

A Dictionary of Modern Consternation

Brook McClurg

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Resembling an updated *Devil's Dictionary* with its sarcastic definitions of buzzwords and euphemistic phrases, *A Dictionary of Modern Consternation* sifts through business and technology jargon and slang vocabulary in a subversive manner. Running alongside this work is a discursive personal account of Brook McClurg's family's recent life: time spent in Kuwait; the birth of his son; returning to the US for a PhD; and IVF treatment during COVID-19.

Both the book's straightforward explanations and its pithy quips have a bite, as in "HUMAN ERROR: Inevitable. HYPERBOLE: Preferable." And it suggests ambivalence about technology: McClurg and his son test Alexa with nonsensical and existential questions, and the book equates email with "a wormhole one can fall into and come out of, having lost all conception of time." McClurg's own narrative comes in the form of footnotes to these ironic dictionary entries. For instance, the book describes expatriates as "people running from something, but with greater privilege and at a more casual clip than those who must flee," while the associated footnote recounts social gatherings at the US embassy in Kuwait.

A wry lexicon with memoir elements, *A Dictionary of Modern Consternation* places the self in a matrix of political and technological absurdity.

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