equally-unrepealable sentences with as much impunity as the grim spectre of the Reaper himself. I held despotic sway over bodies foreign to my own, and it was mine to restore or destroy, to give, or to take life, to ensure that a patient would be completely healed, or to choose that they only persevere in a crippled state of semi-autonomy for the remainder of their earthly term. None but Azrael himself so æqualed me in power; I dealt with the richest and the poorest, the most saintly and the wickedest, and it was up to me to determine who should live and who should die; so expansive was the realm of my knowledge, so arcane in its reaches and surpassingly architectonic in comparison to the science of the other fellows of my field, that I, with my slight subtlety, easily and undetectably was able to determine the success or apparent failure of any procedure, any surgical operation, or of any administration of drugs as I so chose. I held countless human lives in my dainty lily-whites, pawing them the way a cat toys with a captive mouse, cupping my palms around those flickering candle-flames, shielding or surrendering them to the wind as I chose.

Do not think, however, that I was any kind of murderer or butcher—*certainement pas*—not once did I raise so much as a curette to harm a patient—*primum non nocere*—not once did I wield the lancet with malevolence, not once did I administer poison or actively expunge the feeble spark of life with the brutality of an executioner (It is perhaps true that I keenly enjoyed my work, that I did not refrain from deriving some undisputed pleasure and clandestine delight from the pain inflicted on the subjects under my care—but only insofar as it was contingent upon the operation at hand, and never did I inflict any unwarranted or unnecessary torment—no, only except as was absolutely required for the performance of the surgery). Indeed, all I had to do was to withhold some circumstantial addendum to the standard instructions of a procedure, to leave out a minor detail, disregarded by any but an ingenious and inveterate medical intellect drawing on oceans of experiential wisdom, imperceptible and unblameable discrepancies which passed unnoticed, but which, in the long term, as discernible by my præternatural foresight, when carried out in their proper, pivotal instances, eventually proved crucial to the exigencies of recovery and indispensable to successful convalescence;—*“medicus abstinet, natura necat”*. Thus was I able to preserve life or to permit its annihilation without so much as my presence in the same country as the patient in question, simply through the prodigiousness of my prognostic skills, and by distantly counselling and advising my many colleagues, associates, students, and apprentices, all unwitting accomplices and ignorant accessories as field-agents and emissaries of the great arbiter of life and death. I might have been the most pre-eminent physician of the world, but this vast potency, so seldom attained even by the mightiest rulers and conquerors of our race, who had ever lorded their divine authority over the multitudes of the earth, but could not, however, lord such lofty power over their own flesh (Attila the Hun, defeated through a malfunction of the heart, Alexander, vanquished by a snuffle) was compensation enough for me, and I contented myself with this secret knowledge that I alone could determine the fate of empires, choosing instead to avoid high-profile and widely-publicised cases, to quietly offer my professional advice, to let others take the credit and my subordinates to benefit from my knowledge and win the glory, the prestige, and the limelight. This *sub rosa* roseate pleasure and covert personal contentment, combined of course with the affluency admitted by my profession, were efficacious in the sound satisfaction of my untiring efforts and the final reward of my long and gratuitous scholarly labours.

At the same time as myself, Eduard had decided upon the same profession, and had taken up his studies stateside before leaving the ivy-clad colleges of New England to learn certain cutting-edge skills abroad, and we chanced to meet several times in the interweavings of our pursuits. I was allotted on multiple occasions the privilege of observing him at work in the operating-theatre, where I took up the most steadfast scrutinisation of his handiwork, picking out every otherwise-unwitnessed semiconscious motion and each most unregarded aspect of each tiniest sub-step of every surgical undertaking, as was ever my standard wont when observing other professionals, and which had always succeeded in yielding me the keenest insights regarding unacknowledged errors and imperceptibly-minute mistakes, slight inefficiencies which in the beginning of operation were negligible and unnoticed by any but the most observant eye, but which, at the conclusion of a procedure, potentially accounted for its success or failure, at times even in the recovery or death of the patient. Lord, what a clumsy fool—of course, so were most other practitioners in the light of this eye of Lyncenaesus that I had developed, or when compared with my own skill, but all the more pertinent to me because of our interpersonal history were the deficiencies in Eduard’s skills—and he was lauded as perhaps the greatest practitioner of medicine to the east of the Atlantic. The bumbling incompetencies of his craft which were bumbling only to my discerning sight, and incompetent only in light of my vastier wealth of knowledge, were nevertheless a great source of mirthless amusement to me at the time, and I was well-pleased with myself to know that, in spite of his greater repute and renown, his laughable halo of glory buffoonishly bestowed upon him by the undiscerning ignoramuses of the global medical society, I was his superior in every regard, and that my skills excelled his in every way.

Eventually, he returned to the States, and I settled into my familiarly-chilly atmosphere in what would soon come to be a much-talked-of, little-embellished age of Parisian disenchantment and unrestrained decadence, defined by embittered, disillusioned poetry of a decidedly macabre bent, and by a general thread of dejected realism crawling on its scaly belly like some sordid, Phrygian-capped, cold-blooded reptile through all the fine arts and through every aspect of French culture. I was beginning to feel quite at home in these environs, or as much so as an indefinite exile and a ship deprived of its home-port can ever be, continuing the practice of my trade, now possessed not only of my full inheritance, but also by the much-greater and constantly-increasing yearly income of my trade, which allowed me all the amenities of high

society and physical comfort. Europe began to seem stable once more after the recent wars; France seemed to have finally recuperated from its defeat and to have affirmed this fact with its Exposition Universelle, and the so-termed “Great Depression” which had so stunted the country of my birth succeeding its abortive reconstruction attempts in the Southern states had at last subsided, giving way to an eager æra of blissful prosperity at home. The source of the unhealable rending of my soul lay some distance in the past, “...was in another country, and besides...” was very nearly dead (soon it would be), or at least a relatively dormant factor of my present composition, and at last, it appeared almost as if my primordial æquilibrium were on the verge of reestablishment. It was at this time, in Paris, that I at last was able to stroll amongst the fragrant, blossoming pink cherry-trees lining the Rue Monge or the Champs de Mars as petals fluttered around me like a snowstorm, to hold those delicate little ephemera in my begloved palms and fix my attention upon them, without any noteworthy mental anguish or spiritual agitation like that of a drowning child struggling in my rib-cage. I felt perhaps some sense of a distant tragedy, heard faintly some far-and-away clamour of an army being routed and destroyed and driven over sea-cliffs to an abysmal doom, but it was as of something in dormancy, of a person stirring feebly in his sleep against phantasmic terrors and dreadful vagaries, but yet maintaining his somnolency; it was a sort of dying, subsiding weeping, a mourning cry of ghostly strings of countless violas and violins, basses and cellos, being bowed gradually into nervelessly-obliviated silence.

