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## From the Editors

Volume XXVII of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the 2015 English Graduate Symposium, “Being Rhetorical/Rhetorical Being,” which was directed by Matthew Newcomb. On behalf of the Graduate Program, we want to thank Professor Newcomb for putting together an excellent program and for editing the proceedings. Six of our MA students read papers at the Symposium, and the distinguished scholar Marilyn M. Cooper of Michigan Technological University was the respondent and keynote speaker. We are grateful to Professor Cooper for her generous permission to publish the keynote address, “Rhetorical Being.”

The 2017 English Graduate Symposium will be directed by Professor Annie Swafford. Professor Swafford will send out a call for papers in the fall.

The submission deadline for Volume XXVIII of the *Review* is December 15, 2016. We welcome submissions from English graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical, cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. English faculty are invited to submit poetry, translations of poetry, and book reviews. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style and should be submitted as an electronic file accompanied by a hard copy. Essays should not exceed 5000 words (15 pages), book reviews 1250 words, poems five pages, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. With your submission include a brief biographical statement. Please submit material to the Graduate Director, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz.

Students writing a thesis (ENG590) are encouraged to submit an abstract and to apply for the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship. The Fellowship, established by Luella and Donald Cleverley in memory of their son Russell S. Cleverley, who earned his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in December 1995, is open to students matriculated in the MA English program with a 3.3 GPA. Preference is given to ENG 590 students, and to students not otherwise funded by the university. Please submit a letter of application and two letters of recommendation to the English Graduate Director. Applications for the next award (fall 2016 or spring 2017) are due April 15, 2016.

Thanks as always to Jason Taylor for typesetting and production supervision.



# I | Introduction

## Being Rhetorical/Rhetorical Beings

*Matthew Newcomb*

Being and rhetoric are huge terms to work with, but the pairing of those two terms has functioned in several ways in recent years. The field of rhetorical studies is currently undergoing a shift from thinking primarily of beings as human agents who influence and are influenced by others to thinking of being as an exploration of all material things. Any of those things, from people to porcupines to peaches are potentially rhetorical actors in their own right. This combination of rhetoric and being, in newer and older senses, served as the subject of the 2015 Graduate Symposium. Varied approaches to being are reflected in the six graduate student essays collected in this issue of *The Shawangunk Review*. Professor Marilyn Cooper's challenging keynote address also took up many of the current movements toward being in rhetorical studies and stands out here as a valuable example of what is being called *new materialism* in rhetoric concerned with being.

Being, in late twentieth century rhetoric, was often associated with categories and notions of identity. This type of work, considering race, gender, class, sexuality, and other factors in rhetorical contexts, remains relevant. Other areas of growing research, such as digital rhetoric, affect theory, animal studies, and others started presenting new takes on being. Rhetoric and composition scholar Laura Micciche calls the "category 'new materialism,' a capacious enough naming to account for various movements aimed at foregrounding a relational ontology" (489) and asserts that the key is an expanded notion of agency. In other words, maybe these animals, software, visceral responses, and environments should be considered more seriously as rhetorical actors. Often, those elements would be relegated to the background context of a situation, but with the work of Micciche, Cooper, and others, they become co-equal players.

These shifts can be understood in other terms as well. Along with the change in uses of "being," is the turn towards ontology. Instead of emphasizing knowledge, and even understanding the history of composition through different epistemologies, as James Berlin's key work does, thinking of rhetoric as a way of being (sometimes through Heidegger's work) has come to the fore. Similarly, the return to forms of materialism works as a response to postmodern emphases on language playing the primary role in determining what is real. Nonetheless, these new materialisms work to avoid naivety about some

sort of pure access to the world, unfiltered by language, human perceptual biases, and other factors.

The turn to ontology, the material, and more expansive ideas about agency brings its own set of issues as well. What is the difference between rhetorical persuasion and force, influence, material impact, and other notions of one thing changing another thing? Does this expansive notion of rhetoric make rhetoric such an inclusive term as to mean very little at all? Or, perhaps, is rhetoric a style of life—a manner of being in the world? This is how rhetoric scholar Thomas Rickert describes it when he seizes on the term “dwelling” to describe the role of rhetoric, stating,

Rhetoric accomplishes its work by inducing us to shift, at least potentially, how we dwell or see ourselves dwelling in the world. Rhetoric does not just change subjective state of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term *dwelling* here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to flourish) in a place, or better, how they come together in the continual making of a place. (emphasis in original, xiii)

Here the focus shifts from what beings are to how they are. Instead of thinking of rhetoric as something beings of particular types (gendered beings, aged beings, cultured beings, and so forth) do, rhetoric is a way of acting and living with others. What types of beings are involved still matters, but the approach is central. Perhaps a cat curls up in your lap, and you pet it absentmindedly, or maybe you nudge it off because the hot day and warm fur do not mix. These relationships, grounded in physicality, can be understood as rhetorical—as parts of dwelling together in ways where the weather, the cat, and the person all persuade each other by extra-linguistic means. As Diane Davis explains, “the goal is to expose an originary (or preoriginary) rhetoricity—an *affectability* or *persuadability*—that is the condition for symbolic action” (emphasis in original, 2). The reality is that we all can affect each other, and “we” includes the non-human and the non-living. Rhetoric becomes a way to think about how those moments of connection and impact work.

All this discussion of materiality and being is a snippet of one direction work in rhetoric has turned. Certainly, literary studies has its own versions of this too. While there is some danger in moves that always expand, always try to take in more things as rhetorical (or literary, or whatever else), a tendency towards interdisciplinarity is one potential benefit of the new materialism. Science studies, work in neurology, new angles on psychology, biology, and physics can all be connected in interesting ways—one can put words together with pre-cognitive responses in the brain, with chemical changes in the body, and with alterations to a local ecosystem (to give a few examples) for a very

different notion of rhetorical situation than how it has traditionally been understood.

To return to more solid ground, the papers collected here from the 2015 English Graduate Symposium on “Being Rhetorical/Rhetorical Being” range across different uses of the concept of being. Danielle Denaro demonstrates how the language of Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest* directly uses Civil Rights rhetoric to explore options for racialized beings and for beings working under and against repressive regimes. The adoption of rhetoric from one context for another connects her paper to Damien Toman’s otherwise distinct look at uses of the King James Bible in later American religious movements. He analyzes *The Book of Mormon* and *Science and Health*, considering how the King James Bible gives authority and even existence to Latter-Day Saint and Christian Science rhetoric. The familiar King James text, which generations of readers lived with as part of their lives provides an air of familiarity and comfort to ideas that may be radically different than the dominant religious ideas of the time. Toman explores dwelling with a text, with a language pattern. For a study of how beings are shown and how they might dwell with each other and with disease, Allison Leshowitz crosses media boundaries to analyze television, novel, and non-fiction written forms of cancer narratives. She emphasizes how these different modes depict beings with cancer, and cancer itself can be seen as a powerful material actor.

What status or power beings of different sorts may have links the next set of essays. Kasey Tveit’s paper on Mary Shelley’s Creature in *Frankenstein* explores a being that crosses boundaries of gender and that uses specific rhetorical means to attempt to define itself. Gender in terms of “toxic masculinity” comes to the fore in Alana Sawchuk’s detailed critique of shooter Elliot Rodger’s “manifesto.” Her argument looks at the cultural context around a way of being masculine and the dangers that brings. Finally, Sean Antonucci’s work on textual and visual rhetoric on the marginalia of the Bayeux Tapestry considers what form or mode of being the tapestry best foreshadows: comics, film, or something of its own, while considering the relationships of the animals and other beings in the margins to the central text.

Professor Marilyn Cooper’s keynote lecture, presented here, argues for a less confrontational notion of rhetoric and persuasion, moving toward persuasion that is “polite and creative response to others and to the world.” She considers how her less competitive concept of persuasion, along with similar ideas like Rickert’s “attunement” and Isabelle Stenger’s “modification of dreams,” function as an alternative to traditional western rhetoric. According to Cooper, that traditional definition works more out of conflict with the goal of dominance. To work out her theory, she develops process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead’s concept of concrescence, which points to the

continual creation of new, often temporary, beings. Concrecence is about surprising ways of being together, with both humans and non-humans. Professor Cooper explores her own encounter with a dragonfly as a moment of concrecence, where the two of them dwelt together briefly and left a persuasive influence before separating into the flow of life. She then explores geochemist Bill Green's description of cobalt and its effects on metals in Antarctic waters. This may not sound like typical rhetorical persuasion, and it isn't. Instead, the way Green writes about cobalt—as a respected actor putting forth possibilities for scientists and others to consider—serves as Green's polite and creative response to the world. It is his way of being rhetorical. Cooper uses this writing on cobalt as an exemplar of the way of being rhetorical that she calls for, and to show the value of understanding something like an element in rhetorical terms.

I welcome you to this edition of the *Shawangunk Review* and encourage you to consider both what sorts of beings you encounter and what ways of being you find in the essays introduced here. Look, too, for those themes in the poetry and other submissions throughout the volume. One of the advantages of literature and rhetoric, I must think, is to consider ways of being—and becoming—with the world.

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## II | Keynote Address

### **Rhetorical Being**

*Maryilyn M. Cooper*

Nearly three decades ago, in “An Ecology of Writing,” I argued against the common treatment of context in rhetoric and composition as scene or backdrop, proposing instead that rhetoricians are always immersed in an interactive web of relations with others. Now, along with increasing numbers of rhetoric scholars such as Thomas Rickert and Diane Davis and scholars in other fields, I think that those others are more active than I had conceived them to be in 1986, and that they include nonhuman animals, technologies, things, elements, and even the weather. Inspired by Isabelle Stengers who emphasizes that “we need propositions that would . . . activate the importance of new modes of thinking and feeling the togetherness of our lives” with creaturely others (“Whitehead’s” 29-30), I will explore today the proposition that persuasion is the fundamental mode of our interactions with all kinds of others and thus that being is inescapably rhetorical.

To do this, I start with Davis’ notion of a persuadability that “is at work prior to and in excess of symbolic meaning” (3), which is extended in Rickert’s notion of a worldly persuadability that “inheres in the environment and infrastructure and not just in the attitudes of people” (265). I elaborate this notion of persuadability with the help of Alfred North Whitehead’s concept of concrescence, “the production of novel togetherness” as actual entities (*Process* 21). I then redefine persuasion away from its attachments to warlike struggle over positions in favor of what Rickert calls attunement and Stengers calls a polite modification of dreams: “neither a frontal clash between rival powers nor being swallowed up in the other’s dream, not confusion in a banal dream of power but a local resonance, designating past tenses of divergent accomplishments and future tenses responding to distinct tests” (*Thinking* 518). I adduce some help in this discussion too from Bryan Garsten, who, though he does not extend persuasion to creatures other than humans, also attempts to save persuasion by redefining it as being attentive to others’ positions in order to create new possibilities. Persuasion in the sense I am proposing offers a way forward, that persuasion be understood as a polite and creative response to others and to the world rather than as an effort to dominate others through asserting one’s perspective as definitive reality.

Attunement, slight modifications of dreams, politeness—these are not characteristic of the traditional understanding of persuasion in Western rhet-

oric. Rickert remarks that the pursuit of an ambient rhetoric, a project with which I am deeply sympathetic, “might seem to entail abandoning the realm of symbolic action or some permutation of what we *generally* call persuasion [which] is redolent of subjectivity, epistemology, and symbolicity” (160; emphasis in the original). Indeed, the definition of persuasion I am proposing offends against dearly held Western notions of self, reason, and consciousness and abandons epistemological questions about how we know what we know in favor of ontological questions about what exists. Elsewhere I suggest that redefinitions of rhetorical concepts such as agency and persuasion are warranted by a nascent shift across multiple areas of scholarship toward a vision of the world as enchanted—or re-enchanted. Enchanted ontology replaces the identical self founded in conscious reason with an ongoing process of embodied individuation, entities that sense and feel and think, not always consciously or rationally. The process is founded in relation: everything is entangled with everything else and each entity in its various permutations affects each other entity it encounters. Symbolicity and language do play a role, but they are not essential to rhetorical being, and thus all entities are not only capable of persuasion but do so, if not everyday, pretty often.

To make this all a little more concrete, let me tell you about an encounter I had last summer that persuaded me of something. I was driving down a gravel road near my summer cottage when something buzzed in through the open passenger side window and landed on my thigh. Glancing down, I saw a bright blue spangled dragonfly about three inches long with crawly looking legs. Fortunately, before I panicked about what to do, it buzzed out the window on my side of the car. The encounter with this very other other startled me and left a lasting impression. As I remembered what I had read about dragonflies and learned in a workshop—that they are fast and agile fliers due to their nearly 360-degree field of vision and ability to move their four wings independently—I realized that the encounter had presented me with a proposition that infected all my beliefs about the importance of my role—and that of humans in general—in saving individual animals and species, which I am now persuaded is possibly not quite what I thought it was.

Garsten argues that the project of persuasion requires that “we once again look directly at one another and speak directly to one another,” that it requires that “we pay attention to our fellow citizens and to their opinions” (210). True persuasion, he says, “persuasion that lies between manipulation and pandering,” preserves the “active independence” of the listener: the orator “merely puts words into the air,” and listeners engage in “an active process of evaluation and assimilation” (7). This sounds a lot like Kenneth Burke’s notion of identification, and indeed it is similar in some ways. Burke says,

You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his. . . And you give the “signs’ of such consubstantiality by deference to an audience’s “opinions” (55; emphasis in the original).

He also says, “Persuasion involves, choice, will; it is directed to a man only insofar as he is *free*” (50; emphasis in the original). Like Burke, Garsten limits persuasion to verbal, or at least human, means. But Garsten also suggests that the relation between rhetor and listener that persuasion sets up is reciprocal and productive of new propositions. Though persuasion is often motivated by our partial positions, he says, “it nevertheless draws us out of ourselves” (210). He sees persuasion as a matter of influence, rather than proof: “In addressing our fellow citizens directly, we make an effort to influence them . . . with articulated thoughts that appeal to their distinctly human capacity for judgment” (211). And he notes that engaging listeners’ capacity for judgment allows them to consider new positions:

We judge best when we are situated within [our] structures of value, able to draw upon their complexity and able to feel, emotionally, the moral and practical relevance of different considerations in as subtle a way as experience has equipped us to do. And . . . because much of the art of rhetoric consists in drawing new pathways between hitherto weakly related parts of these structures, we need not view ourselves as trapped in our situation but simply grounded there. (192)

In arguing that we are grounded but not trapped, Garsten signals an understanding of selves as changing in relation to their experiences, and in emphasizing the essential role of emotions in persuasion, he rejects rationality as its sole source.

Davis critiques Burke’s notion of identification on these two points, that it rests on his assumption of a biologically separate self that desires to achieve sociality—being-with— through rationality and symbolicity. Referencing the discovery of mirror neurons which activate not only in conjunction with one’s own actions but also in response to observing others’ actions, she argues that “this identification surely does not depend on shared meaning: a mimetic rapport precedes understanding” (24). She finds further grounding for this argument in Freud’s interest in suggestivity through hypnosis, adducing Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen’s analysis of Freud’s related notion of transference: “transference reveals that the influence of the hypnotist’ is grounded . . . in ‘an a priori affectability (a ‘spontaneous receptivity’) in the patient—that is to say [in] the ‘rhetoricity’ of the affect as such, a rhetoricity anterior to any verbal persuasion” (31; quoting Borch-Jacobsen). Davis argues that if affectability is

prior to persuasion, then “the entire logic of identification has to be rethought” (26). Understanding persuadability as prior to symbolicity or language and as affective and not solely rational begins to explain how I can say that the dragonfly persuaded me: it communicated with me through an encounter and not through language or symbols; and my being persuaded was more a matter of feeling than of reason.

Davis also argues that persuasion is thus not dependent on conscious intention, as does Rickert in arguing for a “worldly persuadability transcending human intent” (112). Rickert proposes not only that beings and things other than humans engage in rhetoric, but also that intent and consciousness are not sufficient to account for rhetoric. He says, “Intent and self-consciousness no doubt matter enormously, but they no longer suffice to determine what is rhetoric and what is not” (36). I have argued elsewhere that intent and action are largely nonconscious processes that we become aware of only after the fact (“Rhetorical”). Whitehead too says that “no conscious intention is necessarily involved in expression” (*Modes* 21). As Wittgenstein says, “the intention *with which* one acts does not ‘accompany’ the action any more than the thought ‘accompanies’ speech” (217). Intentions are enacted; they do not exist prior to acts as causes. Thus I am not saying that the dragonfly consciously intended to persuade me, just that I was persuaded by what its action expressed.

Davis’s rethinking of identification reverses Burke’s understanding of the production of sociality; she cites Freud and Heidegger to argue that it is the withdrawal of identity, “through disidentification, dislocation, depropriation that social feeling emerges” (35). Disconnection also figures in Heidegger’s notion of withdrawal, on which Rickert bases an ambient rhetoric. For Heidegger, the world is revealed, or disclosed, to us through our attunement to how we are enmeshed in it. Revealing includes both a grasp of what is present and, crucially, of what withdraws: as Rickert explains, “withdrawal is the reserving of the material world away from all relationality not to disappear but to hold within itself the potential that forms the wellspring for all other and future relationality” (212). Withdrawal, says Rickert, “invites an attunement to world as something that can be revealed differently, since its depths always harbor that possibility” (213).

Whitehead also believes that the world harbors new possibilities. He proposes that “by due attention, more can be found in nature than that which is observed at first sight” (*Concept* 29), and he concludes that “nature is never complete. It is always passing beyond itself. This is the creative advance of nature” (*Process* 289). He claims that instead of aiming at certain knowledge, understanding, if it is not to fail, must always be accompanied by a “sense of growth” and a dim sense of “the unexplored relationships with things beyond” (*Modes* 48). But instead of seeing possibilities as arising through disconnec-

tion, Whitehead sees them as emerging through relation and expression.

Whitehead's notion of concrescence, defined as the production of novel togetherness, suggests that persuadability is not just the condition for rhetoric but that it is the condition for the existence of all actual entities, and thus that being is rhetorical. Concrescence is somewhat similar to Heidegger's enigmatic notion of the fourfold, in which things come to presence through gathering aspects of the world "into something that stays for a while: into this thing, that thing" (172). The dragonfly gathers the currents of air produced by the car's passage, the open window, my thigh, into something that stays for a while — into something Whitehead calls an actual entity. Whitehead's description of concrescence is equally enigmatic: "The many become one and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively 'many' in process of passage into conjunctive unity" (*Process* 21). Let me unpack that a bit. In the "creative advance" of concrescence, a novel entity, the one — that dragonfly on my thigh in that car — arises from a gathering of some of the many already existing actual entities and thereby adds one more entity to the many.

