Opinion

Photo of the Day



Athletes exchange kick pads during Taekwondo practice on Feb. 1, 2026. The team is preparing for its first tournament of 2026, which will take place later this month. PHOTO BY MAK BLAKE, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Lex Walton, the epidemic of parasocial hyper-confessional booths and you

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Content warning: mental illness and suicide.

Musician Lex Walton's 2023 indie rock album "I WANT YOU TO KILL ME," an expression of abuse, unsafe Internet use as a minor, identity turmoil and suicidality, has found the love of online music listeners looking for niche art. Many of these digital audience members can find aspects of this extremely and jarringly confessional album to relate to and identify with Walton's struggles. While it's great to have art that can comfort or educate you, listeners of "I WANT YOU TO KILL ME" need to understand that they do not actually know Lex Walton, or any artist they haven't personally talked to, despite how revealing art can be. They need to know these artists' minds can be different than how they present themselves, and stop feeding delusions of mutual understanding.

Lex Walton was certainly confessional prior to creating her 2023 magnum opus, but seemingly threw out the filter to record "I WANT YOU TO KILL ME.". Walton takes heavy inspiration from indie rock band Car Seat Headrest (primarily their hit album "Twin Fantasy") to create a cathartic and vulnerable piece of art about one woman's mental fight to live in all its ugliness.

Walton acknowledges on the first song of the album, "The Greek Tragedy In Action," that struggling with depression and suicide transcends time and space entirely. As such, even people in prehistory can struggle and display information about what they're going through. The people of the future will do the same. Walton claims that, although the circumstances are different for every human being, her struggles are neither the first nor the last.

What makes art worthy of preserving and sharing is its impact on those who experience it. Walton is incredibly aware of this and assures the audience directly on the penultimate track, "Southland Tales," that although there are similarities, they are not the same. She says that the audience's life will continue whereas her story ends when the album is over. If Walton didn't believe in her art's ability to comfort others, she wouldn't have released something so personal.

But her voice and instrument playing is only that to the audience: art, or a fragment of her complex psyche. This is evident in how Walton portrays her voice to be the art and not her person. Art is not meant to be conflated for the actual artist behind it since, like the audience, the artist can change over time and lie.

It should be understood that this album is an extension of her but does not define her identity. This is why it's crucial for her audience, as well as people who engage with art in general, to understand what it means to be parasocial in an age where one-sided relationships with artists are increasingly common, exacerbated by social media.

The term "parasocial" was originally coined as a sociological term in 1956 and has an impact that's still being researched as the world changes. It went as far as to be Cambridge Dictionary's word of 2025 due to its stark, almost unavoidable presence in our lives.

The parasociability that most people refer to isn't the casual entertainment-social type, which everyone around art is bound to indulge in, but rather the intense-personal and, in extreme cases, the borderline-pathological. Intense-personal gives the illusion of a relationship with this party typically knowing they don't know you, whereas borderline-pathological is taken to such an extreme you have fantasies and even delusions of satisfying the relationship.

Parasociability could potentially be used as a tool for personal good, but it can also be extremely dangerous when unchecked. While it can help with becoming more empathetic to others' emotions and battling loneliness, it can also make people reject reality. Some people with intense parasocial relationships react negatively towards people who don't like or understand the art the same way they do, getting defensive for people who don't know they exist.

Walton develops these parasocial feelings in most of the audience and uses them for an artistic statement and an emotionally moving result. It is undoubtedly and authentically human. But we are more than the past solidified in art. We are so nuanced and complex that we cannot ever truly be replicated if we have something unique to say.

As long as there is a need for art, there will inevitably be parasocial relationships. Lex Walton and so many other artists use art to comfort people in their present and future like how they needed to be comforted. As Walton said on "Greek Tragedy In Action," "our pain is not eradicated, but shared." But the audience and the artist are separate individuals. Art is selected expressions of some stories out of billions crying to be told. The artist's is just the most accessible and preserved. Art gives people opportunities to improve their own lives, but we need to understand that we don't truly know the artist's own complexities.



Lex Walton performing at Trash Bridge Music Venue. Her album, "I WANT YOU TO KILL ME" was released on Nov. 25, 2023. PHOTO COURTESY OF @ FULL_LIFE_CONSEQUENCES ON INSTAGRAM

You can learn another language (and you should)

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Many, if not most, have toyed with the idea of learning another language. Many students in America were required to study a second language in school, but I'd argue this is the reason most Americans lose their interest in learning another language. The system of teaching languages in public school is quite poor overall and discourages students from pursuing another language, as they often make little practical progress over years of studying, leading to a belief that language learning is much more unattainable than it actually is. I'm here to tell you that language learning is not as difficult as it was made to seem; it is entirely possible to acquire another language, and it is well worth the time and effort it requires.

ILLUSTRATION BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Learning another language offers you an entirely new perspective and understanding. In learning a new structure of language, you're learning new ways of expression, as well as opening your mind to that which your language was limiting you in. To fully explain this, I'd have to get into language theory, which is probably unnecessary, as you can just take my word for it (I'm very trustworthy and know lots of stuff). By taking up a new language you're actively opening pathways in your brain that could easily go unused. It has the added benefit of forming a strong basis for understanding language and communication in general, including your mother tongue. This includes important but sometimes boring stuff, like grammar and syntax.

I'll start with the joy that language learning can offer, as many have negative experiences with the practice. Language learning, like most learning, is not linear. There will be points where progress feels slower, but there will also be points where you find yourself proving you've learned much more than you had even realized. I've found that the first few weeks of language learning are generally very exciting, as your ability in a language jumps tremendously from nothing to knowing a number of phrases. This is very encouraging as you can see clear progress but can also feel discouraging when you hit a wall where progress starts to slow down. It's important to stay on top of your level and adjust accordingly. Generally, this means ensuring you have different modes of practicing a language where you aren't consuming content that is too difficult or too easy. One thing that can improve learning is the practice of journaling, or an easier alternative of thinking in your target language throughout the day. At first this will mean constantly looking up words and phrases you don't know, but you'll soon find that the words and phrases you use most in your life will be engrained in your mind after only a few days.

The great thing about learning a new language is the joy from the first few weeks of learning is felt every time you have an opportunity to utilize your newfound skill. Any time you find yourself conversing in your target language or simply coming across a familiar phrase or word, you're growing your understanding and showing your progress to yourself.

Some general tips that I've found to be the most useful in learning a new language is thinking about things you enjoy doing and which of those things can be altered to include your target language. An example of this could be watching YouTube videos in your target language. Most likely these will initially be videos geared towards learners of your target language, but if you're anything like me, you'll probably get bored of this quickly, and want to research to find creators who speak your target language. The same can be said for watching movies and series. You can watch a series or film you have seen before in your target language (I find it's more effective to watch without English subtitles). If you are interested in learning to speak the language, as opposed to just comprehending and writing, then it's important that you find ways to practice speaking; namely find someone who speaks your target language. This can be difficult, so if you're struggling to find a speaking partner, don't limit your speaking practice. In the meantime, you can watch videos or films in your target language and repeat what the speaker is saying aloud.

Learning a new language can be daunting, but the joy and excitement that is felt throughout the entire process is well worth the effort. It's a great way to uncover new literature, films, series and content, as well as connect with people you may not have otherwise communicated with. Learning a language doesn't have to follow the system that was used in school. It can be entertaining, fun and fulfilling.