Then it was, without any prior warning, that tremors began to rock the earth, the sky to darken, cataclysmic omens to appear, presaging the affairs at present (bookending it, even, for this was only the year before that mighty eruption in the Dutch Indies was to cloud skies the world over with the ruddy gloom of volcanic ash, inflaming sunsets for a year after with the most impassioned and conflagratory colours). The world was rocked by sudden disasters, an intense international unease and disquietude fomented, and it was such that when I finally received the fateful news hurriedly cabled from stateside concerning the dire condition of Evangeline’s health, I was left in a confused, limbonic state, unsure of what to feel, of whether to feel, of whether I was feeling anything, or of what I was feeling: a year after its occurrence, the continent was still astir with the shock and general anxiety which the anarchistic assassination of the Russian Tsar had immediately produced, a turbulence and uneasiness which had been complimented half a year later by the assassination of the president in the United States by a

raving madman (whose courtroom antics had been for me a great source of recent amusement), throwing both sides of the Atlantic into nervous agitation, and this exterior societal state of affairs only seemed to mirror the internal state of my being when I began to receive Eduard's letters and telegrams regarding Eva's worsening pulmonary hæmorrhages. It was in such a nebulous state of undecided confusion that I brought myself, at Eduard's insistence, to make arrangements to finally set foot once more on the land of my childhood, which brings us to the present.

After a thoroughly-restful, very peaceful, blissfully-uninterrupted, dreamless sleep, as is ever the case when I finally hole up after travelling, I rose, conducted my morning toilette, and was fed breakfast by my old Cookie (I had found the current staff of domestic servants to be constituted of a gallery of unfamiliar new faces, save for the old family cook, who had managed to out-live or out-last everyone else). Eduard was already busy preparing the makeshift operating-chamber, which had been set up in Evangeline's parents' old bedroom, since preserved as a guest-room until it presumably would have passed to the young lady and her future husband. Eduard had arranged everything already, and were present the (presumably) tyndalised instruments, scalpels and lancets, hemostats, the metal tube for the performance of the procedure, all the other requisite equipment, pans, bowls, towels, the carbolic-acid-mister, and all the other necessities. The intention was to complete the operation before noon, if possible, and I will refrain from detailing the proceedings too deeply, wishing not to perturb the squeamish and faint-of-heart. At ten, the patient was brought into the operating-room, and Eduard's assistants and nurses served as his main aids, whilst I occasionally was brought forward in light of my greater proficiency, to handle a probe or to clasp a hemostat, and once to administer the carbolic acid when the attendant originally tasked with that matter was otherwise engaged, but for the most part, I stood back while Eduard and his familiars conducted the procedure themselves, according to their American training. The chest was opened, the fluid evacuated to the best of our ability, the pleurodesis performed with crossed fingers, and the whole assemblage neatly stitched back up; Eva, however, looked worrisomely unhealthy, gaunt, and fading.

Eduard monitored her thoroughly with his attendants for the remainder of the day, and well into the evening. Cookie was a little disappointed that no one except myself showed for dinner, but I quickly brought him back to his old, accustomed cheeriness with my enthusiastic appreciation of his skilful gastronomical handiwork. Although my tastes had grown refined in

Europe, I still harboured a nostalgic fondness for the well-known dishes of my childhood, and I dined until my stomach and Cookie's honour were both quite satisfied. Eduard attended poor Eva through the night, refusing the suggestion of his associates to sleep in shifts, but the poor, plighted sufferer's condition only worsened. In the twilight hours of the morning, it had become woefully apparent that the accompanying fulminant shock from the surgery had been too much in her weakened state. She was horrendously feverish, lapsing in and out of delirium, though Eduard did not hesitate to administer every drug of any possible efficaciousness at his disposal, in whatever combinations of dosages that medical ingenuity might contrive to ameliorate such a condition as Eva's; no luck, alas, for all that futility of effort. By daybreak, the only hope was to alleviate Eva's agony as best as possible, and closest friends and family notified that she would likely not last through the afternoon. It turned out that even this was a generous allotment, as her health dwindled at an alarming rate, until she lay in her parents' large, antiquated bed, brilliant light streaming in through the great windows to her right, which had been opened to afford better aeration to the growing number of bedside attendants, and which permitted a marvelous view of the whole extent of the rustling pink and white cherry orchard outside. The neighbours and family friends arrived and were ushered into the expansive bedchamber, as well as some of Evangeline's nearer cousins, an aunt and uncle, and some disconsolately-sobbing nieces and nephews who (I was given to understand) had adored her, while the domestic servants huddled in the hallway, and everyone was brought forward one at a time to pay respects to their darling ere her departure. The whole while, Eduard and his chief underling stood beside her, swabbing her forehead with cool towels, fanning her, easing her pillows, and endeavouring to offer what little comfort they could.