An actual entity is a finite, particular entity "that 'decides for itself': thus, and not otherwise" (Stengers, *Thinking* 263). Whitehead says, "The point to be emphasized is the insistent particularity of things experienced and of the act of experiencing. . . . *That* wolf [ate] *that* lamb at *that* spot at *that* time" (*Process* 43; emphasis in the original). Garsten similarly argues that "respect for the actual opinions of one's audience serves to acknowledge the particular features of individuals . . . a respect for what Seyla Benhabib has called 'the concrete other'" (198). I can turn to my guide to dragonflies of the north woods (Mead), as I have, and discover that what flew into my car was a blue darner, probably a Canada darner or a Lake darner, but in doing so I am referring my experience to an abstraction and not paying attention to or respecting the singularity of that particular dragonfly that flew into my car on that day.

Whitehead also uses the term actual occasion for actual entity, emphasizing not only the relative impermanence of entities that "stay for a while" in the process of passage into another actual entity but also that in its formation, an actual entity expresses something. What it expresses is a proposition, like the one I offered you at the beginning of my talk. As I will discuss later, Whitehead's propositions are not essentially linguistic. Expression in Whitehead's usage, is the activity of the finite actual entity "impressing itself on its environment" (*Modes* 20), diffusing "in the environment . . . something initially entertained in the experience of" the actual entity (*Modes* 23). Each actual entity, says Whitehead, "is a gathering of things into the unity of a prehension" (*Science* 69). Prehension is just the reception of expression, so in the unity of prehension, everything is infected with the presence of the other things in the gathering. Stengers explains that expression is "that which will make itself felt,"

the novelty that “in one way or another, will have to be taken into account” (*Thinking* 423). An actual occasion is an occasion of mutual influence.

Whitehead says that expression is “more than interpretable. It is creative. It elicits the intuition which interprets it . . . the existent intuition which would not otherwise emerge” (qtd. in Stengers 426). While Oscar Wilde famously criticized Wordsworth’s communion with nature saying, “He found in stones the sermons he had already hidden there” (301), Whitehead, instead, argues that Wordsworth “always grasps the whole of nature as involved in the tonality of the particular instance” (*Science* 83). Whitehead especially praises the first book of *The Prelude*: “it would hardly be possible to express more clearly a feeling for nature, as exhibiting entwined prehensive unities, each suffused with modal presences of others” (*Science* 84). What the dragonfly persuaded me of is not simply my interpretation. As Garsten argues, being persuaded involves action by both the rhetor and the listener. The dragonfly’s action was creative: it impressed itself on me; the proposition it proffered elicited an intuition that would not have otherwise emerged.

Stengers suggests that Whitehead’s speculative philosophy is a model of politeness, “not addressed to everyone, but to others, . . . insofar as their habits constitute a world for them . . . To others, then, insofar as one cannot claim to ‘put oneself in their place’” (*Thinking* 517). His proposals are adventures that do “not aim at awakening, leaving the cave” to dispel false illusions, to deconstruct, to engage in polemic or argument (Stengers, *Thinking* 516). Garsten foregrounds the etymological link of politeness to politics when he emphasizes the importance of rhetoricians showing respect for and paying attention to the actual opinions of their fellow citizens. Donna Haraway, too, ties respect “to polite greeting, to constituting the polis, where and when species meet” (19). She elaborates what’s involved in the act of respect: “To hold in regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention, to have courteous regard for, to esteem” (19). Respect is not only essential to the habit of paying attention to the specific individual but also, as Haraway argues, to how entities are changed in the unity of prehension, how they “become with,” transform and become persuaded in the encounter. The habit of respect, of paying due attention, as Whitehead says, is what allows persuasion to become a creative rather than a critical practice, adding new possibilities of proceeding.

The advantage of seeing persuasion as a form of polite modification that requires respect for specific others is that it leads to problem-solving rather than impassés. Stengers describes the success that politeness offers: “that laughter may resound testifying to the entertainment of a proposition that transforms what was accepted as an unavoidable alternative into a badly posed problem” (*Thinking* 517). Instead of critiquing opposing positions dearly held

by others, instead of compromising between them, instead of tolerating—and thereby dismissing the importance of—differences, polite persuasion seeks to turn contradictory positions into a contrast that “can be celebrated in the manner of a new existent, adding a new dimension to the cosmos” (Stengers, *Thinking* 513). Bruno Latour demonstrates how this works when he argues that the impasse between the objective facts of climate change that demand sacrifices from human society and the real needs and desires of human society can be turned into a contrast. The entanglement of both “nature” and “society” in such questions as climate change is a proposition that adds a new existent: the collective, that includes both humans and nonhumans who together engage in deliberations (*Politics* 37-39). He notes, “when the newly recruited non-humans show up to enrich the demography of the collective, they are quite incapable of interrupting discussions, short-circuiting procedures, canceling out deliberations: they are there, on the contrary, to complicate and open up these procedures” (*Politics* 38).

Polite persuasion facilitates problem-solving in human society, but as Latour suggests here, it is even more beneficial as a way of addressing ways of rhetorical being in the material world. Gemma Fiumara observes that “There must be some problem of listening if we only hear from earth when it is so seriously endangered that we cannot help paying heed” (6). Humans have for far too long assumed that nonhumans are nonconscious automatons or inert material, thus having nothing to communicate to us. As Whitehead says, by paying due attention we can find more things in the world than that which is observed at first sight.

There are humans who do pay due attention to the material world: those many natural scientists who are fascinated and persuaded by nonhuman others. In this last part of my talk, I will consider how geochemist Bill Green was persuaded by the cobalt he encountered in Antarctica. You can find cobalt, if you want to see it, in cobalt blue watercolor paint. Cobalt is a heavy metal, so this paint is toxic— but it’s also a lovely paint to work with. Bill Green encountered cobalt at one of the lakes in the Dry Valleys, and it presented him with a proposition: “In Vanda, something seems to be removing the metals from the oxygen-rich shallow waters and releasing them to the oxygen-poor deep waters” (149-50).

Latour and Vinciane Despret, who both study the work of natural scientists, argue that paying due attention to natural entities means giving them all the chances, allowing them to be more interesting (Latour, “Well-Articulated”; Despret, “Sheep”). Latour suggests that one way to think of how to do this is to consider the behavior of entities as Whiteheadian propositions, “offers . . . to relate to another under a certain perspective” (“Well-Articulated” 372). He explains: “A proposition designates a certain way of loading an entity into an-

other by making the second attentive to the first, and by making both of them diverge from their usual path, their usual interpretation” (“Well-Articulated” 372). Green attends to cobalt by engaging it in a procedure that allows it to become interesting, that allows it to offer a proposition.<sup>1</sup> One of his colleagues suggests that manganese might be involved in the behavior of cobalt, so Green collects water samples at different depths in the lake and transports them back to his lab in Ohio where he uses an automatic sampler and a graphite furnace to analyze the amount of cobalt and manganese present in the different water samples. His handling of the samples, both in their collecting and analysis, evinces respect: he describes his obsession with the purity of the samples, his exactitude in setting up the autosampler and its interface with the computer that translated the analyses into a graph relating the depth of the water to the concentration of cobalt and manganese. He comments on how the instruments repeated the analysis of each sample in triplicate: “It was working, but I couldn’t watch. I was too nervous” (163). When at last he looked at the graph, he found that “Point for point, the curve for cobalt analysis matched the curve for manganese. Matched it to a T. Where the dissolved manganese was low, so too was the cobalt. Where the manganese rose, in response to the disappearance of oxygen, so too did the cobalt. . . The story was beginning to write itself” (163).

Here’s Green’s version of the story:

The river came in the springtime. It was sound and it was light, but it was also the head-over-heels tumbling of each water molecule, the combined energies of those water molecules, their separated charges like torch fires, burning at the tips. What sound did the loosening of cobalt make, the adsorbed ion wavering a little like a minnow at the surface of a rock, then heading off downstream? How long did it stay in the lake after it had glided there on the current . . .? Maybe a year, maybe five. . . Then what? Perhaps an encounter with the surface of clay, glazed with a few atom-thicknesses of manganese oxide. Then capture. The cobalt transferred from water to stone, perhaps oxidized even, an electron transferred in the wink of an eye . . . from the cobalt to the manganese. The stone sinks, first swiftly through fresh water, then more slowly through salt, the cobalt all the while clinging, being basketed and woven in like Moses by the manganese. And this is the way it goes. A downward journey of a few weeks. . . And in the oxygen-poor waters the manganese is reduced, falls away, unravels like a thread. The atom of cobalt is free again, waterbound . . . So it stays. Perhaps a year. Then another encounter: Something that was once living, a few cells still clinging together drift by. To the cobalt it is as though the roots and branches of a great

elm were being dragged by in a flood. The branches reach out, enfold it: chelation. It is on its way to the sediments. Possibly to a small eternity there. Until the next ice sheet comes. But even buried you can hear it, you can hear the cobalt. Like the salt plains, you can hear it sing. (159-60)

I quote at length because Green, like many natural scientists is a wonderful rhetor—not just skillful, but full of wonder. And his story allows me to return to the question of where and how language comes into the process of persuasion.

As I said earlier, propositions are not essentially linguistic. Latour says, “Propositions . . . do not pertain to language but to the world” (“Well-Intentioned” 373). But unlike statements, he says, “the notion of propositions allows things to be loaded into words. Whereas a statement implies the existence of a talkative human surrounded by mute things, a proposition implies that we are made to speak in this way *by what* is talked about” (“Well-Intentioned” 374; emphasis in the original). The respectful attention Green paid to cobalt warrants his translation of the proposition the cobalt expresses into language. As he says: in the analysis, the story writes itself.

Stengers’ comment that we need propositions that would activate new modes of thinking and feeling the togetherness of our lives with creaturely others that inspired me comes from her consideration of Whitehead’s account of the sixth day of creation. Whitehead is concerned in his account to explain the human feeling that we are somehow separated from other creatures, and that that separation involves language. Stengers argues that in concluding that, “He gave them speech, and they became souls” (*Modes* 41), Whitehead is trying to change the problem, to shift it away from the tired question of who is responsible for what in linguistic meaning. This is the same question Latour addressed in discussing the difference between statements and propositions. With statements one is presented with a seeming impasse: is it the objective facts of nature that are responsible for the meaning or the scientists who are responsible for their subjective interpretation of the facts? Or is it language that imprisons scientists in meanings it has abstracted from the world? Stengers says that to understand what change Whitehead is suggesting, we need to focus on the second clause of Whitehead’s statement and ask “what we became when we were given speech, not what was given to us by speech” (“Whitehead’s” 23).

Whitehead distinguishes four types of aggregations of entities — he calls them societies<sup>2</sup> — in nature: the inorganic, like cobalt, that “lacks individual expression” (*Modes* 27); the vegetable, that “exhibits a democracy of purposeful influences issuing from its parts” (*Modes* 27); the animal, that exhibits a “central actuality supported by the intricacy” of the functioning of its

parts, and that thus has purposes beyond “the mere aim of survival” based in an apprehension of what is important (*Modes* 28); and the human animal, whose life “receives its worth, its importance” from novelty, “from the way in which unrealized ideals shape its purposes and tinges its actions” (*Modes* 27). He emphasizes that the differences are differences in degree, “but the extent of the degree makes all the difference” (*Modes* 27). Stengers says that we became souls when we became “able to entertain possibility as such, that is, also able to tell tales about what could have been but never will be” (“Whitehead’s” 23). But she argues that language does not create these tales; it rather presupposes “the feeling of those tales that may be told” (“Whitehead’s” 23). It presupposes the entertainment of propositions, whose efficacy is, she says, quoting Whitehead, “a tremendous mode of excitement. Like a stone thrown into a pond it disturbs the whole surface of our being” (*Modes* 36). Stengers cautions, “If, on the sixth day, being given speech, we became souls, it is thus not because we entertain propositions: so does a rabbit or an oyster, or a living cell” (“Whitehead’s” 26)—and I would add so does an element like cobalt. She concludes:

We became souls because of the difference language makes in the rippling consequences of a proposition’s impact. Being given language means that when a proposition is entertained it is given a social environment such that its impact may be amplified into many divergent, entangled consequences, activating that mode of functioning which is the soul. (“Whitehead’s” 26)

As she explains, language

induces not the reaction of a rabbit becoming aware that this grey shade is what we call a wolf, that is a convinced “it matters!”, but a speculative adventure entailing questions such as “how does it matter?”, “does it really matter?”, “what if I accepted that it does not matter?”, “how did it come to matter?”, unrealized ideals then shaping our experiences. (“Whitehead’s” 28)

And Whitehead attributes the difference that language makes to its ability to link “one’s past into one’s present”: he says, “an articulated memory is the gift of language” (*Modes* 33), releasing us “from complete bondage to the immediacies of mood and circumstance” (*Modes* 35). Language allows us to integrate the past and future into present experience, thus amplifying the impact of propositions and extending our assimilation of them.

The dragonfly I encountered expressed a proposition: it offered me a relationship, a perspective, that I became attentive to as something that mattered. The impact of the proposition was amplified by the social environment made up of my articulated memories of past experiences of dragonflies and of

reading about them. It induced me to speculate about how it mattered, which brought to mind thoughts of my helping newly hatched snapping turtles across the road and into the slough, and of how my help was sometimes not helpful. This is how the dragonfly persuaded me that humans are not always the best means of securing the survival of others. And this is also how cobalt persuaded Green of something similar, that “in every lake and ocean, in every parcel of atmosphere, there is a cleansing that tempers the Earth . . . Metals pour into the lake, but the lake removes them” (256). The cobalt in Lake Vanda offered Green a proposition. Its disappearance mattered to him; it changed his perspective on lakes, disrupting his beliefs. The impact of the proposition was amplified by his memory of reading about chemical bonds in the book by Linus Pauling his mother gave him in high school; by reading a study about the Laurentian shield in Canada; by discussions with colleagues over the ten years he was working in Antarctica; by Pablo Neruda’s poem “Ode to Salt” that he alludes to at the end of his story. He was struck with the intense feeling of unrealized possibilities, and of the entangled consequences that follow. In his musing on what he learned in the Dry Valleys, Green echoes Whitehead’s claim that the feeling of unrealized possibilities is what’s important in human life; Green says, “What is beyond is all, but what is beyond is hinted at, is eternally present, in what is here—in the swift river and the fierce wind, in the glass, in the ice. It is as though we were destined to wonderment and to praise” (270).

All being is rhetorical, because all beings express and entertain propositions, even though propositions are often not paid attention to and thus fail to disrupt. The material world is entirely capable of persuading us, and we are entirely capable of grasping the entangled consequences of the possibilities it offers. All we have to do is pay attention.

## Notes

1. Green says this about analyzing samples: “To dip a spatula into a powdered reagent, to probe its texture and graininess, to draw it slowly out of its confines, and to watch it lump and plate and roll about in the cavity of a porcelain spoon is to be invited to imagine it in other settings and in other times, to conjure up its possible lives, to cast off the notion that anything, even this inert powder imprisoned on a spatula’s tip, could be dull or anything other than shocking in its very being” (67).
2. Stengers explains that we are never able to talk about actual entities “because the temporality of actual entities is atomic . . . Whatever endures is a society of actual entities and not a *res vera* . . . No particular society endures because of a power of its own; it endures just as long as the corresponding

thread of conformity is not broken by actual entities” (“Whitehead’s” 19).

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### III | Symposium Essays

#### Dreams of the Grassroots: Négritude and Civil Rights Rhetoric in Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*

*Daniella Denaro*

Aimé Césaire was a Martinican politician and poet who famously adapted Shakespeare's final play, *The Tempest*, into the 1969 post-colonial critique play, *A Tempest*. While the source of the play's plot is centuries old, the dialogue between characters contains strikingly similar language to pieces of notably famous Civil Rights Era speeches by Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Using similar rhetorical moves pulled from the speeches of Malcolm and Dr. King, Césaire is able to meditate on the concept of Négritude, a movement created in the 1930's that was helmed by black thinkers. Négritude was a movement that sought to affirm pride in black identity and heritage while simultaneously reclaim African self-determination, self-reliance, and self-respect" (Ngo-Ngijol Banoum). As a father of this movement, Césaire wanted to further the concept of negritude through *A Tempest*. With this play, Césaire creates a unique set of characters by borrowing Shakespearean plot points and Civil Rights era rhetoric; while Ariel exemplifies some aspects of Négritude and gains non-violent focused dialogue, Césaire favors Caliban's character and ideology by making him the more vocal representation of Négritude.

In the expanded version of this essay, I discuss Shakespeare as a source for Césaire's characters, plot, and setting. Césaire's key change was creating a relationship between Ariel and Caliban that isn't present in Shakespeare's version. While Ariel and Caliban harbor different sets of principles, their relationship illustrates a solidarity between opposing ideologies. Through this dynamic, Césaire is able to show that ultimately it is the individual who chooses his own path to freedom. Furthermore, it is Caliban's path that should be traversed.

The rhetoric of both Dr. King and Malcolm X was strategically designed to inspire African-Americans to act. While Dr. King was famous for his non-violent approach to obtaining equality, Malcolm X realized violence was necessary to use as a defense against unjust attacks; consequently the language each man used reflected those respective stances. Notable rhetorical strategies of Dr. King include: proverbs, religious references/images, and metaphors which allowed him to appear "palatable" to not only black audiences, but white ones as well (Miller 168). Furthermore, his religious background influenced his perspective regarding violence—a blend of Christian love and

NAACP protest philosophies that strove to accomplish social change with militant nonviolence (Cone 172).

Malcolm X's speeches are full of vibrant and jarring imagery, with occasional references to his Muslim religion. His theological inspiration was divined by a combination of the Nation of Islam and Black Nationalism (Cone 179). While his rhetorical approach is similar to King's, Malcolm painted a much different picture with his language. Animal imagery figures prominently in Malcolm X's speeches, with his most frequently used metaphor depicting white men as wolves and black men as sheep (Flick & Powell 442). Flick & Powell further elaborate that "...his rapid persuasive messages-dotted with short sentences and quick and cutting answers were the means by which such [societal] conflict was perpetuated," meaning conflict between blacks and whites (435-36). Through his use of imagery and metaphor, Malcolm X was able to call blacks to action, which in turn created active, and at times violent, protestors.

Both Malcolm X and Césaire confronted the tendency of how whites frequently treated blacks as sub-human beings. In *A Tempest*, the white character Prospero refers to the "Negro slave" Caliban. At no point in the play does Prospero refer to Caliban in anything but creature-focused terminology: monster, ape, dumb animal, savage, and beast. The first scene they share ends in an interesting request: Caliban asks his master to call him "X" (Pak 30). Caliban's attempt at re-naming himself allows him to stake a claim to his identity while simultaneously distancing himself from the cruel names Prospero calls him. Additionally, the name Caliban chooses reinforces the strong bond between him and Malcolm X. This instance aligns with Négritude as explained by Césaire, as Caliban seeks to reclaim his black identity through choosing a name with significance.

