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Paul Vernon Kreider, Jr. Memorial Award

Perhaps the most difficult thing for me to understand in my short career as a scholar of the human condition is the fact that avoidable and terrible deeds occur with vicious repetition. Yet, it is through literature that I have started to accumulate tools to grapple with that difficult and painful realization. Though small, my library consists mostly of books that have been assigned to me through classes, and the selections made by my teachers now act as a reference base for future studies of the imperfect humanity. By combining these with favorites from my past and additions from private studies, a coherent understanding of life begins to form, one that is far vaster than that which I held before.

The face of my library now is that of one who is just starting to understand the current state of the society we live in. Titles such as The Second Shift by Arlie Hochschild demonstrate basic problems between two people enacting traditional gender roles in a heterosexual relationship. However, the problem with this particular text is that it does not take into account different sexualities, in spite of the wonderful way that Hochschild shows the discrepancies in tasks assigned to each gender. This empty space in her analysis directs me to expand the library in ways that fill the new hole in my understanding. An author I hope to add to make up for this is Judith Butler, who I have very little familiarity with but admire from what I've read so far. In addition to moving beyond tasks assigned to each gender, Butler's work will expand my understanding of gender in ways that pertain to power use and abuse and an expansion of gender itself. Perhaps in this direction of expansion with Butler and other authors, my library will help me to understand what it is that motivates action between two individuals. Further, though small aspects of human experience, the greatest of all humanity's movement is based on the process of individual relations. The movement of power between people lends itself to the greater movement of power that directs the masses, as is suggested in my readings so far.

Another selection of my library includes Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain, a text that makes bold statements on the relations formed between people in different strata of power. It is through such texts that I have come to understand the importance individuals place on personal power, and how much power can harm and help many of the situations people find themselves in. As greater power movement occurs, other books become pertinent to this study. A favorite, yet heartbreaking novel included in my library is Cheyenne Autumn by Mari

Sandoz, a nonfiction story depicting the mass murder of the Cheyenne Indians. Though the theory in my library tries to explain that often power needs pain to thrive, it is this description of those who were exterminated by past generations of my country that scream the importance of knowing what incites people to do what they do. Yet, the need to understand power relations is not one that completely consumes my dear, enlightening library.

In response to the strength of the difficult readings already mentioned, a good balance include prized contributions by Shel Silverstein's The Giving Tree and The Missing Piece Meets the Big O. In light of what horror does occur, these short children's stories built up a great part of my childhood understanding of people. Though my opinion is now more complicated, these two stories remind me that along with the difficulties of relations, care is also a great part of how the world works. Another beloved possession, from the shelves of childhood through today, includes a marvelous copy of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Lewis Carroll's gift to Alice Liddell has turned out to be one of the more delightful tales introduced to people through mainstream literature. Expansive of one's mind in ways that mock society's rules, this particular text reminds me that what one may take too seriously can be naught but a hatter's tea party. A fancy of one's imagination, amongst all of the seriousness, this and other pieces remind me of the importance of integrating play and joy, lest one become too serious.

To the extent of increasing joy, I also hope to expand my library to include more scenes of beauty, even if those scenes have sad tones. One example of a beautiful scene I cherish is held within Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, particularly part 2. This description of the passage of time in the home is, in my opinion, a watercolor of literature. Words are Woolf's paint blended together with the water of time. Almost pastoral in its description of the home, this section shows how without care and upkeep, things slowly return back to the earth. Change occurs; experiences mellow or strengthen, but time steadily marches on and the importance of events take entirely new and different meanings. In this strain, I also hope to increase my library to include more of these water color-captured moments of life. Matsuo Basho's haiku demonstrates this painting with words. Haiku, such as "Frog," evoke in me the serenity of summer evenings by the water of a pond. Literature with this breath of mellow imagery has always been particularly appealing to me. With only a beginners understanding of

Basho's work, it is my desire to pursue his serenity further and to use his writing as a way to better understand aspects of the other authors' explorations.

Though I strive to increase the number of challenging topics I wrestle with in my library – expansions to include difficult theory and stories to the tune of Foucault, Vonnegut, Faulkner, and others --, I also intend to use books to increase my repertoire of joyful and serene experiences. My library is my choice for understanding life's many tones; it is one of my palettes by which I taste the world. It is ultimately the place where I enter into those summer nights, see Basho's frog jump into the pond, and ponder the ripples he makes on the surface of the water once the silence reigns again.

*Frog* by Matsuo Basho

An old pond –  
a frog leaps in,  
sound of water

Trans. Haruo Shirane