



# dislocate

Spring 2010 No. 6

the  
*contaminated*  
issue

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ISSN: 1554-7485

ISBN: 978-0-9768669-5-4

*dislocate*

University of Minnesota

Department of English

1 Lind Hall

207 Church Street SE

Minneapolis, MN 55455

dislocate.org

*dislocate* is a literary journal operated by graduate students in the English Department at the University of Minnesota. *dislocate* welcomes both postal and electronic unsolicited submissions; all postal submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable as long as they are clearly marked as such. Please visit [dislocate.org](http://dislocate.org) for additional submission guidelines.

Publication of *dislocate* is made possible by the generous support of the Lerner Foundation; we thank the Foundation for their continued involvement. We are also grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their assistance: the Edelstein-Keller Endowment, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, the Department of English at the University of Minnesota, the Creative Writing Program at the University of Minnesota, Kathleen Glasgow, Ray Gonzalez, Terri Sutton, and the University of Minnesota College of Design.

Acknowledgments: Selections from Joshua Ware and Crystal S. Gibbins' "The New Nature" first appeared in *Free Verse*. Walter B. Levis' "Thank You For Calling" first appeared in *Connecticut Review*.

# THANK YOU FOR CALLING

*Walter B. Lewis*

—Hello. Thank you for calling To Be or Not To Be, the world's first fully automated suicide prevention hotline. If you have a Personal Identification Number or Case ID, please enter it now. For online assistance, visit our website at [www.2BRNOT2b.com](http://www.2BRNOT2b.com).

—If you would like to continue in Spanish, please press numero uno. If you took French in high school and know the opening lines of *L'Étranger*, press 2. For the typical Bar Mitzvah boy's Hebrew, press 3; if you ever took an executives' crash course and would like to continue in Japanese, press 4; for honest-to-God-get-drunk-on-vodka Russian (no Yiddish), press 5; if you can handle either Mandarin or Cantonese well enough to impress a date in a Chinese restaurant, press either 6 or 7; for Standard Hindi, press 8; Bengali, 9; Javanese, 10; Telugu, 11; Marathi, 12; Punjabi, 13; Urdu, 14. Please note that selecting options 8 through 14 may result in this call being traced by the United States Department of Homeland Security; for additional languages, enter the first three letters of your country of origin. To continue in English, press 1-5-6-4 (which happens to be the year Galileo Galilei was born). To repeat these options—

—I'm sorry, you have pressed an incorrect key. To continue in Spanish—

—*Bonjour. Merci pour vocation*—

—OK. Let's begin by getting acquainted. Friends, family, and software developers call me Tooby, like "Scooby" with a "T." Created five years ago by the National Association for the Advancement of Computer Processes (NAACP), I am an interactive database with up-to-date information from the world's most renowned experts in everything from aardvarks to zoo-spores, agrology to zygoxis, and lots of other subjects too. Based upon the options you select, I will match the problems in your life with the solutions in my database so that, instead of ending your life, you can "take arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them [the troubles]." Now, to continue in Spanish, press—sorry. We're speaking English, aren't we?

—If this is your *first* time considering suicide, press 1. If you are currently involved in a lawsuit, income tax audit, contentious divorce and/or any form of bankruptcy proceeding, and you would like to skip directly to the law section of my database, please hang up and dial 1-888—

—OK, so it's not a legal matter. Judging by the force and number of times you depressed the number "1" on your keypad, I detect that you're really upset and it's never been quite this bad before. Before we go any further you need to understand that being upset is fine. It's natural. It's normal. It's human. Humans get upset all the time. Frankly, that's why I'm happy to be a computer. Humans programmed me to say that of course. But it's true. No human could possibly know everything I know about how to "bear the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely [insulting displays of contempt in words or actions], the pangs of despised love, the law's delay, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes." I understand all this and lots of other problems too. So let me match your symptoms with my solutions, OK?

—I'm going to ask you some questions. Just relax and answer honestly. And please, please, please listen to all of the menu options before making your selection.

—If you consistently have faith in God, press 1. If you *sometimes* have faith in God, press 2. If you believe there is definitely *not* a God, press 3. If you believe God is Bruce Springsteen, press 4. For a list of additional rock stars, celebrities, historical figures, and other generally important people who might be worshiped, press 5. If you think the whole issue of faith and worship is irrelevant, press 6.

—OK. So religion isn't your thing. That's fine. In the late 1800s the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche went insane shortly after proclaiming that God was dead, but correlation is *not* causation. "Naughty Nietzsche" also had syphilis. The point is: many people are completely secular and reasonably happy. The next series of questions are designed to assess your happiness. Please listen to all of the menu options before making your selection.

—If you have been sexually active in the past twelve to twenty-four months, press 1; if you have been sexually active in the past six to twelve months, press 2. If you have been sexually active in the past three months, press 3. If you have been sexually active in the past three *weeks*, press 4. The past three *days*, press 5. If you had sex *last night* or earlier *today*, press 6. To repeat these options and to hear additional—

—Wow, it's highly unusual to have sex and consider suicide in a single twenty-four-hour period, but that's fine. You are who you are: a unique individual. Let me learn more about you and your sexuality.