A common assumption made about Malcolm X's speeches is that they were filled with baseless and violent imagery, as well as endorsements of violent behavior. While this fact stands, violence was only permissible as self-defense in the eyes of Malcolm X; the black man should be able to defend himself from white violence in the same manner that the white man had done against his enemies for centuries (Cone 179). Malcolm X's approach to violence was based on his association with the NOI:

There's nothing in our book...that teaches us to suffer peacefully. Our religion teaches us to be intelligent. Be peaceful [...] but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery. [...] an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and a head for a head, and a life for a life [...] And doesn't nobody resent that kind of religion being taught but a wolf, who intends to make you his meal (X 12-13).

Here Malcolm expands on the phrase “eye for an eye” by extending the metaphor to include heads and lives; while the original image is violent itself, the addendums Malcolm X makes conjure images of certain death, but only in response to violence acted upon the individual first.

Regarding Malcolm X’s doctrine in relation to violence, Caliban perfectly exemplifies the Civil Rights era leader’s creed. In Act II Scene IV, Caliban is presented with an opportunity to battle Prospero. He advances, but Prospero halts him with the words: “Strike! [...] Don’t tell me you’re going to spare him! Go on! You don’t dare! See, you’re nothing but an animal [...] you don’t know how to kill” to which Caliban responds “Defend yourself! I’m not a murderer” (Césaire 55). Caliban does not strike Prospero without a direct attack on his person, even if he is physically capable and has the opportunity to do so. So while throughout the play both Shakespeare’s and Césaire’s Caliban will not physically harm Prospero, the former’s reason is because of fear, while the latter’s reason is because of moral code.

Césaire deploys a lot of borrowed imagery, and at this part in the longer version of my essay, I discuss a few examples of imagery used in Malcolm X’s “Black Revolution” speech, as well as situational imagery that is more congruent with the Civil Rights movement than a magic tropical island. For example, Prospero’s magic closely resembles tear gas. These examples strengthen the parallels Césaire creates between his play, Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights movement.

In his “Message to the Grassroots” speech, Malcolm X elaborates on his approach to violence: “So I cite these various revolutions, brothers and sisters, to show you—you don’t have a peaceful revolution. You don’t have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There’s no such thing as a nonviolent revolution” (9). He frequently peppered his speeches with small familiar phrases like “turn-the-other-cheek,” which made his speeches approachable by the common man. His rhetoric was effective in that the masses could latch onto these simple phrases and take them to heart. Césaire appropriated that strategy for use in a conversation between Ariel and Caliban: “ARIEL: I don’t believe in violence. CALIBAN: What do you believe in, then? In cowardice? [...] In kneeling and groveling? That’s it, someone strikes you on the right cheek and you offer the left” (Césaire 27). This imagery uses the same moves as Malcolm X’s speech. Césaire equates cowardice with allowing the enemy to hurt multiple body parts because of lack of retaliation. Ariel’s ideology matches with that of Dr. King, a supporter of non-violent revolution. However, Caliban’s words and ideologies are a perfect match with Malcolm X’s.

Another connection between the speeches of Malcolm X and Caliban’s dialogue is the use of the phrase “Uncle Tom.” In *A Tempest*, Ariel questions Caliban’s struggle against Prospero, and the latter’s response is this: “And what

about you? What good has your obedience done you, your Uncle Tom patience and your sucking up to him. The man's just getting more demanding and more despotic everyday" (Césaire 26). Caliban's Uncle Tom imagery was used by Malcolm X, and directly relates to the favor expressed to mixed-race/light-skinned slaves over black slaves, as well as evokes an image with powerful historical context. Caliban sees Ariel's attempts at keeping him non-violent an extension of Prospero's influence and control, much in the same way as Malcolm X viewed Dr. King's non-violent approach: a "white approved" way of passively hoping for change. In my expanded version of the paper, I further elaborate on the parallels between Malcolm X's ideology and Caliban's dialogue, specifically dealing with how blacks were the victims of a distorted self-image due to a savage depiction in world events of the 1950's.

Césaire's Ariel was created in the image of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr; therefore, Ariel takes on the role of the idealistic servant, hoping that Prospero will follow through with his repeated promises of freedom. While Caliban advocates taking charge and fighting Prospero, Ariel instead bluntly states: "I don't believe in violence" (Césaire 27). Dr. King was well known for his non-violent approach to protesting the unequal treatment of blacks during the 1960's. This philosophy was informed by his education, religious background as an Alabama preacher, and his encounters with moderate and liberal whites (Cone 174). Dr. King felt that in order for all people to overcome racism, they must stand together and not resort to violence.

As he states in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, "We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force" (Sundquist 231). Here, Dr. King's rhetoric creates an inspirational and almost Biblical image, shown by the phrase "rise to the majestic heights." He called his methods (sit-ins, peaceful marches) "nonviolent direct action." (Rieder 172). In his debate with Caliban, Ariel describes his path of resistance as having "... No violence, no submission either," which mirrors Dr. King's proposed protest methods (Césaire 27). Ariel has grounded his philosophy in a physically passive but mentally active mindset. Ariel believes that in order for all parties to be free, they must alter Prospero's perspective on the matter of their enslavement: "Listen to me: Prospero is the one we've got to change. Destroy his serenity so that he's finally forced to acknowledge his own injustice and put an end to it" (Césaire 27). While Dr. King's rhetoric called for nonviolent direct action as well as open dialogue between blacks and whites, Ariel's rhetoric calls for action that is only active verbally. Césaire positions Ariel as a logical thinker that invites Caliban and the audience to think through their actions, as opposed to outright fighting their oppression.

"I Have a Dream" is one of the most famous speeches in American

history, and by using the dream image, Césaire creates a strong connection between Ariel and Dr. King. In Act I Scene II of *A Tempest*, Ariel weaves an image that speaks of peace and brotherhood: “I’ve often had this inspiring, uplifting dream that one day, Prospero, you, me, we would all three set out, like brothers, to build a wonderful world, each one contributing his own special thing: patience, vitality, love, willpower too, and rigor” (Césaire 27). This image immediately calls to mind Dr. King’s famous speech. Ariel acknowledges that while each individual may have differences, he hopes to use those differences to find a path to a harmonious place. Caliban’s reaction is to deny the possibility entirely, similar to how Malcolm X exposed the gap between “creed and deed” in Dr. King’s philosophy; while the latter preached Christian love, it was that same religious doctrine that oppressed people of color (Cone 178). Dr. King outlines many dreams, but the one that can be identified as a direct relation to Ariel’s dialogue written by Césaire is this selection: “I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood” (Sundquist 232). This image sets all races on equal ground; Dr. King makes an effort to illustrate a communion between all people involved in the struggle for equal rights, but still consciously refers back to the era of slavery. Despite criticism being hurled at him by Malcolm X, Dr. King was steadfast in his belief of true equality. Unlike Caliban who is the epitome of Négritude, Ariel favors an assimilation between everyone races in order to create “true” equality.

Césaire’s Ariel articulates the idea that all three of their futures are dependent on obtaining freedom, as Ariel sees his future and Caliban’s tied together with Prospero’s equally: “I’m not fighting for just my freedom, for our freedom, but for Prospero too, so that Prospero can acquire a conscience” (Césaire 27). Ariel shares Dr. King’s belief that in order to obtain ideal freedom, all groups involved must come together and recognize that their freedom is not separate. Dr. King makes an identical observation in the Dream speech: “many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone” (Sundquist 231). Here, he seeks to unite all people in the struggle for Civil Rights, not just those who are black. Dr. King depends on having white support because he believes that that is the only path to freedom, contrary to the revolution that Malcolm X speaks of.

In Dr. Martin Luther King’s Dream speech, he creates an extended metaphor for the whites’ promise of freedom for all people, which takes the form of a promissory note. While this check had been cashed for white people, it was defaulted on for people of color. Dr. King demanded that this check be

cashied, and he “refuse[d] to believe that the back of justice [was] bankrupt” (Sundquist 230). This powerful metaphor encouraged audiences to articulate their demands in a non-threatening and easy-to-grasp way. The way in which Césaire rhetorically plays on the concept of promised freedom is to paint Ariel as naïve. In his scene with Caliban, and in response to Caliban’s “Uncle Tom” jab, Ariel says: “Well, I’ve at least achieved one thing: he’s promised me my freedom. In the distant future, of course, but it’s the first time he’s actually committed himself” (Césaire 26). This throwaway line confronts the idea of promised freedom. Césaire seems to be satirizing the metaphor in order to make Ariel’s philosophy seem the weaker. Despite Prospero releasing Ariel from enslavement, Césaire augments that seemingly happy moment with a line from Prospero: “Go! Scram! Before I change my mind!” (59). Prospero’s comment overshadows Ariel’s freedom because Prospero is still portrayed as having the power to take away his freedom.

Aimé Césaire firmly believed that the path to freedom lay in the embracement of an individual’s black culture in order to restore dignity, confront racism and conquer colonialism (Ngo-Ngijol Banoum). Through his play *A Tempest*, Césaire sets up Ariel and Caliban with conflicting views on the methods they should use to obtain their freedom. While Ariel ultimately is gifted his freedom by Prospero because of his non-action, it still hinges on the constancy of Prospero’s mercy. Conversely, Césaire privileges Caliban, the embodiment of Négritude, and it is Caliban whose role is expanded to be as large as Prospero’s. Within this character, Césaire endorses Malcolm X’s philosophy as it aligns with Négritude, advocating for blacks to band together and demand their freedom. Césaire shows his audience that it is only through the acceptance of a black identity separate from white culture that a person can secure authentic freedom.

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Unauthorized Versions: Appropriations of the King James Bible in *The Book of Mormon* and *Science and Health*

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I am a troubled sleeper. Some two years ago, while enduring an unusually persistent bout of insomnia, I arrived at the habit of reposing with my computer open beside me, and listening to the familiar cadences of the King James Bible read aloud by one or another nameless orator, with the thought that it might at least calm my tempestuous thoughts. The custom proved soporific, and before long I was in search of other religious texts that might conduce to a similar effect. The Qur'an being unintelligible to me in Arabic and unaesthetic in English, I finally found myself limited to streamed recitations of *The Book of Mormon* and Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. While their comparative novelty did not produce sleep as readily, I began to notice in both of these how free—almost antic—in them were the interspersions of language lifted directly from the King James Bible. And yet they were very different books, working, I first supposed, in quite opposite directions. That is, Joseph Smith's so-called translation was penned as a history, purportedly derived from the most ancient of sources, while the scope of the Christian Science scripture was boldly utopian, seeking, it seemed, a wholesale abolishment of the past and its errors. Spurred on to further inquiry, I discovered that despite their immeasurable effect upon the American religious landscape, and even upon the American religious tradition (broadly cast), the mutual use—arguably misuse—of the Authorized Version of the Bible in these texts has never been studied in conjunction.

My purpose for undertaking this study is that, despite our insistence upon having progressed out of our Puritan days, the King James Bible (henceforth called the KJV) has forever been and still remains a rhetorical object of indisputable power in America. Its phrasings and rhythms remain impressed upon the American heart and ear whether or not it has been read. In fine, it is the original and—even today—perennial authority for those of the Protestant persuasion who made America, in Mark Noll's words, "a Bible civilization." And as we shall see, it is not so much *how* the words of the KJV are utilized, but *that* they are utilized; for questions of correctness or errancy are theological, not rhetorical. The purposes of the Authorized Version are various enough when the text is presented intact by its innumerable denominational (and non-denominational) interpreters, but when used in a piecemeal, decontextualized, and sometimes altered state—as Smith and Eddy both use it—it becomes, I shall argue, not a rhetorical unit unto itself, but a *support* upon

which other rhetorics are erected. In the present cases, we will find that it works to such advantage as to support rhetorics that are functioning in wholly irreconcilable directions, while obtaining to the same ultimate goal: the successful establishment of a unique belief.

When 20,000 English Puritans landed in Massachusetts Bay in 1630, it was the Bible authorized by the same king who compelled them there that they brought with them, favored over the Geneva version that had hitherto held sway (Stout 26). Thus it is the stylized Elizabethan language employed by its forty-seven learned translators in 1611 that became, in quite absolute terms, the religious language of America: the language in which any text purporting to be scripture must be read, taught, and—by inference—written (Gutjahr, 279). There should be little surprise, then, that when Joseph Smith, Jr.—the son of parents who had both renounced all denominational affiliations to undertake rigorous, self-guided Bible study—on receiving his first vision, was addressed not in his own idiom, but in that of the KJV: first, “This is my Beloved Son” (from Matt. 3:17) and then “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (a close paraphrase of Is. 29:13 and Matt. 15:8). His next vision, in 1823, consisted of the angel Moroni, who would inform him of the golden plates from which *The Book of Mormon* was to be translated, essentially quoting verbatim from the biblical book of Malachi, as rendered in the KJV. When the resultant *Book of Mormon* finally found publication in 1830, it contained twenty-six chapters copied, almost word-for-word, from the scriptures taught to Smith in his youth (Wolverton 110). Half of these are found in the book of 2 Nephi, in which thirteen chapters from Isaiah are essentially grafted unaltered into the text (see Smith 1986 51-55).

What concerns me here, with Smith as with Eddy below, is not the expected employment of scripture by a scripturally-obsessed young man, working in a scripturally-dominated environment. My main interest is with the *unannounced* (we shall not say, plagiaristic) employment thereof: the way that it is embedded in the text itself, and indeed *is* the text itself. While a great many others, including countless Latter-day Saint scholars, have acknowledged, studied, commented upon, and (in the religious sense) made apology for these twenty-six appropriations, it has not to my knowledge been with a view of understanding what effect their presence in the text might have been intended to be by the author (or translator, as you will). Living in a time now in which the Bible is not remotely so widely read as when Smith was writing, a modern newcomer to *The Book of Mormon* would in all likelihood pass over these grafts without distinguishing them from the original material by which they are surrounded. The advantage that Smith’s style has, and the reason for its being so readily accepted by his converts (and decried by his detractors) as authentic scripture, is that it so exactly mimics that of the KJV, often—as

Philip L. Barlow records—to a fault:

Although the Book of Mormon is only one-third the volume of the Bible, the phrase “all manner of” (disease, precious clothing, work, etc.) is found [...] 31 times in the Old Testament [...] 11 times in the New Testament, but 110 times in the Book of Mormon—a per-page frequency almost eight times that of the Bible. Similarly, “and it came to pass” occurs 336 times in the Old Testament, 60 times in the New, but 1168 times in the Book of Mormon. (756-57)

But for a Bible-literate reader of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, these familiar passages from Isaiah and other books, along with the endless, monotonous drumming of “and it came to passes” and “beholds” and “wherefores” would have been instantly noticeable; and I cannot but assume that someone of Smith’s evident genius would have known this. It seems to me as if Smith was quite consciously out-bibling the Bible: employing waves upon ever-rolling waves of distinctly and overtly biblical language to emphasize the point he ultimately wished to make, but never safely could, which is that *The Book of Mormon* is more of a bible than the Bible itself.

This is not said without basis. Directly before the arrival of his first vision, Smith was struck by a certain passage he had been reading in the Epistle of James, the meaning of which he yearned to understand. He reports in his *History*: “I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently *as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible*” (Smith 1972 47, emphasis added). And again, in *The Book of Mormon* itself, we find Nephi declaring:

6. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? 7. Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men [...] and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? 8. Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. (Smith 1986 110-11).

The reader must remember that it is *The Book of Mormon* itself of which Nephi prophesies, however many thousands of years before Joseph Smith is to unearth it, and therein find the clarity and certainty that the old Bible lacks.

This message was not lost on the Latter-day Saints. As Gutjhar states it, “*The Book of Mormon* had come straight from the plates of Mormon. Although Mormons were encouraged to use *The Book of Mormon* alongside the Bible, the message was clear: *The Book of Mormon* superseded the Holy Bible because it was a purer word from God” (285). And the fact that *The Book of Mormon*, according to Smith’s chronology, actually *predates* the Old and New Testaments as they would come down to us, and Nephi lived before the days of Isaiah, means that it is indeed the Bible appropriating from *The Book of Mormon* and not the other way ‘round. How could one book pay attribution to another that hasn’t been written yet?

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science and the Church of Christ, Scientist, nearly surpassed Joseph Smith in audacity, if only with a little more tact. Like *The Book of Mormon*, Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (henceforth abbreviated to *Science and Health*) is suffused with references to the KJV; unlike the former, however, they are presented as quotations. The trouble (for those who find it troublesome) is that the very great majority of these quotations are *only* quotations, and not actually citations. That is, they mention no chapter and no verse, nor even from which Testament they are derived. They are, as it were, *afloat* within the text, lending it the authority with which they are duly imbued, but utterly detached and dis severed from the context in which—and for which—they were initially produced. An example may be taken from the chapter titled, “Footsteps of Truth”:

God made man free. Paul said, “I was free born.” All men should be free. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.” Love and Truth make free, but evil and error lead into captivity. Christian Science raises the standard of liberty and cries: “Follow me! Escape the bondage of sickness, sin, and death!” Jesus marked out the way. Citizens of the world, accept the “glorious liberty of the children of God,” and be free! (Eddy 227)

The quotes in this passage, which is typical of her storming exuberance, are from Acts, Romans, and Corinthians respectively—excluding the “Follow me,” which is of course her own—but one need not know that, because it is all from “the Bible,” which is Eddy’s to use as she will.

We have, many of us, seen or heard evangelical preachers who pepper their sermons with unattributed snatches of scripture, and it would be untoward to deny Eddy the same privilege, *if* it were the Bible she were declaiming upon; but she is declaiming only upon Christian Science, and engaging the Bible merely as a sort of sycophantic sideman or dumb prop. What she uses are not so much quotations (as a quotation must have an identifiable source) but what David L. Weddle, in his analysis of *Science and Health* for *The Har-*

*vard Theological Review* “biblical signifiers.” They rhetorically associate what is wholly Eddy’s with what was once the Bible’s. Relating Eddy’s use of scripture with Mircea Eliade’s notion of “sacred time,” Weddle demonstrates how “Mother Mary” both drew upon and disoriented her pupils’ familiarity with the Bible to induct them into what they believed to be, not a second age of miracles, but an eternal age of miracles that only the knowledge of the “science” employed by Christ and His apostles could awaken them to (284).

For Eddy’s purposes, the pontifical aping of KJV language as found in *The Book of Mormon* would be entirely unsuitable, because not sufficiently obscure. True, Smith sacrifices a great deal of lucidity in his own sacred text by cluttering it with similar “biblical signifiers” of the “yea” and “varily” type, which produce the same somnolent or mesmerizing effect as I once sought in listening to it read aloud. But Eddy needed to comfort her students with the Christianity with which they were already acquainted, while simultaneously wrenching them free of the centuries of “sin, suffering, and death”-based dogmas upon which every recognizably Christian theological system was to that point established, in the interest of ushering them into a new “scientific” age, in which all of that was an illusion based on irrational fear. “Thus,” says Weddle, “the language must be both historical and eschatological, and for the model of such transformative discourse Eddy turned to a biblical archetype” (289). Mark Twain, in his almost neurotic study of *Science and Health* and its author, says, “She has a perfectly astonishing talent for putting words together in such a way as to make successful inquiry into their intention impossible. [. . .] [S]he likes to fire off a Scripture-verse where it will make the handsomest noise and come nearest to breaking the connection” (n.p.). It is precisely this phenomenon, or rather, technique, which Kimber Charles Pearce identifies as Eddy’s “rhetorical polysemy,” or, quite simply, the calculated use of language to arrive at two incompatible meanings (76). Considering the complexities such a strategy must involve, the continuous revision of Eddy’s purportedly “divinely inspired” text over forty years should little surprise us.

