

Academic Forum 32 (2014–15)

to Profound disabilities. Her dissertation was nominated for best dissertation in 2012, and she has presented her research from her dissertation at international, national and regional conferences.

As a researcher, Dr. Hyer has published several articles in the field of Special Education. Her most recent article, *Blending Common Core Standards and Functional Skills in Thematic Units for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities*, was published fall 2014 in the Journal of the American Academy of Social Education Professionals (JAASEP). Dr. Hyer continues to present her research at international, national and regional conferences and recently presented at the 2014 TASH national conference on *Teaching Thematic Units Connect to the Common Core to Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities*.

Dr. Hyer teaches ungraduated and graduate courses offered in Special Education Programs in the Department of Teachers College Henderson. She teaches courses in Methods of Instruction for Severe to Profound Students, Introduction to Autism, Psychology of the Exceptional Child and Practicum. Additional duties include academic advising, university/college/departments committee service, research, and Specialized Professional Association (SPA) responsibilities.

Legal Literature

Scott Turow discusses Jeff Bezos, Monica Lewinsky, Warren Zevon, and his latest legal thriller, *Identical*

**Michael Ray Taylor, M.F.A.
Professor of Communication**

Identical
By Scott Turow
Grand Central Publishing
371 pages
\$16

Note: This interview was originally published Nov. 4, 2014, in Chapter16.org, the website of Humanities Tennessee, a nonprofit agency sponsoring literary events and providing free reviews to Tennessee newspapers.

With nine bestselling novels and two books of nonfiction, Scott Turow, recipient of the tenth annual Nashville Public Library Literary Award, has proven himself a master of the legal thriller. His latest novel, *Identical*, explores questions of betrayal, family, and identity set against the sweeping political backdrop for which his books are famous. In connection with his acceptance of the NPL award on November 8, 2014, Turow answered questions in a wide-ranging email exchange about his three decades as a novelist, his opinion of Amazon's dispute with Hachette, the very personal event that led to his novel about twins, and how he uses the Monica Lewinsky tapes to teach dialogue.

Taylor: In addition to writing a string of bestselling novels, serving as president of the Author's Guild, and contributing essays to leading publications, you remain a practicing attorney. The obvious question is, how do you do it all?

Scott Turow: I'm very selective about what I do as a lawyer and have been for many years. I'm far from a full-time lawyer, and I have a lot of great help in the law office and in my literary office. Finally, I don't recognize a lot of traditional time borders. I work when I need to and am in the mood. Nights and weekends are not out of bounds. I enjoy everything I do.

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Taylor: In September, The New York Times published a story about Campfire, Jeff Bezos’s secretive retreat for top writers. The article describes the way many authors have become uncomfortable with the event because of Amazon’s ongoing dispute with Hachette, a French publisher. As someone who has been an ardent public defender of authors in the global digital marketplace, do you worry about retribution from Amazon?

Turow: No one can look at Amazon’s behavior and think that they would be above retribution. On the other hand, when *Identical*, my last novel, came out a year ago, Amazon’s editors chose it as the best mystery of the month, so I’m not on some global banned list. Amazon believes that capitalism is like bare-knuckles boxing, and there were authors who were reluctant to criticize them a few years ago. But the Hachette incident has shown that they are your partner only until they need to throw you overboard. I am lucky that I’ve had a long career as a successful author with more good years behind me than lie ahead, and as a lawyer I’ve learned to take strong positions for good causes. But I’m not holding my breath for another invitation to the Campfire.

Taylor: In *Identical* you make use of a venerable literary trope: twins. What led you to make twins your principal characters?

Turow: This is a fairly personal answer. My sister, who was born when I was almost three, was carried as a twin. After being told that two babies would come home from the hospital, I found that only one arrived. It was all the more a mystery because my dad was an ob-gyn who managed to deliver healthy, happy babies for everyone else. I became preoccupied with the baby who would have been my brother and thoughts of the “lost twin” were frequent in my childhood. This was a natural subject for me, one I had actually thought about most of my life.