In the midst of this moribund pageantry, my turn came to be beckoned forward; Eva had signalled her desire to bid me farewell with a feeble gesticulation of her hand, and in compliance, I knelt beside Eduard at the side of the bed nearest to which the girl had been positioned. This was the closest I had been to her since my arrival, since I had departed for Europe a decade ago, and for some reason, I held my breath—perhaps out of suspense, perhaps out of some unconscious fear that if I were to breathe, she would somehow latch onto my soul and reïnfect me as she once had done. I tensed as her blue-veined eyelids fluttered open, fluttered gaspingly, like the wings of a dying songbird, limping along the floor of a gilded cage, and those deep, amaranthine, purpleal eyes out of my childhood swept momentarily like spotlights back to

helpless, senseless me, who knelt in wait of vindication or annihilation, bating my breath and biting my lip. I nearly jolted (but managed to suppress this instinct) as I felt Eduard tug my sleeve, and found that Eva had been reaching forward to take my hand; with an almost battle-fatigued slowness, I acquiesced to his direction and reached forward to connect my hand with hers. Although the assiduous assistants had been dabbing her industriously with towels soaked in cold water in an effort to alleviate the fever, Evangeline seemed to shiver upon clasping my hand, as if alarmed by some unexpected frigidity; hers was to me, in spite of her illness, exactly everything that I had remembered it being: warm, immaculate, more well-proportioned and alabastrine than any surviving Aphrodite chiseled by the classical sculptors, unexcelled and unrivalled by any of the modern masters—indeed, Michelangelo, who had destroyed his final masterwork in desperation, would have so despaired at the touch of Eva’s hand as to forswear ever again wielding file or chisel—and it was above all, the most yielding, the tenderest, the softest sensible ever to render itself unto my sense of touch. I dumbly clasped this virginal hand of hers, incapable of thought, until my fingers detected an unyielding interruption of brazen roughness upon it, a jarring intermission to the sea of softness in which my benumbed sense had inebriated itself. I turned her hand over while feeling the protrusion with my thumb: situated upon her bejeweled ring-finger was Eduard’s engagement-ring; set within its aureate corona of flammeous gold, a diamond of such clarity that it appeared to me then a perfectly-clear, crystalline, flawlessly-faceted shard of the purest and coldest ice, born raft-like to this alien torrid-zone amidst an ocean of heart-rent tears as a frozen floe from the polar regions of my perpetual habitation. My grey eyes rose like the muciform orbs of cloud-occulted polar suns to meet hers, the gaping abysses of lapping violet, and they were as spotlights, gazing into mine, into my pupils, down into the darker, deeper abysses of my interiority, and finding within—nothing.

Eva’s hand slacked, and pulled away, and was quickly taken up in Eduard’s, and she gasped as an onset of anguished laboriousness afflicted her breathing, and it became spasmodic and sputtering. The room grew hushed and palpably tense with anxious anticipation and with the inescapable dread of what was to follow. The girl redirected her gaze at Eduard, and tears welled at the corners of her quivering eyes, rolling sideways down her face to commingle with the blood and fever-sweat saturating her pillow. With one last emission of vital power, Evangeline squeezed Eduard’s palm, Eduard struggling to stifle his sobs and sniffles, and she sighed out

“love” followed by the name of her Saviour, and along with those phrases as its escorts, her incorporeal being. Her struggling chest fell at last, and failed to rise again, and I saw her wide, violet eyes begin to still; as they were arrested, I noticed that, aside from a slackening of dilatory muscles of the iris, and the usual change in the circumference of the pupil, there was no supernatural light passing from them, no sheen of departing soul like the aurora over Byzantium when Mehmet had laid it seige, no shimmering footstep of a bewinged angel released at last from its earthly prison-house of clay. There was no glimmer of a beacon on that Hadean beachhead, no final flashing of a lighthouse from that distant Plutonian port; no dimly-glowing spark at the end of that downturned flambeau which Thanatos swung, clublike in his free hand, the other arm of that ancient psychopomp linked as mine and Eduard’s alike fain would have been in the elbow-crook of that of the departed Eva, gently escorting the newcomer to her final abode; no fading ember of her eyes casting one last, sidelong glance over her shoulder at me in the realm of the living before joining the denizens of the underworld, and fading forever among the mute, shuffling throngs of unconjurable, irrecoverable shades of those long since gone to sleep and to dream forever. Her soul, the fate of which was as immaterial to me as her soul itself, slipped forth into the hands of whatever awaited it, a passing which was immediately met with a sudden and concomitant breakdown of lamentation throughout the chamber, which break-down was only offset by a wholly-unexpected and spectacular shake-down of the remaining cherry-blossoms from the orchard outside. The vast windows of multitudinous panes, which had been left undraped so as to admit the greatest possible degree of light from outside, were, on the instant of Eva’s expiration, overwhelmed by a sudden primrose motion as if, simultaneous to Evangeline’s last breath, some invisible, giant suspiration of nature, some unison sigh of bereaved sylphs and grieving dryads, jostled free each cluster of pink or white petals that had yet managed to cling to its tree, releasing them upon the breeze to be born like a vast, rippling, gauzie, pink bedsheet tossed free of its clothesline. The attention of the startled bedside attendants was for that brief moment diverted from the deathbed-scene before them to that majestic action out-of-doors, and then, just as quickly, the wailing resumed; Evangeline’s closest friends and neighbours weltered in liqueous sobs, Eduard, still clasping Eva’s pale, lifeless hand, gasping, crumpled forward and positively dissolved his tears, and I knelt unflinching in that same spot, unable to move, not because I was arrested by those same sentiments as the attendants around me, but because I was undergoing passions altogether different:

Victory had been achieved at last: I ran through an interior examination, conducted a thorough diagnostic of my core being: nowhere within could I find the subtlest vibration of bereavement or discontent, not the slightest perturbation of grief or sadness for the passing of the former fixation of every faculty of my soul. Immunity, total, complete, utter immunity, had been attained, and this was the ultimate test to prove that fact incontestably and to lay the matter to rest forever. I was cured of that seemingly interminable, crippling ailment of childhood, cured of that deathly, infectious contagion, cured of that oppressive and debilitating marrow-deep disease, and could live free of the fear of relapse. This was the ultimate assurance of my blessed, blissful, indifference to what had so deeply aggrieved myself alone while all the rest of the world smiled, and now, the source of the world's grief was the cause of my furtive elation. Cymbals crashed, the marching-drum beat, the horns sounded, and the triumphant general astride his gilded chariot paraded beneath the wreathed and festooned victory arch into the forum, crowds amassed and thronging on either side, waving and cheering, and the florid showers of vibrant pink cherry-blossoms catching the sunlight outside were the confetti-like flurries of raining rose-petals tossed by the armful into the bugle-riven air by admiring, basket-toting Roman citizens leaning atop roofs and balconies, overlooking the grand entrance of the conqueror. I ascended the steps and stood, fronting the crowded forum with my gaze of stately satisfaction, Death himself as the *auriga* lowering the crowning laurels over my battle-fresh brows, whispering his own name into my ears, as I grinned and drowned out his "*memento mori*"s with deep laughter of ultimate complacency. In the far frozen forests of Gaul and Britannia, I had been inducted in the icy methods of the north-men, and had returned like tempered iron, all the stronger for my endurance. Oh, poor, poor Eva, to have been destined for such a woeful end. Nonetheless, you have served a great and wonderful purpose as the vehicle of my final achievement, the ascendancy over my once-ungovernable, yet feeble inferior nature; little could I have dreamt in my poor, deluded boyhood, that you were eventually to serve such a starkly-opposite purpose in the perfection and vindication of my nature to that which I then had given hope and imagination. I felt as if I had been released with all finality, with the final stamp and seal of approval from fate, from the uncertainty regarding the weakness of my nature which had been so long mentally dominated and emotionally subjugated by the merciless, spectral slave-master of Eva's leaden shadow upon my memory.

After the embalming, when Eva's lesser half had been laid out on the couch in a curiously lifelike reclining pose, and cast in a celestial aura by the dazzling flare of flash-powder ignited by the funeral photographer, the body was picked up and placed back on the bier for the ensuing viewing, settled with care back into the casket in the same drawing room I had just entered a few days prior, now draped only in the gloomiest shades, and I stood, looking down into the container for some time. Gazing upon that corpse, I suddenly felt almost as if my long-absent sense of beauty were about to return to me; I hovered motionless over that æqually-motionless pile of matter that once had been the world to me, waiting, not entirely sure of that for which I was waiting, but waiting nevertheless for something, perhaps to see if that familiar sensory pattern of Eva's face would strike some long-disused chord in the depths of my being and reawaken something, and indeed, for a brief interval, I felt my soul teetering on a fulcrum. There was the pallorous face I had known in childhood, now rendered all the more immaculately-pale by the chill cosmetics of death, in its supremely tranquil, sublimely peaceful repose; there were those long ebon lashes, those beautiful carmine lips, that unmarred skin with a pallid smoothness and morbid morbidezza that an Academic painter would be at pains to recreate; there were those lovely, lilac-scented, luxuriant ringlets of rich sylvan, chestnut hair, coiled once more into little corkscrew-curls as they had been styled in her childhood. She was further dressed, much as she once had been, in a widely-flaring, girlish frock of exquisite *blanc d'innocence virginale* silk taffeta, billowed up by a number of airy, diaphanous white petticoats, and draped over with a tenuous, gossamery veil. It had been intended as her wedding-garment, and it had been considered fitting for the virginal bride to go to meet her true and æternal husband in no less a garment than that intended for the occasion of her earthly nuptials. Beyond these accoutrements, the body of the puellile maiden was garnished round with a veritable bath of thickly-piled fresh Easter lilies, filling the casket with their saccharine aroma and brimming over its ebon mahogany walls, which were lined on the interiors with a thick, white satin quilting of superb softness. The soft, placid, childlike face of that angelic beauty, florally-enwreathed with so many little emblems of her own purity, I daresay came closer than anything, any sight or sound, any work of painting or sculpture I had encountered in Europe, or any symphony I had heard in Vienna's concert halls or beside the banks of the Seine, to revivifying the long-deadened boyhood appreciation of all things beautiful since the passing of the bliss-filled primal golden-age of my Edenic, paradisiacal youth. She was almost more beautiful to me now in death,

flanked by hypnotic, funereal lilies as if plucked straight from the cave-mouth of Somnus's dwelling, as if peacefully recumbent and merely slumbering with careless ease within some Nyxian lily-field on the banks of River Lethë, than she had ever appeared to me in life.

—Almost, I say, because, in an instant, it was all over; I regained my composure, soul soundly tipping back on its fulcrum to the position in which it belongs, and I felt nothing, settling back into my ether-sweet numbness. The slab of preserved flesh before me was no different than the countless other formaldehyde-saturated cadavers that I had encountered innumerable times before in the multifarious medical halls and dissection-chambers of the multitudes of European Universities. The cold, pulseless specimen that met my eyes was nothing more than an amassment of common matter, synthesised into biological compounds which would soon decompose into their original constituents, compounded and interwoven and arranged in such proportions so as to reflect light in such a way that the image apprehended by the eye was pleasing to the subconscious mathematical intuition of an order-sensitive mind. That was Evangeline, the centre and the sun around which my world had turned, no more than a corruptible assembly of simple substances, little motes of dirt and dust and clay and ash that would soon disperse and be assimilated back into the sod from which they had been culled piecemeal. I was looking at lifeless soil that yet had the appearance of what had been living soil, but soil all the same, a walking plot of land, ambulating dirt, sentient dust, sapient ash, but dirt and dust and ash and clay all the same, soon to succumb to the undoing to which all material things are subject. I nearly laughed then—could have laughed myself to tears in that instant, peering at her corpse, a superficial little watercolour veneer of that hazy portrait miniature painted on a little piece of ivory—but how indecorous that would have been in such circumstances (*“Lo pianto stesso li pianger non lascia”*)—Instead, I turned back from the sight, as other mourners came to shower their vain, insipid cascade of tears over the becomingly-dressed mound of pretty clay that had been the fair Evangeline.