As the undeniable basis of what Americans have regarded and cherished as “religious language” since before the nation’s inception, it is natural that both Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy should have deferred to and relied upon the KJV when composing their own religious texts. But their ambitions would not allow them to merely use the Bible: instead they usurped it and, in their own spheres, absorbed it without struggle or cry into the bibles of their own creation. In so doing, they inaugurated—or substantially advanced—a new American bible-making tradition exemplified by such works as *The Urantia Book* (1955) and *A Course in Miracles* (1976), which establish their authority upon Bible-based language, names, stories, and principles, without paying any direct reference to the text of the Bible itself. Through this

we see that the KJV still speaks to us and through us, even when it is silenced.

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## The Rhetoric of Fictionalizing Cancer

Allison Leshowitz

The halls of Ocean Park Hospital, the setting of Fox's medical comedy-drama *Red Band Society*, are teeming with teenage boys on skateboards, young women in tight dresses, tight jeans and heels, and nurses gripped in a trance-like gaze toward the attractive male doctor who appears to be the second-coming of *Grey's Anatomy's* Dr. McSteamy. Yes, *Red Band Society* appears to possess all the common tropes of a primetime medical television show: attractive doctors, story lines riddled in love-triangles and heartbreak, and the flat-lining beep of a heart monitor seconds before the episode leaves us until the following week. What sets *Red Band Society* apart from other medical shows is the painfully apparent intended audience: teenagers. The leading characters, patients ranging ages fourteen to seventeen, embody well-known American high school archetypes, as demonstrated on the show's promotional poster which labels each character as "The Rebel," "The New Guy," and "Mean Girl." In an analysis of the show, I pose the question: Does the use of these recognizable teenage figures oversimplify the all-too complex and undefinable experience of chronic illness, or does this usage help to translate the story's disease-specific content to people who have never experienced disease?

More broadly, I explore multiple rhetorics of cancer narratives, both fictional and non-fictional, and examine how the stories told are affected by speaker, audience and purpose. Through this examination, I argue that fictionalizations of cancer that do not acknowledge their status as fiction further marginalize members of the cancer community in the very act of bringing the cancer experience to the forefront of media representation. This marginalization is caused by an illusion of understanding, and therefore creates an even larger gap than the one that already exists between cancer and non-cancer patients. When non-cancer patients pursue a cancer narrative and are met with an oversimplification or misconstrued reality, they are likely to accept, rather than question, the representation.

Before I discuss my research, I would like to identify myself as speaker: I am not a cancer patient and have never experienced chronic illness. Therefore, I do not make any claims to understand cancer or the hospital experience. My arguments set out to encourage other non-cancer patients to question the fictionalizations they see.

Throughout my research, I have located three layers of cancer narratives, two of which are fictionalizations, one of which is non-fiction. I explore these three texts to demonstrate 1) the importance of acknowledging artifice

when creating a fictionalization of cancer and 2) the importance of allowing cancer patients to tell their own stories and reclaim their own experience with illness.

To represent a first layer cancer narrative, or a story told by an actual cancer patient, I analyze *This Star Won't Go Out*, the memoir of Esther Earl, a sixteen-year-old who died from thyroid cancer in 2010. Her memoir includes diary entries that represent writing in the absence of audience; therefore, readers are gaining access to thoughts uninfluenced and undirected by an audience-dictated purpose. The next layer comprises writers who know or knew a cancer patient and are familiar with their experience, and who write as a response to the disease. In the longer paper, I use John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, a novel inspired by Esther's story, to represent the second layer. Green provided me with an example of a fictional cancer narrative that addresses its status as artifice; therefore, Green encourages readers to question, rather than accept, his representation of the cancer experience. The final layer includes writers, producers and filmmakers who create fictional cancer stories for the masses: mainstream representations of cancer that are often oversimplified or typically steer clear of gruesome images or medical language and accuracy. I analyze *Red Band Society* and ultimately argue that the show represents hospital life as fantasy rather than reality.

My exploration of fictional narratives of cancer and disease comes with the understanding that fictionalizations *are* different from reality and therefore are typically *allowed* to present viewers with fantasy and artifice. *Red Band* chooses to emphasize “happy” truths of the hospital, such as the friendships among patients and using humor as a coping mechanism. But what does omission of “sadder” truths do to cancer representation? Should healthy viewers not be exposed to more gruesome realities, some representation of an “uglier” side of illness? These omissions convey a message, too—that the sadder “truths” of cancer should be “othered” and shameful, that these sides of hospital life do not deserve to be represented on primetime television. Shows like *Red Band Society*, if they continue to remain within the realm of hospital as fantasy, should be assisted with a declaration of artifice, whether that come in the form of a textual warning at the beginning of each episode or a few words from an actual cancer patient at the end of each episode. The show should, in some way, point to its artifice as to avoid creating generalized definitions about the experience of living with illness and providing viewers with merely an illusion of empathy and understanding.

*Red Band Society* does little to challenge viewers to step into a world beyond their current experience, aside from the show's setting of a hospital. However, the hospital could easily be replaced by a high school or college dorm building. Ocean Park, presented as a welcoming, amiable setting, is

stripped of a hospital's foreign qualities: the characters are seldom connected to IVs, we rarely see large, loud medical equipment, and there are no wards separating the cancer patients from the patients with eating disorders. Instead, the hospital is bright and spacious, the rooms are decorated like permanent living spaces, and the characters run through the corridors and never truly seem weak until a climactic fall occurs to serve as an episodic cliff-hanger.

While there are clear merits to the show, with its inclusion of humor and its ability to represent patients as more than patients, but rather, as “normal” teenagers, there still seems to be a severe disregard for audience members who *are* familiar with the hospital. In the following paragraphs, I address the omissions of the more realistic qualities of a hospital and argue that these omissions serve as a way for the show to remain within the language of healthy teens and “tweens” in its focus on themes of friendship, love, and community.

Claire Wineland, a seventeen-year-old with cystic fibrosis who posts weekly reviews of the show on her YouTube channel, comments upon the prevalence of medical inaccuracies throughout the show. Her mission, as stated in the description of her channel, is to “break down the barriers that we tend to have with people who are living with an illness.” In response to the show's pilot episode, which introduces viewers to the six main characters, Wineland observes the disregard for common hospital rules and regulations: “Patients are not allowed to just go into each other's rooms,” she explains, “Especially for people who have cystic fibrosis and cancer—you gotta think their immune systems are so low.” Here, we see a dismissal of reality for the sole purpose of including elements that would appeal to non-cancer patients.

Crucial to Wineland's reviews are her opinions of how the show is representing her story with illness. She shares her thoughts on Dash, a fellow “CF'er,” she calls him, who is labelled “The Player” on the show's promo poster, moves throughout the hospital on his skateboard, and searches for marijuana and beer in the show's first episode. Wineland states, “I have a deep attachment to the way that they represent [cystic fibrosis] because it's such a complex illness. [. . .] I don't know if they're going to make it obvious how dangerous [drinking and smoking] is for a CF'er.” Ironically, *Red Band* is ignoring audience members like Wineland while simultaneously attempting to represent her illness. Wineland's YouTube channel allows her to correct misrepresentations but, unfortunately, her voice remains on the sidelines, at least in comparison to Fox's power of reaching mass audiences.

Another inaccuracy of *RBS* is a lack of discussion about health insurance. Ocean Park Hospital appears to have an abundance of available healthcare, medications, and equipment, and offers serious medical procedures, on-the-spot, instantaneously, and without proof of health insurance. In the show's pilot episode, Jordi, a sixteen year old with Osteosarcoma, walks

into the hospital requesting assistance from an in-demand pediatric surgeon. Jordi is met with brief resistance from the doctor, but after some keen, smart-witted words, he is scheduled for leg amputation surgery the next day. The show's content, here, is dictated by its teenage audience—most teenagers know little or do not care to know about health insurance.

In *Red Band's* pilot episode, the five teenaged patients gather on the hospital's spacious, furnished, string-lit rooftop, beer in hand, to form the show's titular premise, the Red Band Society, a clan whose friendships become visually signified by red hospital bracelets dispersed by Leo, another patient. The formation of strong friendships, along with the lack of financial concerns, demonstrates the representation of the hospital as fantasy rather than reality. The patients *live*, rather than simply stay, at the hospital, turning the hospital into a home rather than a medical facility. While the sentiment in this representation is clear—to define the hospital as something other than scary or upsetting—it also shows the hospital as a place where people might *want* to be, especially teenagers who might feel isolated or in need of a tight-knit community. Reactions from non-cancer patients on social media reflect this point. Not only have responses to the show made it clear that it does little to accurately represent disease, or provide a new perspective on the topic of pediatric illness, but viewers are imagining themselves in the character's situation and *enjoying* the experience. A simple “tag” search on Tumblr, a popular blogging website, reveals a myriad of posts fantasizing the experience of being a patient at Ocean Park. One Tumblr user posts, “Imagine you're new to the hospital and Leo Roth helps you through your surgery.”

*Red Band's* failure to acknowledge its status as artifice further allows for these teenage fantasies. Additionally, *Red Band's* reliance on presenting cancer narratives with archetypal high school characters contributes to both the media's and doctors' tendencies to adopt metaphoric language when discussing the disease. Susan Sontag, in her book *Illness as Metaphor*, explores the ways in which cancer has been defined in “battle” terms, placing cancer in the position of a “demon” or an “enemy,” and turning the cancer patient into “victims” who, in their treatments, take on a “responsibility” to survive (57). Similarly, Reisfield and Wilson describe the metaphorical language doctors often adopt when speaking with or about patients. They, too, discuss the “martial” or “war” metaphor, defining the “enemy (the cancer), a commander (the physician), a combatant (the patient), allies (the healthcare team), and formidable weaponry (including chemical [and] biological weapons)” (4025). Here, the patient is expected to become a valiant soldier.

In Esther Earl's private journal, readers are exposed to Esther's story on *her* terms, through her words, allowing readers to see beyond the image of the valiant, brave cancer fighter. Before readers encounter Esther's words,

they are met with introductions written by Esther's parents and doctor that allow readers to gain a sense of how Esther was affected by the tropes used by doctors and media representations of cancer. These introductions make it clear that Esther was divided between how she discussed her illness with other people, and how she regarded her illness on her own, with no audience involved. These varying perspectives reflect what Arthur W. Frank deems "narrative wreckage," which describes the dualistic purposes of illness storytelling. Frank defines two purposes for this story-telling: the first, to "repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life," and the second, which Frank describes as "literal and immediate," serves the sole purpose of objectively telling family members, doctors, co-workers and friends about the illness (53).

Esther uses these two purposes of story-telling in her diary, the "literal and immediate," to chart out the sequence of events leading up to her diagnosis, and then uses reparative language to reshape and reclaim what is happening to her body. In terms of "objective" story-telling, or speaking in more literal terms about what is happening to her body, Esther writes about the story of her diagnosis, explaining the sequence of events rather objectively: "My side hurt and I was extremely out of breath. I caught my breath in a half hour or so" (Earl 93).

However, the majority of her writing consists of "reparative" story-telling, moments that veer away from her body and toward her sense of self and her relationship with her illness. Through writing, Esther is allowed to take control of her identity and transcend the static image of a "cancer patient." In an entry from 2008, she writes about an interaction she had with her younger brother:

[L]ately I've been thinking about my identity. [. . .] Well I drew this very not-so-good self-portrait of myself the other day, and Abe saw it. He was like, 'You drew that? Without any picture?' [. . .] And then he said, 'but where's your nose thing?' pointing to my nasal cannula. (104)

Esther's story-telling, through both words and pictures, allows her to escape the language that focuses on her body and bring the focus back to her self. Here, Esther fictionalizes herself—she represents herself as a person without breathing tubes; therefore, she is controlling her own image. While she has no control of what is happening to her physical body, Esther is able, through her *own* language and in this instance, drawing, to control how she defines herself and her experience with cancer. As Esther branches away from "literal and immediate" story-telling, she shares her own interpretation of her illness—her interpretation alters the bodily experience, her cancer is no longer objectively medical, spoken strictly in medical terms. It is through *her* "fictionalization"

that readers are able to view her story on her own terms and in turn, Esther is able to reach some semblance of control.

The introduction by Esther's doctor takes away some of this control. The passage, titled "Diagnosis and Treatment," provides readers with a detailed account of Esther's medical history. At the end, Smith writes, "As her disease progressed, she fought with such poise and dignity" (43). This image limits Esther's identity to cancer as metaphor. The doctor's description of Esther's experience ignores the wide range of emotion and opinions Esther held about her illness. Luckily, through her diary entries and YouTube videos, Esther was able to share her story and escape the rhetoric of doctors and medicine, similar to Wineland's use of the site. In a video posted in 2010, Esther states:

I feel like I'm fooling you all because I'm not always [...] strong and I'm not always brave and you guys should know that. I'm not always this perfect person. I get pissed, I do stupid things, I get angsty, I cry, I hate my cancer. (Earl)

Esther's Youtube channel became her way of countering and transcending the cancer tropes that were placed onto her. Esther's diary entries, too, show how her writing, when uninfluenced by an audience, uses her own language and dialect to make sense of what she was going through and to reclaim her experience with illness.

Esther's dismantlement of cancer tropes and stereotypes lessens the distance we place between ourselves and people with disease. The use of labels and set images of who we perceive a person with illness to be demonstrates a fear of disease and of acknowledging that disease is human and random, rather than purposeful, fate-defining or a vehicle for some great, inherent meaning. Through labeling patients as, and thereby limiting patients to be, "strong," "courageous," and "inspirational," we are ignoring the individual stories of people living with illness and further perpetuating the idea that the sick are something other than human, perhaps even superhuman, appointed to be someone to inspire those around them.

Recognizing these tropes and labels within the fictionalizations of cancer and illness is crucial in order to avoid the marginalization of the community of people living with illness. Mass media representations of cancer and illness, as seen in *Red Band Society*, are oversimplifying the cancer experience. Shows like *Red Band Society* paint illness and disease as a shameful experience through their omission of realistic and accurate elements of hospital life and living with illness. Social media outlets, YouTube in particular, have acted as a way for cancer patients to reclaim their stories and correct misconceptions prevalent at the forefront of media representation. Although the words from cancer patients are typically not represented on mainstream

television, they are available for anyone who wishes to pursue a deeper, richer understanding of illness. It is through these outlets that people living with disease are given back the power of telling their own stories and transcend the stereotypes we so often meet on mainstream television.

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## The Unexpected Feminist: The Rhetoric of Mary Shelley's Creature

*Kasey Tveit*

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* is a window into the rhetorics of the Romantic Period, particularly the rhetorics of the patriarchy and the feminism that opposed it. Of course, much has already been written about Mary Shelley since there is no shortage of applicable criticism when it comes to a novel as multilayered and complex as *Frankenstein* and a life as fascinating and traumatic as Shelley's. What feminist critics and biographers have failed to do is credit the Creature with his most notable accomplishment, which is giving a voice to women who were silenced and stifled by the patriarchal society in which they lived, as well as providing readers with a look into the struggles of the physical body that women dealt with, and still deal with, on a daily basis. Through his unyielding protests against the patriarchal rhetoric that marginalizes him, the Creature establishes a feminist discourse desperately needed by women in an otherwise oppressive social environment. According to Anne K. Mellor, one of the foremost authorities on Shelley and her masterpiece, "*Frankenstein* is a penetrating literary analysis of the exploitation of the female" (38); her "fictions criticize the dominant romantic and patriarchal ideologies of her day" (xii). The Creature and his maker Frankenstein, respectively, represent the struggle of women and the dominant masculine ideologies of the period.

Though Frankenstein's Creature is an unlikely vehicle for feminist principles, he suffers from the same conflict of identity that his female contemporaries, and Mary Shelley herself, struggled with: the conflict of the physical body with the mental and emotional aspects of the self. The Creature not only endures a plight similar to that of women, (including the one who penned him into existence), but is vocal about the injustices of having an identity foisted upon him by other people, particularly when the assumed persona solely considers the physical construction of the body and does not take into consideration the intellect or anima of the soul and mind. In his interactions with men throughout the novel, the Creature argues with eloquent discourse against this discrimination, asking what Mary Shelley and other women of the Romantic Period were, and what women now are still asking: Why should my fate be decided by my physical body and appearance?

The sexism of the period presented women with problems of the physical body as it defined their identity to both their male counterparts and middle and upper class European society. As Laurie Langbauer writes in *Women and*

*Romance*, “The male order [. . .] is able to effect its own self-interest by defining the category of woman” (6). The “self-interest” the male order succeeded in effecting was establishing a culture that stifled women and treated them as inferior to men. By constructing a category to which women were expected to conform, a category defined by its requirements of voicelessness and bodily servitude, men took women’s choices away from them. To fit into this category, women simply had to possess a female body; to remain within the category and avoid becoming outcasts, women had to be domestic, subservient wives and selfless, fecund mothers. Since gender was the main determining factor in which roles were acceptable for women to play, fighting against these roles was a lifelong struggle. Speaking of the period in which Shelley lived and wrote, Langbauer says, “Women’s choices are reduced to their bodies” (123), and, “Man grants woman meaning only in terms of that body” (124). In her book *Romantic Women Writers, Revolution, and Prophecy*, Orienne Smith points out that, having been a victim of the male order and status quo, “Shelley’s novels trace the history of the suppression of female visionary discourse as integral to the foundation of a patriarchal social order that refuses to see women as anything more than sexual objects and denies them equal rights as citizens” (192). As a result of this firmly established social order, the physical body was an obstacle for women to overcome in order to cultivate their own intellectual identities to escape those identities externally constructed and applied to them based on their gender, an experience mirrored by the life of the Creature in *Frankenstein*.

In the longer version of this paper I examine the biographical and historical contexts in which *Frankenstein* was written to reveal the similarities between Shelley and her Creature as well as the experiences that prompted Shelley’s writing of a feminist novel. In this investigation the philandering of her husband Percy Shelley, the failures of her own body in her attempts to bear children, and the influence of her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, a famous early feminist, are brought to light in relationship with the arguments she makes in her novel. Shelley’s feminist roots were further reinforced by her own experiences at the hands of men, making both nature and nurture proponents of the Creature’s narrative.