Taylor: The novel also references Greek mythology in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Was that your intention from the start, or did that pattern evolve with the story?

Turow: Well, as the answer above suggests, the lost twin loomed over my life in the large way of myth, so it was natural that I looked to the Greek myths for inspiration. The myth of Castor and Pollux, the so-called Gemini, identical but for the fact that one was mortal and the other immortal, early on suggested a plot twist that intrigued me. And I’d also spent a couple of years socializing in and observing the Greek-American community in Chicago. Many factors and interests flowed together.

Taylor: Many of your stories, including *Identical*, develop through gripping and often dramatic exchanges of dialogue. Do you have a special method for producing realistic human exchanges?

Turow: Dialogue is weird because it’s not a tape-recording of actual speech. Years ago, when I took a break from law practice to teach writing at Northwestern, I gave my students the transcripts of the tapes of the private conversations between Monica Lewinsky and Linda Tripp, the Republican operative who ultimately outed the Clinton-Lewinsky relationship, and asked them to turn it into dialogue. It was a good way to show the differences between speech as spoken and as written in fiction. But my good fortune is that I’ve always heard the characters speak in my head without any effort. When my youngest child was nine, we wrote a short story together, and I was knocked out to see how natural dialogue was for her. So maybe it’s in the wiring. I don’t know.

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Taylor: I've heard there's a reunion in the works for The Rock Bottom Remainers. What's the story there? Think you'll ever play music better than "Metallica writes novels"?

Turow: Like all great bands, the Remainers can only prove their greatness by reuniting once in a while to thrill a clamoring public—or else because somebody's offering free cocktails. We did play at last year's Miami Book Fair, and we've agreed to appear at the Tucson Book Festival next March. I'm not sure there's really a great demand for this—but we all have a hell of a lot of fun. As for me, by the standards of a band where many members actually have some talent, I have none. I sing and occasionally hit the right note. I am there to prove that the rest of them don't take themselves very seriously—or to make them look even better by contrast. I love them all, but in a blessed life, no privilege I have enjoyed has been more undeserved than appearing with the Remainers beside giant talents like Roger McGuinn, Judy Collins, or the late Warren Zevon. If life were really a meritocracy, I wouldn't even be allowed to sweep the stage.

One Giant Step Back

Margaret Lazarus Dean bids a nuanced farewell to American spaceflight

**Michael Ray Taylor, M.F.A.
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Leaving Orbit: Notes From the Last Days of American Spaceflight

By Margaret Lazarus Dean

Graywolf Press

320 pages

\$16

One Sunday in July 1971, when I was eleven years old, my father loaded our family into an aging speedboat with an iffy motor and set out from our home in Ormond Beach, Florida, for what was then called Cape Kennedy. We were heading south, sixty miles down the Intracoastal Waterway, so we could watch NASA launch Apollo 15. After a long meandering journey through lagoons and inlets, we docked in Titusville and spent the night with a relative. The next day, anchored amid a flotilla of spectators in the Indian River some ten miles from the space center, we witnessed the awesome power of a Saturn V from close enough to see the crew compartment that carried three men toward the moon.

As the rocket thundered through the blue Florida sky, I felt bound to a national pride in the space program. A year and a half later, the moon landings ended. In 1986, when he was nine, my younger brother experienced a different sort of life-changing moment: his fourth-grade class walked out to the P.E. field to watch the Challenger carry a schoolteacher—the first civilian chosen to fly in space—into orbit. Instead the children and their teacher watched in stunned silence as pieces of the exploding space shuttle rained into the Atlantic.

Sometime between these moments in my life and my brother's, between the thrill of the Apollo landings and the horror of the Challenger disaster, attitudes toward manned spaceflight and the very meaning of space exploration shifted in the public psyche. The risk and the cost of space suddenly seemed too great. Astronauts were no longer famous; space was at once boringly routine and increasingly dangerous.