During the funeral proper, I at first made some show of effort to hear the service, though whilst divertedly and busily engaged in slowly twisting the wings, and then, one at a time, the legs off of a struggling mosquito that had made the egregious misstep of landing upon my person and of futilely endeavouring to draw my blood. At the commencement of that long-winded, particularly-blusterous, and uncustomarily-ululative eulogy, however, there arose in reply a general outpouring of such aggrieved wailing, and a veritable deluge of such torrential

simultaneous effluvia of tears, that the oration itself was very nearly drowned out, and I relapsed with a slight annoyance and roll of the eyes into my previous meditation regarding the interchangeability and convertibility between the given corporiform assemblage of dead earth in yonder casket, and any other æqually-massed mound of dirt anywhere else in the universe. The whole affair was conducted with such tiring torpidity and ponderousness, from beginning to end, and the congregation shuffled with such unhurried gait, as if contesting with one another to display their grief for the dead via a reluctance to exhibit the automotive properties by which the living are identified. There was scarce need for the landau in which Eduard and I rode to the cemetery, for the procession moved so slowly that I might have dragged my heels alongside the same carriages and easily have outpaced them. Even the horses with their headdresses of solemnly-nodding black ostrich-feather plumage seemed to plod along the colonial-era cobblestones with an unusually and almost disturbingly-sombre tread as they drew the ebony hearse in which lay Evangeline's Venetian-velvet-palled mahogany casket, piled round with lilies and girt with the attendant crew of sniffing, handkerchief-clutching, weepy-eyed mourners in nigrine parramatta and obsidian bombazine, veils of thick black lace, crêpe trims and ruffles and garnishes, top-hats tied round with great black satin bows, and coats garnished with broad bands of that same dark fabric.

The parade of underworld shades at last came to its destination at the grand, ancient, well-kept, well-fed cemetery wherein all of Eva's family line of the last century had been buried, entering through the high, spiked, wrought-iron gates to the fateful plot which was to receive that fair, unblemished body; the final rites were held, a solemn final prayer recited, eliciting cataracts of tears and a tumultuous and swelling outbreak of sobbing, consolation offered from male and female attendants to one another alike, closing remarks choked out with what I can only gather was heart-rending difficulty, and with one last deluge of wailing and outpouring of tears to rival the release of floodwaters from heaven to wash clean the sordidness of the antediluvian world, the grim, dark casket was lowered by the pall-bearers into its final resting-place six feet down, “From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell,” and the cold, chaste earth received Eva, where those “little snakes of silver throat,” (which I did not hesitate to think upon), would do what worms do in the course of nature, as so very many Elizabethan and Cavalier poets had loved to invoke, turning her “quaint honour into dust,” penetrating after an arduous but unremitting siege the bulwarks of the casket, applying themselves like the coarsest Visigothic

ravishers to that immaculate treasure which had been so unattainable to its countrymen, dismantling and deconstructing the marmoreal bastion of “that long-preserved virginity”. All through the affair and the deposition, I did not utter a syllable, did not smile, and did not frown, but held my composure with total steadfastness and complete ease and confidence, daydreaming idly on the unwitnessable, subterranean, postmortem banquet to come with what I muse was a vicarious anticipation on behalf of “the conqueror worm” (if worms were capable of such) and meditating collectedly upon those well-known lines: “The grave’s a fine and private place,/ But none, I think, do there embrace.”

At the filling of the grave and gradual dispersal of the crowd, I stood still near the paved pathway, resting my black kid-gloved hands atop one another on the silver handle of my walking-stick, and waiting for Eduard, who remained somewhat hunched over at the foot of the freshly-packed sod for some time, his hands clasped to his face, and convulsing ever so slightly in little tremulations at odd intervals. Eventually, he finished his business, and reeled about drearily, expecting, I imagine, to see all of his former accompaniment long-gone, but instead finding me still posed exactly as I had been for the length of the service. He transmitted a brief, haggard look, of singularly-forlorn dejection, settled his sable satin-bowed topper firmly upon his macassared hair, and turning his face back to the grass, paced over to where I was standing, similarly attired, and we commenced the slow walk down from the cemetery back to the manor, which, as is the case with most of those original old New England and Mid-Atlantic towns and cities, was not far from the center of habitation. At first, we were both silent, and walked in our silence, I glancing now and again at Eduard’s sleep-deprived and thoroughly-lined visage of puffed, baggy under-lids and starved, gaunt pallidity. It was evident that he had been weeping heavily, and had likely been doing so all through the night and morning during the funeral as well, for his eyes were reddened and berimmed with a raw fleshiness on the edges of their lids, his long, dark lashes (which had recommended him so highly to the gentler sex, so I had been told) matted to one another, and the skin about his sockets noticeably enflamed and sore from rubbing. I fancied that I could even make out the very channels eroded by the rolling descent of his tears down the length of his handsome physiognomy to that chiseled chin-line.

We had exited the cemetery, leaving the looming shadow of its sooty gate and the pointed, toothlike iron bars of the sable spectre of death behind us, and turned toward the welcoming spectacle of the town flanked by charming stretches of treeline and open countryside,

a pleasant brocade dotted with blossoming orchards and quaint farmhouses; the sky, which had been occulted by a mottled white-and-grey cloud-strata, had cleared considerably, and presented itself with the vibrant azure of a forget-me-not, a lovely, vivacious, hyacinthine hue—all-in-all, it was a very pleasant vernal day, in contrast to the funereal scenes of the morning and the grave morbidity of the preceding evenings. The springtide was well underway at this point: the season of rebirth (I bemusedly contemplated), a most unseemly setting for such events as these to which I had been privy. The sun, commencing its warm noontide reign at the summit of its celestial track, beamed suddenly upon us with renewed vigour, and though the cool primaverile breath of the Maryland clime draughted over us, our layers of jetty garments absorbed the liquid sunbeams, imbuing my limbs with a lovely sensation of warmth, while the unmistakable marks of spring, signs of new life in the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, the lucky warm-blooded creatures who relied on no such direct solar influence to invigorate them and spur their muscles to action, flitted and scurried to and fro. I began to think that perhaps I might not return to Paris after all, that perhaps the time had come that I might finally settle comfortably back into the country and society of my birth and upbringing, now that certain dissuasive fixtures had been removed; it was as if an old, packed cover of snow were thawing finally into the crocus-beds of the countryside inhabited in my youth. Glancing back at Eduard, I noted that even a faint ruddy tinge had returned to the pallorous plains of his prematurely-sunken cheeks. His eyes remained downcast, however, and following his line of vision, I fixed my own upon its object.