Instead of the cause, this particular discussion focuses on the result: the discourse Shelley began when she gave a voice to women who were struggling to define themselves disparately from their gender and the limitations it presented. The feminist voice I speak of, of course, belongs to Shelley’s Creature, the protagonist of *Frankenstein* and of this essay. Despite his physical gender—it is important to note that the Creature is referred to using masculine pronouns because Victor Frankenstein being so afraid of and derogatory towards women would never have built a Creature that is outwardly female—

the Creature is plagued with the same conflict as women of the period: the conflict of the mental and emotional identity versus the imposed identity of physical body. In their influential book, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar acknowledge the Creature's similarities to Shelley and even argue that the Creature actually is female. "In fact," write Gilbert and Gubar, "it is his intellectual similarity to his authoress (rather than his author) which first suggests that Victor Frankenstein's male monster may really be a female in disguise" (237). While I don't believe that the Creature is a female living in a male body—that would imply that Shelley penned a transgender character, which I do not intend to do in this essay—I do agree that he, notice, again, the continuing use of "he," can commiserate with the plights of women because of the limitations and frustrations his physical body places upon him. Rather than assuming Shelley's knowledge of transgender studies, I think it is more probable that Shelley is simply having fun by imagining how a man would react when forced to endure the systematic oppression and marginalization that women work to overcome in their daily lives. Based on the Creature's level of emotional distress throughout *Frankenstein*, I think it safe to say Shelley imagines men would not handle the role reversal very well.

But, despite his distress, the Creature does manage to navigate the waters of social interaction by employing his rhetorical skills. Since he cannot rely on his body and the small, limiting box in which it places him, the Creature relies on his mind. His intellectualism compensates for his physical deformity; by refining his mental faculties and speech the Creature trains himself to be a master of persuasive discourse. Whenever he encounters characters in the novel who will give him the chance to speak, the Creature enchants them with his eloquence of speech and manages to convert them to his cause, displaying that his identity lies within his intellect as opposed to his deformed body. The Creature's mastery as a rhetor is seen when he encounters his maker Victor Frankenstein on Mont Blanc, when he corners De Lacey alone in the cabin in France, and when he meets Robert Walton at Frankenstein's coffin at the end of the novel. Using the grand, antiquated language he learned from reading *Paradise Lost*, the Creature forms an urgent, intellectual ethos that gives his audience no choice but to respect his arguments. In all of his face-to-face discourses, the Creature entreats his, at first, reluctant listener with Miltonian eloquence to look beyond his appearance when forming their opinions of him and focus instead on his knowledge and compassion, a common request made by women then and to this day.

The rhetorical skills of the Creature are such that he persuades his regretful and reluctant maker and nemesis Victor Frankenstein to sympathize with his situation by arguing the injustices of having a predetermined fate because of physical appearance. Upon their first meeting atop Mont Blanc in

Switzerland, the Creature describes his mistreatment by human beings because of his “wretched” appearance:

Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me [. . .] These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow-beings. (Shelley 69)

Here, the Creature argues that even his creator “abhors” him because of his physical deformity, so there is no hope for him to find sympathy or friendship amongst other human beings who are not responsible for or familiar with his origin. Because his appearance prevents him from forming any mental and emotional connections with other people, the Creature is “alone, miserably alone.” In his isolation, the Creature becomes a symbol of the silent suffering of women, whose own isolation is similarly imposed upon them by their inferior standing in a society that honors masculinity.

The confrontation between Frankenstein and his Creature atop Mont Blanc allows the feminist (the Creature) to directly confront the patriarchy (Victor Frankenstein) without disastrous socioeconomic repercussions to the feminist. “Devil!” exclaims Victor upon seeing the Creature, beginning the confrontation. “Do you dare approach me? And do not you fear the vengeance my arm wreaked upon your miserable head?” he asks. “Begone, vile insect!” he demands (67). In response the Creature says, “I expected this reception. All men hate the wretched” (68). Immediately, Victor begins throwing insults at the Creature, specifically insults aimed at his appearance: “devil,” “vile,” and “insect.” All of these words strip the Creature of his humanity and seek to emphasize his inferiority and Victor’s superiority. The Creature, constantly dismissed and feared due to his physical form is not surprised by this “reception.” His latter comment, “All men hate the wretched,” is where feminist rhetoric makes its subtle appearance; Shelley uses “men,” not “humans” in this dialogue, and “wretched,” meaning ugly or malformed and concerned with the physical form. This phrase is commentary on the superficial, discriminatory values of male-dominated culture. “Begone!” says Victor again, “relieve me from the sight of your detested form” (69), once again focusing on the Creature’s physical appearance (for which he is responsible) instead of listening to his words. But the Creature continues his speech and manages to convince Victor to listen. “Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion” (69), he says. Here, Shelley is again weaving feminist undertones into the text; this request is an entreaty she is posing to her male contemporaries.

In his autobiographical narrative, the Creature focuses on the reactions humans have to his appearance and how this determines their treatment of

him. It is no coincidence that the worst acts of fear, hatred, and violence are enacted upon the Creature by men. The Creature encounters few women and their reactions to him are delayed and subdued compared to those of the men he meets. When the De Lacey—a family the Creature has revered from the shadows—finally meet the Creature, blind De Lacey and the women, Safie and Agatha, have gentler reactions than Felix in the scene that ensues:

At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered [. . .] Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung; in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick.  
(94)

Though the women are not welcoming to him, their reactions are more symptomatic of shock rather than Felix's revulsion and hatred. Immediately Felix acts to harm the body of the Creature, emphasizing, again, masculine preoccupation with the physical form and the need to exert control over it. Felix treats the Creature like the "vile insect" Victor accuses him of being. Indeed, from his first encounter the monster is "spurned by man," to use his language. The next time he sees a man he knows to hide. He tells Victor, "I retired; for I saw the figure of a man at a distance, and I remembered too well my treatment the night before, to trust myself in his power" (73). In these pathos-heavy, lyrical descriptions, the Creature softens Victor's feelings toward him and manages to inspire empathy where before only hatred and disgust existed. Sensing these grains of empathy that have sprouted in his maker, the Creature seizes the moment and employs the eloquence of speech he has learned from books, particularly *Paradise Lost*, in order to make a request. "Unfeeling, heartless creator!" he says, "You had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind" (98). With this sentiment, again emphasizing *mankind*, the Creature not only inspires feelings of guilt and shame in his maker, but addresses explicitly the conflict he feels between his physical form and his "perceptions and passions." Like women, the Creature has thoughts and feelings equal to those of men but is unable to express them due to the limitations of his form.

By emphasizing the maltreatment of the Creature at the hands of men and having him request a female companion, Shelley shows how her Creature identifies with and relates to women and can only be comfortable and accepted in their company. Shelley uses this confrontation between her protagonist, The Creature, and antagonist, Frankenstein to allow feminist rhetoric to prevail over the rhetoric and ideals of the patriarchy, a situation she surely wanted to see come to fruition outside of the realm of literature. In the end,

the overall impression of the Creature as a character is of his intellect and skill as a rhetor, not of his physical appearance. In this aspect, the Creature manages to overcome the obstacle of his physical body in creating a persona for himself reliant on his mind, as Shelley did when she wrote *Frankenstein*.

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## The Rhetoric of Toxic Masculinity: An Analysis of the Elliot Rodger “Manifesto”

*Alana Sawchuk*

On the night of May 23, 2014, a young man went on a killing spree in Isla Vista, California resulting in the deaths of 7 people and the wounding of 13 (Walters). Violence on this scale has become disturbingly common in recent years, but the Isla Vista shootings, perpetrated by 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, were unique to a concerning pattern of behavior that continues to plague the country. The shooting sparked a national conversation about the realities women currently face as the consistently acted upon “object” as opposed to the autonomous individuals they are. In the months before the attack, Rodger devoted quite a large amount of time to composing a “107,000 word” (Duke) autobiography detailing both his life and ideology entitled *My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger*. By studying what Barbara Walters has referred to as the “so-called ‘manifesto,’” I will attempt to analyze and expose the “toxic underbelly” of Rodger’s language in order to understand the implications of a damaging form of masculinity that has severely warped our perceptions of gender.

The intention of this analysis is not to fuel hatred of men or create generalizations, but to consider how our society has evolved in such a way so as to create dangerous expectations for young boys and men. To broadly discuss “masculinity” is only to associate certain qualities with the male sex. It is meant to be a large-scale concept, and not, I think, meant to confine individuals to any one rulebook. But when we talk about “toxic masculinity,” we might consider a kind of entrapment that forces men into a place of isolation from themselves and others. This isolation requires men to identify as domineering, aggressive, violent, and emotionless. It asks people to refer to themselves as “real men,” with the implication that your masculine identity can be false based upon a set of rules put down by no real authority, and perpetuated by a media (and therefore a culture) that refuses to consider an existence beyond binaries. A self-identified man can be masculine without being aggressive, or “manly” in the midst of a conversation about their feelings. Masculinity is not a dirty word; we need not shun it or men. What we do need is an exercise in exposing harmful misconceptions of what any one gender needs to be, and in the case of Elliot Rodger, its tendency to adapt itself to our culturally mandated (and outdated) rulebook.

“Toxic masculinity,” specifically as it pertains to Elliot Rodger and his ideas concerning women stem from a “narcissistic projection” (Žižek 2408); a

woman imagined so vividly in his imagination that she has become nothing more than a manifestation of his own desires. Slavoj Žižek's "Courtly Love, or, Woman as Thing" suggests that the polite, "chivalric" attentions on the part of men are in fact a masochistic behavior, wherein the man, suffering from his attraction, creates a false chase with an imaginary female: "the Lady is the Other which is not our 'fellow-creature;' [...] she is someone with whom no relationship of empathy is possible" (2408). Men will have grown to think of their pursuit of women as a romantic, selfless act; a rescue of the damsel in distress, when in fact that "damsel" is little more than a projection of their own fantasies, as Žižek describes her, "the Lady as the sublime object" (2407). Rodger is the dangerous culmination of centuries of this male/female dichotomy. As masochists, Žižek claims, men operating under a "chivalric code" are not sadists, they have no plan to inflict violence on others; as that violence is only a part of their "performance," any real violent behavior is "suspended" (2410). Unfortunately, in conjunction with society's current misconceptions of an "appropriate" masculinity, that "suspension" no longer acts as a barrier between imagined violence and actual criminal behavior. Elliot Rodger existed in this self-imposed state for years, and innocent men and women paid for it with their lives.

With an understanding of what I mean when I say "toxic masculinity," I will turn now to Rodger's final communication before the shootings, in a video uploaded to YouTube shortly before the attack:

I will be a God, exacting my retribution on all those who deserve it, and you do deserve it just for the crime of living a better life than me. [...] Girls, all I have ever wanted was to love you and be loved by you. I wanted a girlfriend, I've wanted sex, love, adoration, but you think I am unworthy of it. That's a crime that can never be forgiven. If I can't have you, girls, I will destroy you. You've denied me a happy life and in turn I will deny all of you life. It is only fair. ("Full Transcript")

Avoiding the obvious, heavy-handed conclusions that can be made from a sentence opening with "I will be a God . . ." I would like to instead consider Rodger's sense of entitlement in his words, an entitlement born not only of class but also of a corrupted sense of masculinity. Rodger's anger stems from an image of "real" men as if they existed at the top of a food chain. His peers deserve a violent death for having committed "the crime of living a better life." Elliot Rodger was an especially privileged boy, born to a wealthy father working in Hollywood; Rodger's "manifesto" reflects the life of a boy who wanted for nothing. What is this "better life?" A life of "sex, love, adoration;" Rodger does not exclude "love," and we might be inclined to consider an emotional hole in his life where engaged parents should be, but in Rodger's words, "love"

is secondary. It is sandwiched between “sex” and “adoration,” and as we’ll soon see, “adoration” is not parental pride, but worship and subservience. “Yes,” he reflects in the text, “*I am the image of beauty ad supremacy.*”

Elliot Rodger’s sense of entitlement should come as no shock when we consider how the public received his “manifesto.” While he has never appeared to refer to his lengthy diatribe as such, it has become one nonetheless. According to Teresa Ebert, “The manifesto is writing in struggle. It is writing on the edge where textuality is dragged into the streets and language is carried to the barricades. It is writing confronting established practices in order to open up new spaces for oppositional praxis” (553). To say that Elliot Rodger “struggled” in the same sense that revolutionaries “struggle” would be a gross disrespect to both the genre and its writers. Ebert’s descriptors, imagining the manifesto as “writing in struggle” elevates the genre to a level that Elliot Rodger should never for a moment inhabit. Galia Yanoshevsky, in her own writings on manifesto, refers to the genre as a discourse that demands responsiveness on the part of its audience, “calling the reader to active participation” (264). To infuse this text with such power only serves to further encourage those who felt that Rodger was justified in his murder and hatred of both women and men. Why would the media at large wish to associate “My Twisted World” with some of our greater revolutionary ideologies? Although his actions were swiftly condemned, the inordinate amount of attention paid to his life, as if he were merely an imagined figure, and of no real danger to us, shows an extraordinarily lopsided response to a violent attack that preserved his own twisted understanding of masculinity and denigrated femininity. Understanding our naming of Rodger’s work as a “manifesto” serves as a definitive example of one of the roots of “toxic masculinity.” As our media evokes the term and reverence of “manifesto,” we remain stuck in a cycle stemming from gendered assumptions.

One of these assumptions being sexual identity and behaviors, the “manifesto” indulges extensively in Rodger’s sexual history. He attempts to blame all of his struggles on puberty, claiming that he had “a very high sex drive” (*My Twisted World*, 47). According to Rodger, his struggles were not a result of hormonal imbalances, but rather an uncontrollable, aggressively masculine “sex drive” that women would not be able to resist. Leonard Shlain, author of *The Alphabet and the Goddess*, explores the “alpha male” trope, asking, “Had not Darwin explained that natural selection required strife in order for the alpha male (not uncommonly the strongest and most aggressive) to rise above the pack?” (379). Rodger refers to the “alpha male” on more than one occasion, claiming, “The girls don’t flock to the gentlemen. They flock to the alpha male. They flock to the boys who appear to have the most power and status” (*My Twisted World*, 28). Despite Rodger’s supposed anger with the

“injustices” of the “alpha male” character, he continues to view himself as that “alpha,” intelligent and worthy of “love,” or rather control over the dissemination of his genes and ultimately the feminine body. Rodger’s autobiographical examination of his sexual identity has little to do with sex, and more so to do with power. When it comes to the subject of women, particularly his mother and stepmother, Rodger’s language becomes an amalgam of condescension and disrespect, as if those women have failed to meet the standards he has set for them.

According to Elliot, his mother, Chin Rodger, is the perfect example of what a woman ought to be, largely because she would (according to the narrative) acquiesce to many of his demands, while his stepmother Soumaya was inclined to “deny” him, as if he were a ruler and she subservient to him. Elliot “throws tantrums” multiple times throughout his childhood and later years, including moments where he has “absolutely refused” to do something; but the language is proud, as if he were practicing some kind of non-violent protest at the threat of injustice, but in one instance the scenario is so mundane as to become laughable in light of the seriousness of his language: “I remember one funny incident when we were taking school pictures. They forced us to sit cross-legged, which I hated doing, so I absolutely refused to sit that way for the picture. The teachers eventually conceded, and the picture was taken with me being the only one sitting differently” (*My Twisted World*, 2). He refers to the “incident” as “funny,” but given his use of the words “forced” and “hated,” you can plainly see that it was anything but “funny” to him (more than likely, it became less funny as he became older). It is of interest to consider Rodger’s hatred of sitting cross-legged, a position largely associated with women, and again, it’s more likely that as an adult he ascribed this “hatred” to his younger self. According to Almeida, Galambos, and Petersen in their study on gender intensification, “Because masculine behaviors, preferences, and interests are socially valued, it is not surprising that there is an escalation of masculinity among boys as they move toward adulthood;” in other words, as a child, probably no older than four, it is highly unlikely that he hated sitting in a feminine-oriented way (i.e. “cross-legged”), and more likely that the “hatred” was learned. The seemingly innocent reactions on the part of a spoiled child would remain innocuous if it weren’t for the looming voice of an older, far more disturbed Rodger in the background. His voice is a menacing presence that in its very role as creator and subject seeks to control every aspect of his life as if a cruel dictator, while his parents (particularly his two maternal figures) play the part of his subjects.

Rodger’s delusion that he maintained this level of control resided in the confidence he developed in his role as the “alpha male,” the “true” man. His apparent ignorance of the fact that he deplored yet desired both sex and women

would have been an inevitably conflicting series of thoughts and feelings, resulting in irrational frustrations and violent behavior. As Elliot grew older and more isolated within the world of Internet gaming, his anger and hatred towards women, men, and sexually intimate couples while he was “denied” the experience resulted in “fantasies of becoming very powerful and stopping everyone from having sex,” Rodger concludes, “If I can’t have it, I will destroy it” (*My Twisted World*, 56). Just as a child observes their sibling with a toy they themselves don’t possess and so break that toy, Rodger felt the same towards people engaging in sexual activity. In thinking back to Rodger’s earlier years, the “funny incident” in which he declared himself different, and therefore better than everyone else because he refused to pose cross-legged for a picture, Rodger believed that he saw “the world differently than everyone else,” he felt himself to be especially intelligent, and felt that he was able to conclude thusly: “Because of all of the injustices I went through and the worldview I developed because of them, I must be destined for greatness. I must be destined to change the world, to shape it into an image that suits me” (*My Twisted World*, 56). Rodger frequently presents himself as someone to be sympathized with; a victim of a society that has actively worked against him his entire life, and while my own argument has depicted a societal and cultural pressure upon young men to inform their thinking so as to “fall prey” to those gendered standards, there are “myths” that people like Rodger would be too self-involved to become aware of, and therefore realize (and decidedly ignore) that those very claims to victimhood are nothing more than arrogant blathering, a masculinized rhetoric to garner the sympathies of others. Like an abusive partner or spouse, Rodger relies on a series of “tricks,” drawing his audience into “the turbulent world of his feelings,” so as to distract from the danger of his internal thought processes, permeated with a toxic masculine rhetoric (Bancroft 21).

If we can firmly establish Elliot Rodger to be, above all things, an abusive man, we can begin to observe the violent nature of his language manifest itself as real-world violence. Despite Žižek’s claims that the “masochistic knight” would never physically harm another, Rodger’s own narcissistic self-abuse fails to embody “the knight” in his inability to perpetually wrestle with his own desires at an internal level only. As the “manifesto” reaches its inevitable conclusion, the language begins to deviate from simply hateful or condescending, and becomes outright explicit in its descriptions of violent behavior that he has perpetrated, and that which he wishes to commit. His first physical act of violence occurred when he was between the ages of 19-22; observing an intimate couple waiting in a line at Starbucks, he proceeded to follow them out of the store and threw a hot cup of coffee at them in his anger at this twisted “injustice.” It was around this time that Rodger discovered a particularly vile website, “a forum full of men who are starved for sex, just like

me. [...] Reading the posts on that website only confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are” (*My Twisted World*, 118-19). These kinds of websites serve as near-literal points of transition between violent language and violent action. Rodger frequently visited this site, full of other men who felt as if women owed them something due to the very fact that they were men, and as such, “deserved” women, if they were entitled to nothing else.