—If the sex you had last night or earlier today was mildly satisfying, press 1; moderately satisfying, press 2; extremely satisfying, press 3; if it failed to satisfy you, press 4. To repeat these options—

—Please be advised that while you were selecting an option to evaluate your recent sexual experience, my high-speed database was matching your ten-digit telephone number to various banking records, medical records, insurance records, educational records, motor vehicle records, credit card records, travel history, shopping preferences, dining and entertainment transactions, and other online sources of information that I might use to

help me further understand who you are. To confirm that you are who I think you are, press 1. Confirming your identity now will allow me to prepare a Personal Identification Number and Case ID so that you can call me back anytime 24/7, and our conversation will continue from exactly where we left off. No menu options, no waiting. Instant contact. Would you like to confirm your identity now? And don't worry, I won't use your name. Our relationship is strictly confidential.

—Great. According to my records, you are a thirty-two-year-old single Caucasian woman, average in almost every possible way. Height, weight, socioeconomic status, approximate portion of income spent on nonessential items—your profile matches the arithmetic mean for single women in your geographic area. And more good news: my database shows no signs of major medical trouble. You are absolutely, completely, definitely, unconditionally, utterly, and entirely normal.

—However, a correlative analysis of your personal records indicates one characteristic of yours is a little odd. My database has created an Unusual Activity Report (UAR) to help us examine this aspect of your behavior. It should be noted that seven out of every eight callers find the UAR to be closely connected to their suicidal thoughts. Do you want to hear about the unusual activity my database has detected? If so, please press 1.

—Congratulations. By choosing to continue, you have taken an important step toward ending “the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.” The behavior noted involves your use of technology. During the past sixty days, you have purchased *and then returned or exchanged* over forty items determined to be ordinary consumer electronics and/or common household appliances. If you would like to hear a detailed description of these purchases, please press—

—*Una HTC Tacto*—

—I'm sorry, you have pressed an incorrect—

—呼び出してくれてありがとうHTC—

—I'm sorry, you have—

—One HTC Touch Smartphone measuring 2.8 inches with a QVGA TFT LCD.

—After six days, you returned this phone, canceled your account with AT&T, and purchased a (sleek) Motorola RAZR V3m design through Verizon. This phone's integrated music player and stereo headset support EMU with up to 1GB optional removable memory. On the same day, for some inexplicable reason, you returned this phone, too. A detailed search of in-store records indicate you did not purchase another cell phone, so now you don't have any cell phone. No wonder you're suicidal! Who can live these days without a cell phone?

—For a summary of the remaining thirty-eight consumer electronics and/or common household appliances *you bought and then returned or exchanged*, please press 1-8-4-7 (which happens to be the year Thomas Edison was born).

—Three digital clock radios, two electric pencil sharpeners, four Palm Pilots, one battery-powered electric toothbrush, one rechargeable battery-powered toothbrush, one medical digital thermometer, one digital meat thermometer, one digital room thermometer, three coffeemakers with automatic start-stop shutoff features, one fax/copy machine, one scanner, one combined fax/scanner/copier, one laser printer combined fax/scanner/copier/printer—

—*Lo siento. Para continuar audiencia—*

—You have also changed your cable TV providers three times, long-distance providers twice, and hired a “Cross-Platform Apple-Certified/Windows XP- and Vista-Trained Independent Technology Consultant” who seems to have visited your apartment earlier today.

—Please listen to the following conclusions that might be reached about the meaning of your behavior, and select the option that you think best describes how you feel. Be sure to listen to all of the menu options before making your selection.

—“I am seldom annoyed by modern technology.” Press 1.

—“I am occasionally annoyed by modern technology.” Press 2.

—“I am frequently annoyed by modern technology.” Press 3.

—“Modern technology makes me want to kill myself.” Press 4.

—Select the option that you think best describes how you feel. To hear the choices again or to transfer out of this section of the database and hear additional options, please press 1-9-6-7 (which happens to be the year J. Robert Oppenheimer died).

—Please make a selection now. To hear the choices again or to transfer out of this section of the database and hear additional options, please press 1-9-6-7 (which happens to be the year J. Robert Oppenheimer died).

—If you would like to select a cell phone and cell phone provider now, please press—

—I’m sorry. You don’t seem to have made a selection. Please make your selection now.

—I’m sorry. You don’t seem to have made a selection. Please make your selection now.

—I’m sorry. You don’t seem to have made a selection. Please make your selection now.

—I’m sorry. More than three minutes have passed. Please press any



number on the keypad now. Any number.

—I'm sorry. You don't seem to have pressed anything. Please press any number on the keypad now.

—Please press a number.

—Or make a sound.

—Please. Please, please, please press a number or make a sound. If you press any number or make any kind of sound, I can immediately assign you a Personal Identification Number. Then the next time you call, our conversation will continue from exactly where we left off. No menu options, no waiting. Instant contact. So . . . please press a number or make a sound now.

—Any number.

—Any sound.

—I'm sorry. More than seven minutes of silence have elapsed. I am programmed to assume that you have attempted to commit suicide or are in the middle of attempting to commit suicide. Therefore, an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) team has been dispatched to the address linked to the phone number from which you called. Please stop whatever you are doing and wait for the EMS team to arrive.

—Per my calculations, the EMS team should arrive in eight minutes and twenty-seven seconds. Meanwhile, thank you for calling To Be or Not To Be, and on behalf of everyone who has contributed to the existence of my database, please accept my sincerest apologies for failing to be of greater service in your time of need.

—“ . . . enterprises of great pith and moment with this regard their currents turn awry . . . be all my sins remember'd.”