With one hand, Eduard’s walking-stick clacked limply on the paving-stones, out of tune with the metre of his step, whilst he held the other at about the level of his navel against his sable-sashed frock-coat, and in it, I glimpsed cradled between his black-clad fingers, the flashing facets and gold band of Evangeline’s ring, scintillating in the sunlight. His eyes were fixed upon this as if all the world about him were dark and insensible, and as if this ring backdropped by the black kidskin of his gloves was his sole visible reality. He repressed a convulsive sob and blinked his eyes repeatedly. In a gesture of good-will and thoughtfulness, I attempted to offer some solaceful support to assuage his distress.

“Now, now, dear Eduard, be sensible; there is no use weeping,” I said, with some strained concert of my faculties managing to inject an approximation of conciliatory softness, “You did everything you could, and it is all over now; she is gone. Doubtless, God found that she had

served her purpose here, somehow, in a way that will be made manifest in His own due time, and deemed it the providentially-accordant moment to call her unto His bosom.”

(Here, he did not quite succeed in fully suppressing a tearful suspiration that was frankly unseemly of a man of his maturity, which I will thus omit in my reproduction of his speech.)

“But her future—our future—it was filled with such promise, such envisioned happiness” (and do believe that I am omitting the consecutive string of intermittent sighs, gasps, and sobs, which otherwise further punctuated the flow of his speech) “She was so young, of such hopeful makings, oh, heavens. Dear heavens, oh Albert, *we were in love together*. Truly, ardently in love—not with any schoolchild infatuation or juvenile pretension, but honestly, earnestly enraptured with that particularly rare, uncommon, genuine, undying love; we both knew it so surely. How many can lay claim to what we felt, what we had, what we were to have in the years to come?—and all cut short, all snuffed out in its incipience, like, like a rosebud before it had a chance to bloom—Oh-ooohh... ”

All through this maudlin performance, I endeavoured (within the prescriptions of public conduct and daylight propriety, in contrast to his weltering display) to console him with reasoned counters to his mournful outbursts. I even offered him my unsullied, still neatly-folded and creased pocket handkerchief, as the available capacity of his own had long ago been surcharged with the grossest quantum of his lacrimal effusions and nasal runoff.

“Nonsense, my dear Eduard; think of the purpose, the divine, arcane, heavenly purpose known only to God,” —(and to me)— “that necessitated her passing, for some greater glory yet unbeknownst to us, but which will nonetheless be revealed on the day of rapture, when all creation shows its hidden purposes and unseen worth in giving glory to its Creator.”

“Yes—yes—though I cannot prevent myself from feeling—oh, Albert, it is a truly horrible weight that I feel—that I have failed; that I alone should have been able somehow to save her, and that through some shortcoming on my part, I could not—that because of me, my heart, my beloved, is gone from this earth and from me.”

“You did everything within your power and according to your perspicacity as a medical professional to restore her to health, Eduard. There is little more anyone would have asked... nothing more anyone would have asked.”

“Yes,” he responded, dubitantly at first, and then more firmly, “Yes, you are correct, of course...I you are quite right...” and it was clear that poor Ed was coming back around to his

better senses; perhaps in another year, the inexperienced youth (a year my senior, but mentally, I mean, much younger) would have come around to the same level-headed reasonability and detachment that I had achieved.

“Of course I am correct,” I said, “one must keep in mind that she was just another patient; you would not blame yourself if anyone else were to die under your lancet as you were directing every power towards his preservation, and neither must you blame yourself in this case.”

We were nearing the house at this point in our talk, and each of us contemplatively beheld the scattered, withering cherry-blossom petals strewn beneath our tread, the vitality visibly ebbing from those short-lived beauties as they brunesced on the bricks of the path. Eduard nodded his assent, and then, inhaling deeply, recollected himself and told me what a kind friend I was to offer such encouragement and consolation, and thanked me with another emotive and tearful show of such intensity that I found it almost stomach-churning, but which I accepted with a humble thanks. Indeed, I am a good friend, Eduard; in fact, with our past now behind us, I can see us growing to be much better friends, if you will allow me to gently operate upon your soul, to work my subtile therapeutics upon your character.

“Yes, Evangeline is with God now,” he murmured, “and there is nothing anyone might have done to oppose the will of the Almighty, who, as you say, has taken her in His own due time. It is for the best.”

“...and yet, nonetheless...” I could not keep from adding, not aloud, but inwardly to myself, with a certain contentedness of illusory vocal timbre that nearly made me smile, (in truth, I had to exert an unusual amount of concerted force and deliberate effort to prevent the corners of my mouth from involuntarily twisting upward), “...yet, nonetheless, I cannot help but think that a more skilled physician might have been able to save her.”

## The Tale of the Eagle

By Tim Gervais

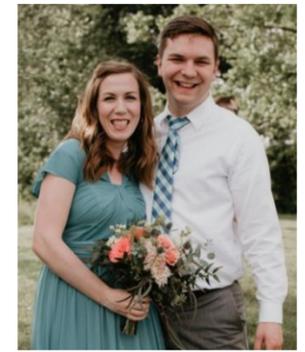
When the world was young and newly formed, the great eagle was placed in the west to govern as king over all the animals. The dominion of the eagle stretched across the face of the land, from the soaring mountain peaks to the sunbaked liquid sands of the low desert. The shadow of the majestic bird often skimmed across the earth, following the eagle as he hunted, roamed, and protected his realm. Fierce and resolute in his duty, the great eagle ruled over the land with equity and justice; for it was said that the eagle's eyes were so keen he could perceive the truth of a person's words, and discern the state of an individual's soul.

Although the eagle was a fearsome predator, the other animals knew that it did not hunt for capricious pleasure, but instead took only what was necessary for him to live, and in so living, protected his kingdom from the corrupting influence of the coyote who roamed the wilderness on the borders of the eagle's kingdom, seeking those weak-willed individuals whom he could entice beyond the eagle's protection.