For most of “My Twisted World,” Rodger’s ideologies aggressively perpetuate the ideals of the toxic male in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He simultaneously slanders and desires women; detests the figure of the “jock” while emulating the “alpha male” persona. The frustrations that stem from these contradictions are what put women (and men) in the crosshairs of those like Elliot Rodger and others. Even when Rodger’s parents tried pairing him with various counselors and mentors, they too were stuck in a patriarchal mindset. When Elliot shared his “problems with girls,” his mentor Gavin concurs with Elliot’s observations of women in the Isla Vista area (as if the same type of women all rally to one location like mindless sheep), “he confirmed to me that yes, the girls in Isla Vista prefer tall, muscular, rowdy jock-type men” (*My Twisted World*, 119). Many commentators have been quick to jump to the conclusion that all of his ramblings and violent outbursts were the result of “mental illness” despite the fact that his father claimed that he was never formally diagnosed, and then only with a mild form of Asperger’s (Walters). But if we were to dismiss all of his ramblings as the result of autism, how do we dismiss the apparent “advice” of his mentor, who fed into a similar delusion? Although Gavin did not presumably experience the same violent visions that Elliot did, he was still operating under similar assumptions: women were living up to a certain set of standards that men had decided for them. Rodger’s linguistic violence of a non-explicit nature turns disturbingly graphic as “The Day of Retribution” approaches, wherein he imagines himself luring people into his apartment and torturing them (“I will cut them, flay them, strip all the skin off their flesh...”). Unfortunately, as we know all too well, the violent language of Rodger’s “manifesto” did not remain in abstracts, and became all too real for his victims and their families. To deny the importance of our “principal *means* of communication” is to deny the safety of people of all genders and varying forms of identity.

Language is an indispensable aspect of our humanity and we need it to develop as both a species and a culture. However, it is also our responsibility as critical thinkers to understand that language and know its flaws. *My Twisted World* and the Isla Vista shootings are the result of a written and lived history that devalues and subjugates both the female sex and the sexual animal; it harms both men and women, and should motivate people to wonder

how we got here and how we move forward. We need to be looking at the harmful nature of toxic masculinity in our post mass-violence discussions. Having conversations on gun control and the mental healthcare system are both worthwhile discussions to have, but this kind of frequent violence needs to be examined at a deeper societal and cultural level. There needs to be an acknowledgement on the part of all freethinking individuals to question our established gender norms and allow them to evolve beyond traditional power structures.

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## Above and Below: Visual Rhetoric and the Margins of the Bayeux Tapestry

*Sean Antonucci*

Spanning approximately 230 feet long, and 20 inches wide, the Bayeux Tapestry is a visual masterpiece of medieval European art. The embroidered piece depicts the 1066 Norman Conquest of England, and since its emergence into scholarly consciousness it has been a frequent subject of debate. Many of the debates center around the creation of the tapestry: who created it (Bishop Odo or Queen Matilda?), and to which side is the creator sympathetic (Harold and the English, or William and the French?). Although these are the main debates surrounding the tapestry, there are also debates related to the form of the tapestry—i.e., the use of words and images to construct its meaning making process. Scholars of various mediums of graphic narration have appropriated the Bayeux Tapestry as a predecessor in order to give their chosen medium a tradition grounded in a historically significant work of art. In *Understanding Comics*, comic theorist and auteur Scott McCloud states that the tapestry is a clear predecessor of the comic medium. Meanwhile in Gerald Noxon's article on the tapestry, Noxon proposes that the tapestry is actually a predecessor to film. Therefore, the scholarly arguments surrounding the visual rhetoric of the tapestry offer a unique case study in the limits of formal analysis, limits which have had some rhetoric scholars—like Oriana Gatta in her article “English 3135: Visual Rhetoric” and Franny Howes in her article “Imagining a Multiplicity of Visual Rhetorical Traditions...” —call for an expansion of the visual rhetoric sub-field. In this essay, I will analyze the reasons behind McCloud and Noxon claiming the Bayeux Tapestry for their respective mediums, then meander through the implications and weigh the usefulness of said claims as related to the study of visual rhetoric.

In our composition classrooms we might designate a lesson or two to the study of visual rhetoric by analyzing advertisements, or critiquing the aesthetics of a thematically relevant comic or film; however, the sub-field of visual rhetoric continues to expand beyond these approaches. For example, Howes states in her article that she desires a theory of multiple visual rhetorical traditions to move “beyond the formalist approaches widespread in comics studies right now,” and suggests that the theory “looks for consistencies and strategies between texts or across them rather within any given iteration of a text” (par. 20). Gatta echoes Howes's approach in her article, which provides an overview of how, as a doctoral student, she redesigned Georgia State University's three-credit upper-level visual rhetoric course. While discussing the

new course outcomes, Gatta asserts, “it is counterproductive to take a ‘separate but equal’ approach to visual and verbal texts and their analysis, production, and ideology” (81). In other words, while formal analyses can offer a wealth of educational opportunities, it remains imperative that the analyzed work be situated both within its original cultural moment, and within the analyst’s own time. Instead, McCloud and Noxon use the tapestry for its historical clout to justify, and rewrite the history of, their respective mediums.

In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud defines comics as “juxtaposed pictorial images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response” (9). McCloud’s definition allows him to retrace the course of history and create a much broader lineage for the comic medium. Dylan Horrocks argues in his response to McCloud, “Inventing Comics: Scott McCloud’s Definition of Comics,” that *Understanding Comics* is not quite the comics textbook that the name suggests, but is instead a “powerful piece of polemic” written to redefine the comic medium (1). According to Horrocks, McCloud’s problem with the current definition of comics is that “people associate them not with what they *could* be, but with what they *have* been—i.e., their history. So McCloud must first find a way to get rid of that history” (2). McCloud retroactively reforms the history of the comic medium by noting its alleged precursors in “pre-Columbian picture manuscript ‘discovered’ by Cortes around 1519” (10), the Bayeux Tapestry (12-13), hieroglyphics (12), and Egyptian paintings found “in the tomb of ‘Menna,’ an Egyptian Scribe” (14). Instead of superheroes as the predecessors of the modern graphic novel, McCloud swiftly redirects the reader’s attention to ancient artifacts in order to legitimize the medium.

McCloud incorporates a brief analysis of the Bayeux Tapestry in his chapter defining comics. McCloud states of the tapestry, “reading left to right we see the events of the conquest, in deliberate chronological order unfold before our very eyes [. . .] There are no panel borders per se, but there are clear divisions of scene by subject matter” (13). McCloud’s gloss of the tapestry as an ancestor to comics is suspicious because so much depends on the “per se” in the previous quotation. While McCloud is happy to shut the door on certain forms of graphic narration (e.g., he states that single-panel “cartoons,” like Bil and Jeff Keane’s *Family Circus*, are not comics because of they lack panels in sequence (McCloud 20)), he is eager to let the Bayeux Tapestry into his history despite its lack of panels. Horrocks argues that McCloud’s inconsistent standards are “an expression of certain values and assumptions” used to obscure comics’ low-brow past, and to prescribe the medium a high-brow future (1). For McCloud, comics are the highest of high art, and therefore the medium needs to divest itself of its childish past and find new roots in the annals of history.

Though McCloud's *Understanding Comics* is clearly more of an argument than a purely informative text, there are still many instructive moments that actually assist the reader in better understanding the medium. Rather than the previously cited academic definition that McCloud created for comics, a more useful concept that is central to the medium is the concept of "closure." According to McCloud, closure is simply "the phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (63). Although McCloud includes the tapestry in his version of comics' history, the lack of panels in the tapestry means that the tapestry lacks the process of closure—i.e. "here in the limbo of the gutter [the space between two panels] human imagination takes two separate images and transform them into a single idea" (McCloud 66). Instead of connecting separate panels via the viewer's imagination, the images in the central section of the tapestry move in a type of procession that seems more akin to cinematic traditions. In Noxon's article on the tapestry, he states that the tapestry most resembles "early silent film" and that it is "in fact, astonishingly similar in many respects to the kind of historical movies made in Italy just before World War I" (30). Noxon's reading of the tapestry therefore compares the titles of each scene to the written-out dialogue cards—which interrupt many silent films to narrate/explain the action—and the main images to a continuous reel of footage. Noxon attempts to incorporate the borders into his reading as well, stating that the whole tapestry resembles "a sort of horizontal triptych, which is somewhat like a triple movie screen form of presentation, but with the center screen much larger in width than the other two screens flanking it" (31). Considering that the triptych Noxon envisions is an impossibility in mainstream cinema (and would only find realization in a piece specially curated for an art gallery), it seems that McCloud is not the only scholar attempting to use the Bayeux Tapestry to justify the merits of his/her respective medium. Therefore, while Noxon's reading of the main band of the tapestry's relation to cinema is perhaps more appropriate than McCloud's argument that the tapestry *is* a comic; the marginalia is still unaccounted for in the filmic tradition. However, the marginalia's relation to the main band does seem to require the imaginative leap of McCloud's closure.

Although the main band of the tapestry is lacking closure, since it is not subdivided into specific panels, it is possible to recuperate McCloud's argument by focusing on the marginalia's relationship with the main narrative. In Gale Owen-Crocker's article "Squawk Talk: Commentary by Birds in the Bayeux Tapestry?" she asserts, "a study of the border birds reveals a voice or voices different in tone from the main narrative. Like the court fool, the border artist seems to have license to point out the vanity of human splendor and to provide some light relief around the most serious and far reaching political event in English history" (254). For Owen-Crocker, the birds in the margins

of the tapestry are not merely decorative ornamentation, but subversive idols mocking the humans in the main narrative band. For example, Owen-Crocker notes that when Harold is entering a church in Scene 3, he and a companion are depicted “already bending their knees and making the sign of the cross, [and that] birds with crossed wings bow down in what seems to me a faintly comic imitation of this serious moment” (253). Although we might be tempted to dismiss her example as over-analysis, she provides further (and more convincing) evidence from Scene 26—the completion of Westminster Abbey. After the abbey is completed for the burial of King Edward, the hand of God is depicted consecrating the abbey from above. However, to the left of God’s hand is the main tower of the abbey, and in the upper-band of the tapestry a bird is clearly pecking directly onto the tip of the tower. Owen-Crocker states of this scene that to the birds the abbey is “merely a habitat” and that “the birds’ irreverence for what humans hold most sacred is amusing” (254). Although it is still difficult to know the original intentions for all of the decorative features of the margins, there are at least a few marginal scenes that contain information that is not merely humorous in relation to the main narrative. In fact, some of the marginal scenes actually add to the meaning of the tapestry’s main band.

Many scholars have noted that in the early scenes of the Bayeux Tapestry, there are marginal references to Aesop’s fables. Owen-Crocker in particular notes a few in “Squawk-Talk,” and at least one of them relates directly to the main narrative. Owen-Crocker states “*The Wolf and the Crane* [. . .] is represented twice (Scene 4, lower, 24, upper)” (241-242). *The Wolf and the Crane* is the story of a wolf that offers a crane a reward if the crane removes a bone from the wolf’s throat. In order to remove the bone, the crane must stick its head down the wolf’s throat and pluck the bone from where it is lodged. In other words, the crane must trust that there is a bone to be removed and that the wolf is not actually creating an elaborate con to eat the crane. The crane removes the bone, but instead of giving the crane a reward, the wolf states that the crane’s reward is that the wolf did not bite the crane’s head off. Therefore, the moral of the fable is to know whom to trust; here the crane clearly represents an innocent and benevolent figure, while the wolf is a villainous trickster. The first scene that features the crane and the wolf is in the lower band of Scene 4 when Harold is embarking on his journey. The relationship between the fable and the main narrative is not immediately apparent here, and it may instead be a prefiguration of Harold breaking his oath to William. The fable is again recalled in the upper band of Scene 24, which is the scene directly after Harold swears his oath to William on the two reliquaries. Since the fable is recalled directly after Harold’s promise to William, the relation seems to be that Harold is the trickster wolf and William is the innocent crane.

William had previously saved Harold from Count Wido in Scenes 5-13, and though Harold seems to promise loyalty to William in Scene 23, he is quick to renege on his oath when he accepts the crown after King Edward passes in Scenes 26-30.

Soon after Harold takes the throne in Scene 30, there are two other examples of the marginalia relating back to the main narrative in a unique way. In Scene 32, the main narrative seeps into the upper-band with the title “*isti mirant stella*” (i.e., they marveled at the star), and the text is followed by an image of Halley’s comet. According to Roberta Olson, in her article on medieval interpretations of celestial happenings “comets were read by Christians as signs of either God’s wrath or approval,” but also that “comets were far less frequently considered positive signs . . .” (216). As with the example from Aesop’s fables, the margins again contain a prefiguration of a scene from the main narrative: here of Harold’s ultimate demise. In fact, Scene 33 further emphasizes Harold’s impending doom, again in the margins. Scene 33 depicts Harold in a state of shock due to a message he receives from (what appears to be) one of his servants; however, directly below there are a series of outlined ships that can either be seen as a prefiguration of William’s in-coming troops, or simply as a glimpse into “the inner workings of Harold’s mind” (Noxon 33). Therefore, while the main narrative may be lacking the imaginative leap of McCloud’s closure, the gutter—symbolized by the main narrative’s bordering threads—could act as a gap that the viewer’s imagination needs to cross in order to pair the marginalia with the main text.

However, using the comic framework to analyze the relationship between the marginalia and the main narrative band is not the only option. Scholars, like Robert G. Calkins in his article “Narrative in Image and Text in Medieval Manuscripts,” have suggested that illustrations and marginalia in some illuminated manuscripts similarly critique and expand upon the main text. Calkins states that, particularly in medieval art, “illustrations no longer just froze a single frame: by combining multiple incidents within a single frame, an illustration had the capacity to combine, present and future action, and perhaps by doing so [. . .] indicate larger implications” (5). The examples Calkins lists in the remainder of his article include instances where the marginalia of an illuminated manuscript similarly: provide social commentary (e.g., in Psalters or Books of Hours, there are often “satirical digs or reversals, such as monks cavorting with young damsels in an unseemly manner, or hares chasing hounds” (13)), include humorous vignettes involving animals (e.g., the Alfonso Psalter circa 1290 includes a marginal illustration of “a dragon facing off against a stag while a monkey rides a stork above” (13)), and prefigure information not directly stated in the main text (e.g., the Moutier-Grandval Bible in the British library includes two compositionally and thematically

similar miniatures before Exodus and after The Book of Revelations, which other scholars have read as “reaffirming the unity of the Old and New Testaments” (12)). Thus, rather than reading a current medium into an older work, it might be beneficial to change the conversation and view the Bayeux Tapestry as an important work—with its own predecessors—in the larger evolution of the image.

While the tapestry is similar to both the comic and cinematic mediums, its uniquely threaded narrative continues to overshadow its similarities to either. It may be tempting to reinterpret (or appropriate) an historical work in a current theoretical framework, as McCloud and Noxon have tried to do, but it is perhaps better to understand the work in its original contexts. For the Bayeux Tapestry, this might mean that scholars continue to decipher its great unknowns: e.g., why Harold left England, what Harold swore to William, and/or who King Edward intended to be his heir. Yet, this approach could also result in historically informed formal analyses: e.g., how the rest of the marginalia relates to the main narrative band, and/or further investigating the similarities between marginalia in medieval manuscripts and that of the tapestry. However, by both leveraging an historical document for a rhetorical purpose and at the same time ignoring the history of that document and possible predecessors to its form, the sub-field of visual rhetoric remains relegated to a sub-topic for one of the waning days of a busy semester.

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## IV | Poetry

### for the last beat poet

Larry Carr

for the last beat poet

you've run the gauntlet  
from boobs to blake

korea to nam

sailed the long way on that slow boat  
from china

Siddhartha to Mao to Mac

your peace eye radiates  
American Primitive

bodhisattva sight  
with avuncular smiles

we're surprised you haven't been carted  
away (again)  
to their hell in a handbasket

but you've seen paddywagon innards  
and know it's just another room

for the weary fellow traveler  
no fear there

plaintive odes conjure up old ghosts  
you sing for all who have forgotten the tune  
you sing for the mouths sewn shut  
you sing for those voices that no longer carry  
you sing to our mother to whom we return  
you sing in time to the weary sunflowers  
you sing for those who can't hum along  
you will sing for us long after we leave  
songs of still waters and deep flowing rivers

time tyther time traveler  
that shock of gray hair  
silver wires running with current  
the body electric  
the body eclectic  
singing for the revolution yet to come

## Navy Wives

Dennis Doherty

I wonder, the sea and anchor detail  
now made of women and men, who stays,  
waves at departing crews, the goodbye blast  
from the ship backing, turning, then steaming  
beyond the outstretched arms of longing bay,  
the sea itself detachment, space without  
shape, fixity, markers, just abstraction  
of destination. Imagination  
and memory conjure faith; instruments  
and hard work promise arrival someplace.

But what of the ones who turn and pace back  
to established order, a sense of what's  
life? Children and loved ones left to worry?  
They have to fill the space, occupy time.  
In the past, navy wives, perhaps a bit  
cynical, aware that their husbands, free,  
with a claim to danger and sacrifice,  
let loose in the fleshpots of Singapore,  
Olongapo, maybe Pattaya Beach,  
turned, indeed, elsewhere to satisfy needs.  
It was like almost a contract, housing  
and kids and infidelity. You went  
to the clubs when they left, the mariners,  
for sex with the lonely and the bereft,  
sometimes paying by playing with children.  
You didn't see it as preying. Older  
women more worldly than you ought to know  
what they're doing. They wanted more golden  
time too, and craved new heights, wild if untrue,  
not just a lay. So why the discomfort,  
this shadow life stalking what others made?

And how do mates do it now, balance home  
and away? What do the kids see in two  
disparate ways? I think we grope with dark  
paradigms between what should and what will  
be: that's the lesson navy wives taught me.

## Men Aloft

Dennis Doherty

Sounds cool – *men aloft*, if it weren't coming from the daily-grind-zombified voice of some seaman droning on the squawk box: "Men aloft. Do not rotate or radiate while men are working aloft."

Wish I could rotate *and* radiate at will. Really, it can be dangerous up there – not sheets and rigging, bare feet from the days of Billy Budd, handsome sailor, but radar, radios, gun directors, invisible rays burning air, and our yardarm seemed fifty feet up, and we *were* at sea, and not a quiet one. I didn't like the pitch and roll. Still, scheduled maintenance on antennae. So up we went, Jim Bob and I, up the ladder along the stack to our arm out over the wind whitened turbulence.

I shouldn't have gone first, nor looked down the eager throat with a mile to its belly, the champing maw of history – anonymous, indifferent death of the petty trifler, world water of eyes and bones bounded by shores of the shattered, forgotten and meaningless. I shouldn't have looked out at the expanse, Light blue sky and dark blue waves without horizon, somehow never touching, The former a somber, silent, vast echo chamber; The latter an anxious, angry, gnashing for action. It felt personal in the loneliest way. I simply didn't want to die there – a hollow nowhere, so I muscled up and clipped my safety belt, but it seemed, somehow, weak? We were sitting with tools in our hands, our legs wrapped around a length of metal tube, rolling at sea.

Have I said that? We were supposed to do something to an antenna? “Jim Bob,” I said calmly (I think), “I have to leave.” He waved his wrenches in the air and laughed. “What’s the matter, Denny? Ain’t this Great!?” The spray was hissing for me, dizzying; I couldn’t think. “You have to get off! I can’t do this!” “But we’ve got safety belts!” “I’m getting off. Move!”

Finally, he did, and I slunk back to radio, job undone, manhood too. I couldn’t explain my panic to the boss, a first class petty officer who would never become chief, who affected a neatly trimmed mustache, a pipe, face shaved red, and belly pulling his ironed work shirt tight against shiny buckle, an air of unearned intellect, as if he knew of books. He seemed (but only seemed) to study me, mustered a pose of command, and said, “Follow me.” “Where are we going, Ed?” I said, meaning that nothing would take me back out on that arm, but I followed to see where this would lead. We got half way up the ladder on the stack and he stopped. “What’s up, Ed?” I said. “Back down, Denny,” was all he said, so I did. We returned to radio without exchanging a word, chained to disparate fears of things left in air.

I love living under a sky; I love being on the sea,  
but sometimes they reveal deadly absurdity.  
I often soar in my lucid dreams; I breathe  
brine as I glide to mermaids who sing a sweet  
melody of the gifts the jeweled world reveals,  
but like Icarus, too late into his reverie,  
the alarm clock goes off a steadfast sentry  
who can neither march on air nor on the blue sea,  
honks “Men aloft! Men aloft! Men aloft!”

## Cosmos

Kim Sa-in (*translated by* Bella Dalton-Fenkl)

Oh, you empty pockets of  
One who's never persecuted another  
Will we return, someday, to our home town  
And crying, tell Father  
All the things we did while we were gone

코스모스

김사인

누구도 꺾박해본 적 없는 자의  
빈 호주머니여

언제나 우리는 고향에 돌아가  
그간의 일들을  
울며 아버님께 여쭙 것인가

## Elegy for My Sister

Master Wōl Myōng (*translated by* Heinz Insu Fenkl)

On the way from life to death,  
Fearful, you hesitated,  
And left without word  
That you were going.  
Born of the same branch, you and I,  
But like leaves scattering here and there  
In an early autumn wind,  
I do not know where you are gone.  
*Ah! Ah!* We shall meet again hereafter;  
I'll await you—'til then—on the way.

## 祭亡妹歌

月明師

生死路隱

此矣有阿米次 伊遣

吾隱去內如辭叱都

毛如云遣去內尼叱古

於內秋察早隱風未

此矣彼矣浮良落尸葉如

一等隱枝良出古

去奴隱處毛冬乎丁

阿也 彌陀刹良逢乎吾

道修良待是古如

## Snow as Essence

Jon Munk

snow as its own  
light.  
in the gray storm.  
in the early morning.  
fine substrate  
blown  
onto worlds.

as essence.  
white smoke from  
a white fire.  
a dove wing  
over.  
soft quiet bright  
forgetting  
spirit.

of death.  
of north.  
non.  
not of the sun.  
devoid other kind.  
blind anodyne  
aloft breath.

## Ghosts

Jon Munk

People fade in my life.  
Maybe I have faded.

No one says anything  
about it.

Time is a sun.  
Time makes us gray.

I had friends in my heart.  
Now I cannot find them.

They are shapes of faces  
I see as through dirty glass.

I lost their smiles.  
Then I lost their eyes.

Their names are not attached,  
like strangers' names.

O they are pale to me!  
They are as unpainted walls.

I reached to each of them  
in turn, was warm.

But it was less than nothing,  
like ghosts touching.

## eleven gray days

Jon Munk

the orange clock  
tells orange time

the hour is two  
it is an oriole

icedust and white  
rough out the sun

a pallor of snow  
in parlors at night

the moon anyway  
is half an ash

the black and not  
an orange half

the hour is three  
a meadow fritillary

dead roots affix  
dead gold to fields

an old weed folds  
down from the knees

a very pepper color  
to the trees and sky

such splendor for an eye  
all gray

the hour is four  
it is a lily flower

## The Wicker Song

Jon Munk

ljus/grus

—

light/gravel

—from the Swedish

lightfall

on gravel

mother

blue anemone

wildhoney

and king

arrow on bow

a crow in the tree

contented

night

the wheel

of the night

in houses

candles

old straw

for the chosen

and winter

hyacinths

returning

spring

to heather

to the wicker-bush

this meadow plea

is light green

## The Little Bird

Jon Munk

Brush  
of light snow.  
Sagged pepperbush.

Bark furrow  
furred  
with ragged ice.

Little bird  
flies to cover  
silently.

Bland  
little bird  
the color of rice.

Up over  
the chimney  
and the white land.

## Les Huitres de Les Moutiers-en-Retz

*For Sparrow*

Matthew Nickel

If you could catch the myriad sweet wave-spray  
ocean's gift compact like whitecap contractions  
buy all forgotten houses salt-weathered along shore-roads  
(rescue all lone artists selling salt cellars in Breton accents)  
and kiss the wrinkled hands of sailors, ancient mariners,  
who cross beyond the wind-stricken *gois*  
you might find a certain sweeping loneliness  
that satisfies all longing sought in drunken evenings  
lost somewhere south or in Louisiana.  
If I could taste once more that cold metallic  
sharp and sea juice, no horseradish  
Tabasco eye-burning, not even  
*mignonette* with shallots tongue-squinting  
just the *eau de vie* and oyster muscle  
like the sea's heart on a scoop-shaped shell  
nothing except ice and salt spray  
and a cool white wine from the Vendée,  
I could remember the water of life  
the cleaning wind-waltz that walking winding roads  
recalls beside sea exposed cows grazing  
salt-marshes that color the sharp metallic  
sky in shades far deeper than memory.  
If we could hold that moment once more together—  
like in a chorus as the audience sings  
aloud in joyous longing—  
where the green earth meets the distant blue  
in a sparrow's song releasing us from  
sacrifice at the water's edge

restrained only from seeking the drowned road to  
Noirmoutier, raiding a dusk to this longing,

we might contain Time again  
like that windy afternoon in July 2008

when we celebrated the wind's revolt  
and *royalistes* martyred in open resistance

paused to drink their bitter cups by salt waters  
and lantern shrines to sailors lost at sea, when

we prayed to the wind while casting shredded  
cloths like offerings, like Saint Francis blessing

raging waves and wind gusts, a singular prayer  
for release to the mystical oysters of Les Moutiers.

## Do you hear my words as a whisper?

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

Do you hear my words as a whisper?  
Hear them from far away  
as if in a night wind?

Do you hear them as a calling  
an echo or not at all?  
Your lips clenched in a fit of anger.

All we once had were words,  
stories to remember,  
You, a young father, in a stiff back chair,  
me, at bedtime, a little girl, chin up  
to the edge of covers, listening.

And where are we now?  
I press my fingers to your flannelled chest  
Your eyes shut against it all.  
No syllables from your silent tongue.

Not a nod, a single word,  
not yes or no.  
Just silence dead air  
and your shuttered eyes.

How do I know you  
now that words are gone?  
How do I know the darkness  
or light you live in

a fluorescence  
that turns flesh cold,  
skin pale,  
limbs weak.

I cast my line  
into light stained waters  
of memory.  
Whisper to my old self

your young self.  
Speak.

(from) ***Redeeming Old Pacts—With Walt Whitman in Camden***

(Drafts for a poetry reading at the Walt Whitman House in Camden & the Franklin Inn Club in Philadelphia for the Fifth International Imagism Conference in 2016.)

H. R. Stoneback

***Prologue: Return***

What we have fled, to that we must return.  
Time uncoils like a copperhead, seconds  
slither, minutes meander, weeks wobble,  
months murmur, seasons simmer, years yearn,  
decades dangle, until at last the clock strikes,  
weighted with remorse. The envenomed Future,  
which is our Past, invades our Present  
(or else, worse, memory abandons us).  
Time coils like rattlesnake rasp and rise,  
deep time at last strikes and late, late we learn  
that time is always a Round-Trip ticket.  
Though we paid just One-Way, we must return.

**I. *Moving to Camden***

Under the tall shadow of William Penn,  
Philadelphia-bred—*heaviest baby ever born*  
*in nation's oldest hospital* reads the record worn.  
Four years old, crossed over to Camden.  
*Less congestion, parents said, cheaper rent*

**II. *Victory Garden***

*With Walt Whitman in Camden.*

—*Title of Horace Traubel's massive multivolume work*

Aged four, digging in their Victory Garden  
at Pyne Poynt on the deep dark Delaware:  
Sudden clamor of car-horns, sirens, church-bells,  
factory whistles, cherry bombs, shouts from the streets.  
Loud air-raid sirens wail the all-clear code.  
It is V-J Day. The war is over.  
Even the boy knew. The bombs were dropped last week

A fine fat red-skinned potato in each hand,  
his war-garden mother raised both arms sky-high,  
shouted *Praise the Lord!* The first time he heard  
her shout that. (A late Roaring 20s flapper,  
Atlantic City High School beauty queen,  
then after some college, Great Depression-trapped,  
she grew more religious—but never dressed  
in black and passed out tracts, as Zelda did.)

His father soon came running—  
The defense-plant factory where he worked  
closed down early (closed for two days)—  
war-weary, father danced family through the garden.  
His father was an air raid warden.

A poet, his father quoted something  
from Whitman. The boy did not know the poem,  
maybe from *Drum-Taps*. Then his father said:  
*As Whitman put it, war is 99 parts  
diarrhea to one part glory.*

His father must have read Traubel closely.  
{*SING: Nobody knows the Traubel I've read . . .*}  
(Tell us Walt, did Traubel's notebooks record  
*everything* you said, every day, every way,  
in every mood on every street in Camden?)

V-J celebration simmered, boiled toward sunset.  
It was the first time the boy saw a city dance.  
Jubilant firecracker waves breaking rat-a-tat  
tat-bang, blaring bugles, distant drum-taps.  
Great booms roared down the river—shook the earth.  
They gut-felt the big guns of the war-ships  
docked along the Camden waterfront.  
In quiet intervals, they could hear the noise  
from Philly across the river. Baskets full,  
they slow-strolled home from their riverfront  
Victory Garden, where their patriotic

vegetables, they said, had helped to win the war.  
People danced in the streets, shouting *Japs Surrender!*  
singing *God Bless America*. His father  
whispered: *And say a small prayer for Japan*.

Nobody heard. They passed out Victory Garden  
potatoes and tomatoes like war medals.  
Their hunger did not limit their generous joy.  
After dinner, left-over meatloaf  
with their new peace-potatoes boiled and bathed  
in peppered butter, father and son  
went back out and waltzed the streets. Father said:  
*You will remember this—the rest of your life*.  
In the crowds he took the boy's hand, dragged him  
along. Four-year-old stride could not keep up  
with the fast pace. They walked past silent factories,  
past neighbor Whitman's house. Unknown women  
kissed father, wet-kissed son. Tears. Big cars roared  
by, horns blowing, people standing on running boards  
cheering and drinking. Before they went home,

the streets were ankle-deep with shredded paper,  
confetti, broken beer bottles, women's underwear.  
Back home, they listened to radio reports  
of riots and chaos across the country.  
There were no riots in Camden that night.  
In San Francisco, many things burned, people died.  
They heard President Truman's voice through static.  
Other voices—Hirohito? MacArthur?  
His father waltzed him up the steps to bed.  
*Say a small prayer for Japan—he said again—*.  
*A day like this should be written by Walt Whitman*.  
*When you really need him—where's Abraham Lincoln?*  
*Goodnight. Say your prayers*. Then the room went dark.  
Aged four, he knew the *Now-I-Lay-Me* prayer, couldn't make  
Japan fit, couldn't get past *if I die before I wake—*

### III. Poets Row—Byron Street to Mickle Street

*Walt Whitman of Mickle Street.*—Title of book

Then he lived on Poets Row, on *Byron Street*,  
narrow cobblestone alley by the river,  
next to two alleys named *Milton* and *Burns*.  
Doomed, he felt his address as destiny.  
Walt's house was on Mickle, a few blocks away.  
He walked past Walt's house almost every day  
from age 8 to 15—like some chthonic dream.  
*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byronic rage  
in the ghetto. (That was long before Elvis.)  
*Paradise Lost*. *Auld Lang Syne* for wee mousies fat—  
mice and men *agley*, dominion of river-rats.

### VI. The Old Man and the School

*For Whitman Reading His Poem at Cooper School—October 31, 1874*

Wondering what happened to Walt's lost manuscript, hoping somehow she got it when the school was torn down, the older man tells himself—speaking of lost manuscripts: ***Try to write it exactly the way you wrote it in 7<sup>th</sup> grade during that week after you lost Mademoiselle Fardeaux forever. The way you wrote it then:*** —*This is a tale about Walt Whitman at Cooper School, where this story's protagonist is presently an inmate. Actually, he likes the school, the building itself, because it is old, from the 1870s, and tall and stylish and solid with its brick and granite-trimmed windows and high-ceilinged classrooms. He likes the school also because of its association with Walt Whitman, a direct living connection. By this 7<sup>th</sup> grade year he's read most of Whitman, you couldn't escape him in Camden. Even Walt Whitman Grocery Stores—Whitman, Whitman every where, / Sometimes too bored to think; / Whitman, Whitman, every where / Nor any drop to drink. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade he already has mixed feelings about Whitman and he's cynical about the "Good Gray Poet" song-and-dance and the "Captain My Captain" routine. He has read plenty of Whitman and he knows you cannot dismiss Whitman like some teachers-preachers do and you shouldn't worship Whitman like some teachers-preachers do. He knows things are more complicated than that. And so is Poetry. But*

*if you lived in Camden, you couldn't dismiss Walt because he is still a great natural fact of the landscape, the buildings, the streets of the city. Walt's words inscribed on the City Hall; framed, hanging on his school walls.*

*Among local dignitaries who spoke at the opening of the boy's school—Cooper School October 31, 1874—was Walt Whitman. The boy read the poem Walt wrote for the Cooper Inauguration called "An Old Man's Thought of School." It started out:*

An old man's thought of school,  
An old man gathering youthful memories and blooms that youth itself  
cannot.

*Then something-something-something, a few lines before this:*

These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,  
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,  
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,  
On the soul's voyage.

*Then some lines about boys and girls in school and tiresome classes (lines the boy should remember since almost all of his classes were tiresome) and then this conclusion:*

And you America,  
Cast you the real reckoning for your present?  
The lights and shadows of your future, good or evil?  
To girlhood, boyhood look, the teacher and the school.

*He didn't know the whole poem yet, because he'd never seen it in a book. Of course, it couldn't be in the pre-1874 edition of Leaves of Grass that he owned or the 1855 edition that his father owned. He'd have to look for it in the Complete Whitman at the Cooper Library.*

*He knew the poem because there was a framed handwritten copy of it hanging on the wall at Cooper School and he passed it every day in the high hall. They said it was in Whitman's handwriting. Some of the lines were hard to make out. It had a big signature in Whitman's familiar hand, with the date, at the bottom of the page. Every time he walked by the framed poem, it made him feel connected to Whitman in a personal way. He wondered if Walt, who had*

*his first stroke right before, could walk the six blocks from his house on Mickle Street to Cooper School or did he ride that short distance in a buggy? Did somebody have to help him up the steps into the school? Was he in some kind of wheelchair? He'd try to find these things out but he already knew there was no info on this in that fat multivolume set with the green-and-gold binding by that guy Traubel—With Walt Whitman in Camden. He read through that last year. It was all about Whitman's last few years, when he was surrounded by his disciples in that little rowhouse on Mickle Street. He wondered if Whitman sat down here, on any of these Cooper School chairs or benches, at any of these old desks, where he—the boy—now sat 80 years later. The poem wasn't great, not one of his favorites at all, but it made him like Whitman better, the fact that Walt came here after a stroke and read the poem he wrote for Cooper School. The boy hoped that if he ever became a famous poet he would not think he was too cool to write a poem for a new school and read it to the kids and parents.*

*He thought the strange thing about Whitman's poem was that Walt felt like an old man when he was only 55. That wasn't really old. Well, he guessed it all depended—sometimes the boy felt really old at 12.*

*He figured he liked Cooper School because of Whitman and was somehow proud of the connection. He didn't know why he should be proud of that, since he had nothing to do with it. Or did he?*

*Maybe it was what Miss Fardeaux said and did when she substituted for a month in 7<sup>th</sup> grade English class. He liked Miss Fardeaux—she was smart and French and she wanted the class to call her Mademoiselle Fardeaux but the stupid older left-back gang guys like Tommy the Greek laughed out loud when she said that. She was the favorite teacher he'd ever had, even if she was only a substitute. He watched her several times standing in the Cooper hallway and reading Whitman's poem, pondering it. She stood there in her high heels reading and that was the first time he noticed what a nice figure she had. Before that, when she sat behind the teacher's desk, he'd only noticed her bright eyes, shining, intense. But at night in bed with his eyes closed he could see her standing there by the Whitman manuscript, stretched forward tracing Whitman's words under the glass with her fingertip, her left ankle lifted and held behind her right leg, her disarranged skirt revealing more leg and knee than he ever saw except at the beach. It was different with a skirt and high heels. That was not the main thing that made him feel he was in love with her. Maybe he*

*thought she was in love with him, too. He was almost 12 and she couldn't be more than 24 he figured. That was OK he thought because when he was 24 she'd only be 36.*

*There was that day she asked the class to recite poems they had to memorize and he recited the longest poem—"O Captain! My Captain!" She loved it. He felt a little guilty as if he were cheating on her—he'd had that poem memorized for two years since the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. But she loved it and so a few times they stayed after school together and read Whitman to each other. Then suddenly she was gone because the regular teacher was back. He was heartbroken and he never saw her again. He wondered what happened to Miss Fardeaux—he'd probably never see her again. He liked the way she smiled at him when she handed back something he'd written. He liked her French accent, the way she talked English in that throat-breathy way. He liked the way she liked Whitman. Maybe he would make up a story about her when he knew and understood enough facts to make the story up and true. —*

—Now, more than 60 years later, the old boy-man wonders if Whitman's lost manuscript will ever turn up. There is not even any record of it as a lost manuscript. What happened to it when they demolished Cooper School? Did she somehow get it and take it back to France with her? Does she, now in her 80s, sit alone late at night in her ruined chateau in the Vaucluse, her fingertip tracing the words? Does she read the poem and think about Cooper School? Does she think about him and how they read Walt together? He wonders and waits for somebody to invite him to write and read a poem at the dedication of a new school. He does not feel old yet though he's already older than Whitman ever got to be. And he has some *thoughts about school* he'd be happy to share. Maybe, for the occasion, he'll borrow Whitman's wheelchair.