One day, as the eagle was soaring far above the golden-forested hills of late autumn, he noticed an unfamiliar animal digging up nuts from the earth. Immediately perceiving that these nuts had been buried by the labors of squirrel and not the animal currently harvesting them, the eagle gave a piercing cry and swiftly swooped down to question the animal in its crime. Upon hearing the cry of the eagle, Raccoon peered up from his digging only just fast enough to be pinned to the earth by the exacting talons of the noble bird.

"Why do you take from Squirrel that which does not belong to you?" Screeched the eagle, as Raccoon withered before the piercing gaze of his judge.

"I did not know whose nuts these were, O mighty eagle, and believed that they had been abandoned by their gatherer." Whimpered the raccoon. "I meant no harm in my taking."



Tim Gervais is a former staff member of John Adams Academy. He currently works for a local accounting firm and home schools his two children with his wife, Emily.



Original sketch by Theresa Kay, former 1st grade teacher at John Adams Academy, 2016. Lives in Swan Lake, ID.

“Be that as it may,” cried the eagle, “you have taken from squirrel the labors of his hands, you have robbed him of his time, his trust, and his winter store. You have jeopardized his family, and for that you must pay.”

“Please!” Begged Raccoon, “Believe me when I say I had no intent to take these things from Squirrel! I meant only to address my own needs as winter approaches. If you let me go, I will work to give back to Squirrel all that I have taken, and I vow to never again take unjustly from another as long as I live.”

The eagle stared at the raccoon for a great length of time, and in the silence of the stare, he perceived that the heart of Raccoon was sincere.

“You speak truthfully Raccoon,” the Eagle said. “And I will release you so that you may begin your labors of restitution.” With those words, the eagle leapt from the ground and floated away, carried off by the strength of the autumn breeze.

True to his word, the Raccoon labored diligently to replace all that he had taken from Squirrel’s store. His efforts were such that as the morning dew turned to frost and the cool autumn wind became the icy breeze of winter, he had restored to Squirrel all that he owed. Furthermore, his dedicated labor had allowed him to collect just enough nuts for himself even as the first snows came.

In the deep of winter, when all memory of the warmth of summer had faded, and so too his fear of the eagle, Raccoon was outside of his burrow fetching from his meager store of nuts what would be his only meal of the day.

Raccoon sighed and shivered as he nibbled his acorn. While he knew that he had plenty to get him through the winter, it was unpleasant to have to ration his store of food, and without his usual plumpness, the biting cold chilled him to the bone. “If only I had



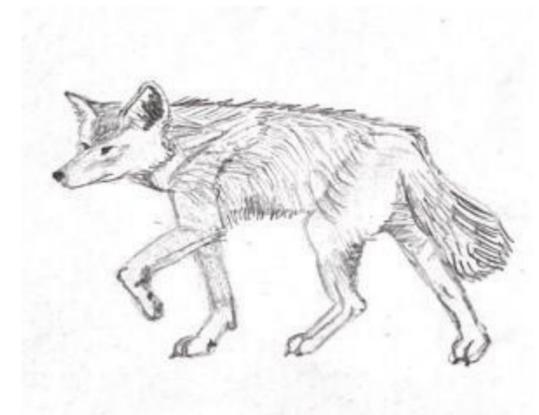
had time to gather some berries to go along with my nuts before the snow came.” Raccoon said aloud.

“But you would have,” a low voice growled from the bushes, “if you had not been forced to gather for another who already had sufficient for his needs.”

Raccoon whirled around, seeking the source of the voice. Slowly from the bushes emerged the gray shadow of Coyote.

“But it was my duty.” Replied a wary Raccoon, who never before had encountered the ghostly specter of the carnivorous Coyote. “I had taken from Squirrel’s stores and was required by Eagle to pay back what I had taken.”

“How could it have been your duty to gather for Squirrel, when he had more than enough for the winter? Even now, he is feasting in his hole on walnuts, blueberries, pecans, and wild wheat, while you starve in the bitter cold with nothing but acorns for sustenance. Why should he have more than you? No, my dear Raccoon, it should have been Squirrel’s duty to gather for you so that you could enjoy the same bounty that he now has.”



Raccoon did not answer, but had frozen in his movements, captivated by the thought and no longer content with his own portion.

“Yes, Raccoon,” whispered the coyote, “it is you who have been wronged. The animals speak of the justice of Eagle, but there is no justice in the efforts you were compelled to undertake. Squirrel had more than he needed, and could easily have shared his meal with you. It was your right to borrow from his stores so that you would not suffer this cold winter, having wasted your time and strength giving to him who had enough already.”

Raccoon turned these foreign thoughts over in his mind until they seemed to become his own. Where was the fairness in his current condition? Where was the justice in the simplicity of

his meals? In the unsatisfying smallness of his rationed portions? Why indeed should squirrel have more than he, and not be compelled to share?

When Raccoon finally came to himself and looked around, Coyote was gone, leaving behind only his tracks and a seed of envy planted deep in Raccoon's heart.

Weeks of cold winter passed, and with each passing day, Raccoon grew more discontented in his current circumstances. "There is no fairness in the world," he thought, "when there is such disparity between Squirrel and I."

The jealousy of Raccoon soon grew to anger, and anger fomented a plan to create the parity Raccoon craved. "I will take what is owed to me," Raccoon declared, "I will create justice where Eagle has overlooked it." And with those words he began his journey through the woods to Squirrel's store, where he had been captured by the Eagle previously.



The sun was blinding on the old snow that still covered much of the ground. Winter was coming to a close, but spring had not yet declared its triumphant coming. Eagle soared high above the hills basking in the warmth and light generously imparted by the sun. "What a gift," he thought, "is the light of the sun. It is given to all so freely of its own volition, never asking for anything in return. Never withholding its light from the undeserving or ungrateful." As he flew

thus thinking, Eagle spotted Raccoon digging vigorously in the earth, covered in mud from the thawing ground. Swooping low, Eagle alighted on a nearby branch.

"Perhaps you have lost your way, friend Raccoon, for I do not believe you make your home in this part of the woods." Said the Eagle calmly, startling Raccoon who had not heard the Eagle's descent in his haste to consume the nuts he had unearthed.

"I am not lost," sneered Raccoon, swallowing his mouthful of food. "I am merely taking that which Squirrel owes to me. Alleviating my suffering! Ensuring my own comfort until the better times of spring are upon us. Surely, you understand my need, O Just Eagle, as nothing in this kingdom passes beneath your notice. Surely, you are aware that I have lain in squalor all this winter while Squirrel feasts like a king." Raccoon's face was contorted in a mask of rage, and muddy splotches covered his face and hands as he gesticulated wildly.

The Eagle was silent, measuring Raccoon with his fierce gaze.

Unnerved by the lengthy silence, Raccoon spoke again, this time more timidly: "My efforts to gather nuts for Squirrel prevented me from gathering enough for my own winter store. All these many months I have lacked the sweet taste of a berry or the oily sustenance of a tree nut. I have had no wild apples, no fruit, and no roots. All I have had is the tasteless meat of unappetizing acorns. Surely, you understand my great need. Surely, you understand the justice of my actions, to take from him that has and give to him that has not."

The Eagle was again silent for a long while.

Then he spoke softly.

"Were you starving my friend?"

The Raccoon could not meet the eyes of the great Eagle. "No, but I did not have the same bounty as my neighbor Squirrel! It was..."

The eagle spoke again, louder this time, interrupting raccoon in his justification: "Did you have sufficient supply for your needs?"

"Yes." Raccoon reluctantly answered.

"Did you seek the charity of your neighbor, and were rebuffed in your request?" Eagle questioned.



“Well, no.” Raccoon chattered nervously. “Squirrel should have perceived my need and shared from his store! Squirrel has always ignored my plight! Squirrel seeks only for his own, and selfishly hoards all that he has obtained! It is Squirrel who has committed injustice, by not sharing freely that which he has with those who are in need.”

“Have you a greater need than the Squirrel then?” The eagle asked darkly, “Is your need for sustenance greater than that of his family? Would you trade places with him? Squirrel who labored the long months of summer, going without so that his family could live comfortably during the winter. Squirrel, whom you have never sought to understand, and yet, *you* blame *him* for his ignorance of your plight?” Eagle’s voice had grown loud.

“I have been busy!” Raccoon replied quickly. “Surely I cannot be expected to have become friends with a Squirrel. I must spend each day tending to my own needs, seeking after my own.”

The Eagle shook his great head. “If you had but asked while in true need, it would have been given to you freely. If, amidst starvation you had sought for relief from Squirrel and had been turned away, justice would have claim upon Squirrel. However, by your attempt to create justice, to coerce another, you, wretched creature, have destroyed the very justice you sought. And now, you will reap the justice that you have sown from your deeds.”

Raccoon trembled in fear, shaking his head vigorously. “Wait! No! I cannot be held culpable for my actions. It was in a moment of weakness that I had these thoughts. In fact, they were really not my thoughts at all! I was persuaded by Coyote to take this food. It is Coyote who should be punished for these wrongs.”

The Eagle released a piercing cry, and Raccoon cowered before him. The Eagle could perceive that there was no remorse in the heart of Raccoon for what he had done. “So you now heed the counsel of Coyote? Perhaps you would like to dwell in his realm? Perhaps you would like to see what justice you receive from Coyote? So be it. I will let you see what the justice of Coyote brings.” And with that, the Eagle picked up the Raccoon by his scruff and flew to the edge of his kingdom.

The Eagle gently let the Raccoon down at the edge of the wilderness, and as he turned to fly away the Raccoon began to rail against the Eagle, incessantly accusing him of harshness,

vindictiveness, and mean-spirited hatred. As the Eagle circled above, and soared away the Raccoon heard him cry: “Do not be angry with me, friend Raccoon, that I am as I was created to be. I give to each what is owed, and I do not exact more than I ought. Justice gives to every man what is his by right, but neither compels nor persuades any to give more than he ought.”

As the eagle faded to a pinprick in the sky, and then vanished altogether, the Raccoon heard dreadful footsteps slowly approaching from behind.

“It is not fair that you have so much meat on your bones while I am so famished.” Growled the Coyote. “Surely you will not deny the justice of my appetite.”

## Call for Submissions

The Editors of *Mentor* graciously invite all John Adams Academy faculty to contribute submissions to this journal. As educators, we appreciate how your actions and words contribute to our academic community; as writers, we admire how you see the good in things beyond our view. Whether your main vantage point is a Kindergarten classroom, an administrative office, or places beyond or between, you have valuable perspectives on the ways our Core Values intersect with the curricula of our Academy.

On a rotating basis, *Mentor* will focus on a particular Core Value. The substance of this fourth volume has been our 5<sup>th</sup> Core Value, Fostering Creativity and Entrepreneurial Spirit. In the upcoming issue, the theme will be our 6<sup>th</sup> Core Value, Maintaining High Standards of Academic Excellence.

You can contribute to the journal either by submitting either a research article or a book review. All submissions within the journal aim simply to connect the thematic Core Value with a classic written text, song, or artifact. Whether you have thoughts regarding academic excellence in relation to history or physics, we invite you to submit an essay for consideration.

Submission Deadline: All submission are due by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and should be emailed as a word document to [ross.garner@johnadamsacademy.org](mailto:ross.garner@johnadamsacademy.org).

### Articles

Having selected a written text, artifact, or artistic work from the Academy's curricula, discuss and persuade in an essay of 1000 to 5000 words how John Adams Academy's 6<sup>th</sup> Core Value, High Standards of Academic Excellence, is evident in your chosen text. Cite and credit all sources according to *Chicago Manual of Style*, including your footnotes and bibliography. If citing and sourcing is not your strength, please contact Mr. Ross Garner.

### Book Reviews

After choosing a book from John Adams Academy's curricula, summarize and assess the book's relevance to the Academy's 6<sup>th</sup> Core Value, High Standards of Academic Excellence, in 500 to 1000 words. Cite the book according to *Chicago Manual of Style*.

# MENTOR

JOHN ADAMS ACADEMY FACULTY ACADEMIC JOURNAL  
VOLUME IV, ISSUE I – SPRING 2020

Appreciation of Our National Heritage  
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