(1953-2016)

## Canticle

Pauline Uchmanowicz

At the prairie's edge, wide-eyed cows,  
tails swatting, wander toward us  
like curious children encountering  
foreign tourists and their strange  
odors and tongues. Sensing a storm  
drawing closer, the bovine herd  
appears to be listening for God's voice

Something has already ended.

A train whistle carries through the rain.

## Homecoming

Robert Waugh

### I

It's a long slow river, slow  
heartwise, slow in the mind  
fingering through the deep black mud  
in its bed, fingering through

the slow long air that lumbers  
above it, a thick July air  
that farms upon its journey  
bestow it, long and slow

and dark, no one can see  
its dark slow bottom of mud  
but we guess at its mothering leisure  
and at its long slow pulse.

### II

It's bearing me north-east,  
not far from its sodden banks  
where an old woman, old as I am,  
is waiting. She doesn't know it,

she didn't know it when  
she was young in a dress of roses,  
the river had far to flow beside her,  
its humble roots and dark

banks bringing down the trees,  
it gathered waters that lapped  
at her feet but she didn't know it,  
only her old heart can know it.

### III

The hollow halls of my high school  
echo its emptiness. Now that  
the city has shut it down

it does nothing, pulling out rocks

like the quarry it abuts on  
pulling out rocks, in the long  
dark hallways some of us walk,  
we are heavy rocks who pull

our lovers out like rocks, recalling  
the air in them still, the rocking  
impossible slow air  
long as a hallway despair.

#### IV

I can write nothing more  
than my age at loss, I speak  
to the old men and women  
I barely recognize.

Tell me, you spooks like threadbare  
shirts in a closet, tell me,  
what's become of us, tell me,  
what's become of the river.

Does it flow slow and long  
as it always has, or does it  
flow leaden and deadly, does it  
flow dead and long and dark?

#### V

They cannot shut down the river  
much as they wish, it's too long  
for their fingers and papers, its lounge  
is too long to comprehend.

The love we surround it with  
holds its banks and releases,  
its banks in its steady heartbeat,

and the belly of it extends  
dream by dream—tell me your name,  
its pulse in the hollow halls,  
tell me your long slow name  
and abide in it tonight.

## VI

The room in which I was born  
has fled into time, the womb  
in which I was born has died  
into space that's akin to time,  
a long dead time, it is faceless  
and cannot speak, I return  
to the empty hallways, the pulse  
of the river, too slow, too slow  
and long to speak, but there  
in its dark bed a voice  
sings almost into voices  
as broad and long as a lake.

## VII

The lakes and rocks accept us  
like cradles, a white-haired friend  
accepts us—I'd hardly know you  
but do not need your name,  
no need between us, I'd know you  
anywhere on this lake  
but nowhere else. Hello,  
it's like always saying hello  
coasting along the shore,  
imagining us in those houses  
we never shall inhabit,

but we inhabit each other.

### VIII

We have surrendered the wheel.  
Our sons tear us up and down  
the hospitable lake and turn us  
into the home canal.

It's not bad here as the sun  
watches the long afternoon.  
I watch it out, it's slow  
this gathering dark in the coals

they have lit, we let it burn  
and walk up the hill, they will bring us  
hamburgers, beans and chips  
and make out in the boathouse.

### IX

It's heartgruel that forbids  
its fellow death, the river  
and hallway that takes you home  
long and slow over the rocks,

because we cannot lift  
you off our hearts and backs, dear friend,  
because you remain with us still  
long in this troubled land,

that uplifts us as though we were dying—  
it's slow, I can't say it, it's slow—  
as if you were dying in me and mocked  
your sudden death, our rock.

### X

The city and the long  
full river are sprinkled in lights,

like foreign constellations, full  
of the future, full at last

of presence gathered up,  
not put aside, not lost  
and not praised anyway  
we were not, we never shall be.

It's a sprinkling of lights, it's not  
a settlement of lights.  
We're casual in our meetings, remember?  
We're casual in our deaths.

## Visions from the Old Mill Twilight

Gregory E. Bruno

I watch the birds at dawn  
Diving in purposeful directions,  
Snacking on bugs in beakfuls  
Streaking the unkempt yard  
With reds and browns and blues.  
Little one's fluttering from the bush,  
Return quickly to the lush nest green.  
Mature birds, masters of craft and efficiency  
Count flaps of their wings and fall,  
Propelling themselves in harmony  
With the heaviness of gravity.

I watch the bats at dusk  
When mosquitos buss in my ear,  
Preventing me from writing and taking  
Bits of my blood, before night: Venus  
And Jupiter's light penetrate the plaster  
Blue dome of my outer body;  
Her light is stronger than his:  
Theirs is the only crepuscular order.  
Bat's wings flutter frantically  
Unaware of the conflict in their  
Blindness, flowing through the air  
On cosmic reverberations.

I watch the birds at dawn,  
And the bats at dusk,  
The soul repudiates  
Its chthonic ties to ameliorate  
The tension between  
Sight and echolocation.

## **An Invitation**

Gregory E. Bruno

May I, if it would bring you pleasure,  
Dance on your tongue's tip?  
To take a world from my lip  
To your lip, like a tulip laid on placid  
Lake water with breeze delayed?

I apologize I meant to grant you  
A green rose but while I was  
Reading in a field I lost it amongst  
The leaves of green.

Shall you receive me as I am?  
A dry host, cracked and tasteless,  
Or will you discard me as you did  
The FOOL, dog biting his behind,  
Forgetting the WORLD and my  
Circle dance. I rotating wait  
Eagerly for your reply.

## San Marco by Way of San Rocco

*for MG & EH*

Christopher Paolini

I have never seen a space hold light,  
Fill with so much light  
As the golden hour on Burano,  
Sun shrinking away on the last vaporetto  
Toward night's hidden nest

I think,  
“Maybe I am Mister Dante for the moment”—  
Paradise-pushed through the taut  
Unswept mosaic of houses  
Softened by low-hanging flower-clouds  
Here at the high point of pilgrimage

Back home all roads beckon toward the sea,  
Each step illuminating the shell-speckled dream

san marco by way of san rocco

Two cities chained together but not touching,  
Both at the mercy of the sea,  
And behind me  
The head of a wild boar  
On the wall above the bed—  
He whispers endlessly of his dream  
That the Ninth Ward is the hand of Our Lord

san marco by way of san rocco

Two swans on the canal  
Leaning toward each other in sentimental shape—  
“That's our monument,”  
The grace that forgives death with every happy breath

san marco by way of san rocco

I fall asleep dream-shrouding her in lace  
While she waits like a fisherman's wife  
Beneath a Creole moon

*Burano/Torcello—6/26/14*

Note: This poem was read at the PEN/Hemingway Fundraiser, held at the Locanda Cipriani on the island of Torcello, as part of the 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Hemingway Conference in Venice, Italy. I presented a paper on the function of Dante in Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees*, as that novel mainly takes place in and around Venice. Thus, many of the images allude to Hemingway's novel. At the heart of the poem, though, is the connection between Venice—including the island of Burano, where I shacked up during the conference—and New Orleans—where I was living at this time. San Marco refers to both the piazza—the main public square in Venice—and its basilica—the most famous church in the city. San Rocco is the patron saint of Venice, as well as the namesake of the neighborhood I was living in in New Orleans—anglicized to Saint Roch, of course. He is sometimes depicted—as he is in the Saint Roch cemetery's chapel and shrine—with a scallop shell on his hat or clothes—a symbol most often associated with Saint James and the Camino de Santiago, a famous (and Hemingway's favorite) Catholic pilgrimage route.

## The Deluge from Ten-Ten

*(Winter-Spring Visions from a New Paltz Skyscraper)*

Daniel J. Pizappi

### I.

Snowbound grainfields still lined with till lines,  
salt choked blacktop aged gray in the sun.

Cars queue roadside and drift under tree lines.  
Windowglass glistens, a message in morse

drawn out 'cross the miles to ignorant eyes.  
A code undecoded is nothing but time.

A murder of crows alights in the furrows—  
some rise toward my windowlined eyrie of glass.

Do these carry messages and must meaning  
fail me? Surely their language is clearer

than glass. But where do I read it,  
this blackbirds' back word tongue,

spoken as such without words to divine.  
Perhaps in the curl of their drifting wingfeathers,

or else in the way they seem fixed in the sky—  
gliding and rising but never wingflapping,

slipping unturning to the right of my foothold,  
drifting like shadows from under my eyes.

Reddening, deadening, the Kodachrome sun sets.  
Darkness descending, all meaning denied.

### II.

Fallowfields now greenfields—meadows lie deadstill.  
The trees are still brown save the evergreen pines.

The mountains make the horizon, black  
against the cloudbanks and baby blue sky.

The buds must be coming, though I see none from here.

The sun warms, feeding, surely they're eating.  
Perhaps I should make some concession to time—  
lie down and slumber, let a week or two by.  
For two days it's rained. Today, the sun's shining.  
My view from the firmament crystalline, clear.  
The river has risen in the unceasing deluge.  
Its cup runneth over through fields become fishponds.  
There is no traffic on the roads today,  
except, occasionally, a lone car approaches  
the flood waters where they drift 'cross the blacktop.  
They never stop right away—as soon  
as the impasse is visible that is—  
but continue right to the watery edge,  
roll in an experimental wheel, as if  
they trust not to sight when the scene spells disaster.

## On My Sister's Birthday

Ethel Wesdorp

Snow frosts the fallen leaves;  
Fog muffles sound,  
Mantles the mountain, and  
Blurs the dark trunks of dormant trees;

Sun glows through opaque skies,  
Pearling the valley cloaked in mist,  
Silvering memories,  
Like old photographs;

There is a fragile beauty  
To this winter's day;  
As each year passes, I grow older,  
But my sister's youth is everlasting.

## The Reckoning

Ethel Wesdorp

“I’m not ready,”  
    he whispered,  
his eyes shut tight,  
    against the glare  
of fluorescent light,  
    and the murmur  
of machines that  
    measured each beat.

Did he know  
    he would fade a  
bit more each day?  
    *For the rest of*  
*his life* could be  
    reckoned in seconds?

Did he feel trapped  
    by the tubes  
that bound him  
    to the bed?

Did he fear the end?

Did he count his regrets  
    instead of sheep?

## Angel Sightings

Caroline Wolfe

Gathered a mustard seed of evidence  
dreamed a broken wing  
she came to rescue me

Chimes, not trumpets, reflect the wind  
A woman at the grocery store asked,  
*Find what you need?*

Awakened with a memory  
her eyes of light  
reassuring

I actually saw an angel once  
looked like a dragonfly  
flashed blue iridescent

## Colors Passing

*(previously published Chronogram May 2015)*

Caroline Wolfe

The sun gathered gold  
dispersing blue until tomorrow  
yields to pink along the blushed horizon.

We watched the sunset  
from Plattekill Avenue.

Exchanging stories and  
talking with our hands  
revealed mutual colors.

As though this happens every day,

The sun disappeared below  
darkening trees transforming  
henna into orange.

Turning toward twilight,

We headed east  
words trail indigo  
reaching for violet.



“Virginia Woolf: Healing the Trauma of the Gender Divide”

*Laura Donovan*

In this thesis, I argue that the rhetorical discourse surrounding the social and historical traumas of women informs the perpetuation of these traumas in our society. Examining the memoirs and novels of the early twentieth-century English writer Virginia Woolf, I explore how historical trauma influences individual trauma. My reading of Woolf’s writing locates her work at the intersection of psychoanalysis, gender studies, and trauma theory, and places modernist literature in dialog with the sciences, from psychoanalysis to neurobiology. My own story of Woolf’s reckoning with trauma traces the development of the field of trauma studies in the twentieth century from Sigmund Freud to Cathy Caruth. While Freud’s psychoanalytic work lays the groundwork for understanding both the structure of trauma and the importance of narrative in shaping it, Caruth complicates Freud’s faith in the “talking cure” by arguing that our lack of an adequate language for expressing traumatic experience makes it difficult to communicate that experience with others and to come to terms with it, thereby leaving us, she suggests, without a cure. Simply put, trauma resists narrative. What I argue, then, is that Woolf instead makes narrative conform to trauma by generating a visual vocabulary and sensory language for articulating the experience of pain and violation. I analyze how this hyper-sensory language transforms our conventional conceptions of the gendered spheres of public and private life and draws attention to problems of sexual inequality and constraints. In this way, I suggest, Woolf’s stories move us from a gendered to an intersectional concept of identity that embraces difference rather than seeking to suppress, discipline, or contain it. Gender, ideally, might become a space for creative performance and no longer a source of social and individual trauma.



## VI Book Review

Naomi S. Baron, *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Thomas G. Olsen

Over the last several generations the topic of reading, especially whether Americans are doing enough of it, has been a matter of significant academic interest and lively public policy debate. But whereas studies and reports on this topic have generally focused on the quantity and types of reading readers are reading, in *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* linguist-turned-media studies scholar Naomi S. Baron looks at the various media in which we do our reading—for pleasure, for information, for work, with our children, with our colleagues, and with our students. She asks, in effect, for us to consider the cognitive, social, and political effects of digital reading, and to ask whether they differ from those associated with traditional reading on paper.

The time has never been better to ask such questions. In 235 pages, over ten chapters, Baron admirably surveys the field and offers both a range of expert opinions and some of her own predictions for the future of reading in a world that will almost certainly be defined by the simultaneous availability of both digital and printed texts. And she does not stop at predictions: part of the value of this book is that she concludes with a series of prescriptions for successfully negotiating this brave new world of reading choices.

The complexity and inter-related quality of these questions immediately becomes clear in *Words Onscreen*. Are all reading tasks or occasions the same? How much does the age of the reader matter? How culturally specific are reading habits and the social institutions that support them? Is e-reading really “greener” than paper reading? Do our reading habits feed back into our writing habits? And so on. For anyone interested in literature, pleasure reading, education, or the forces that shape contemporary educational policy—or indeed anyone connected to the world in which we now live—this book might as well be required reading.

Baron generally keeps to a course of objective inquiry in addressing to these questions, acknowledging the virtues and (in the technical parlance of media studies) the *affordances* of digital reading, which offers of a number of conveniences for readers, opportunities for communal or social reading, and cost-saving measures for publishers. However, the underlying skepticism

that begins the book and explains her personal interest in the subject runs throughout her analysis: she asks, “If I have trouble doing serious analysis when reading online, what about my students? As my research would subsequently show, many undergraduates treat online academic articles the same way I do: They print the pieces out. But what happens with textbooks or complex novels? When they are consumed online, what are the educational and psychological consequences?” (xii). *Words Onscreen* is thus really two projects in one: a more or less objective synthesis of recent thinking by scholars and other deeply invested practitioners of reading and writing around the questions that digital reading provokes; and at the same time a more personal coming-to-terms with the opportunities and challenges that accompany new ways of reading. She asks whether digital reading is reshaping our basic understanding of what it even means to read, and she is interested in this question personally and as a global citizen (xii).

Just how new are these new ways, and how deep is the scholarship that attempts to make sense of the most important media innovation since Gutenberg’s magnificent invention over 550 years ago? Although onscreen reading began to emerge as a viable alternative to paper reading with the advent of the personal computer in the last years of the twentieth century, and Sony introduced a rather unsuccessful device in 2003, it’s really the introduction of Amazon’s first Kindle in 2007 that made digital reading a serious business in every sense of the word. Barnes and Nobles’ Nooks and Apple’s iPads, along with some other minor players in the e-reader and tablet market, combined with Amazon’s incredible success to ensure that by January 2014, nearly one-third of Americans owned an e-reader—up from about 4% less than three years earlier (8). Publishers and market-watchers immediately took notice, forming the Book Industry Study Group (BISG) to try to understand the absolutely explosive market potential in those heady years of triple-digit increases in e-book sales.

But as Baron recounts in Chapter 9, the enormous commercial success of e-books in the United States and in the UK is hardly matched elsewhere in the world. Many European countries with rich traditions of reading have not taken to e-reading with anything like Anglo-American enthusiasm—the result, perhaps, of government-mandated price-fixing in some countries (policies that are very detrimental to Amazon’s business model of deeply discounting books), differential tax rates for paper books vs. e-books in others (with most Continental tax rates at or near 20%, potentially a significant factor for consumers), and perhaps greater loyalty to local, independent bookstores elsewhere. In Asia, cell-phone reading has been popular for a generation; e-readers are often seen there as duplicating what a good smart phone can already do.

Although Baron's analysis of the broad cultural and political dimensions of onscreen reading are genuinely illuminating, her real interest centers on the cognitive effects of e-reading, especially for those—like students and scholars—attempting to undertake deep, sustained, serious reading. Much of the thinking of *Words Onscreen* derives from the results of a three-part study the author conducted among American, German, and Japanese university students. Her findings are revealing: although many of her subjects did do significant amounts of academic reading onscreen, they expressed strong preferences for paper over screens for long-form reading and for their recreational reading. Japanese students tended to do more school reading on paper than their American and German counterparts, but to prefer the medium of paper somewhat less. All three cohorts read for pleasure in hard copy by a factor of about 3 to 1 over digital. Perhaps most revealing, Americans and Germans overwhelmingly did their longer assignments in hard copy and strongly preferred to do both their schoolwork and pleasure reading in hard copy. If price were not an issue, over 94% of German students and 89% of Americans reported that they would do their scholarly reading in hard copy; 77% of Japanese students would do the same (and in fact seem to). For pleasure reading, German students said they would prefer paper at a rate of 89%, Japanese at 83%, and Americans at 81%—about the same figures they reported for their current habits.

What do these data points tell us? Responses to the open-ended questions in Baron's survey may offer some clues: while appreciating the portability, money savings, and apparent environmental benefits of e-reading, students in all three countries expressed a number of disappointments with the screen medium: difficulties in making marginal notes or highlighting important sections of text; eyestrain and cognitive stress; with no pages to turn, the feeling that e-reading is not "real" or fully engaged reading; and concerns about the lack of physical contact with one's material as the reader floats about in a continuous on-screen text. Perhaps just as important, they agreed that the digital environment of a laptop or even e-reader invites distraction and unproductive multitasking: students in Germany and the United States overwhelmingly felt themselves more likely to wander off task when reading on multi-function screens.

These results take us to the heart of Baron's project in *Words Onscreen*. She concludes that although e-reading has its benefits and is here to stay, the higher the stakes of what one is reading (pleasure reading vs. school work, short assignments vs. long ones, etc.), the less likely it is that the onscreen medium will satisfy our cognitive requirements. The same principle applies to works we are likely to re-read, whether revisiting a beloved novel at another time in life, writing scholarly work, or studying for a final exam: a trashy novel

intended to get us through a long plane journey or to give us something to do at the beach can probably be read about as effectively onscreen as on paper. But Marie de France, William Shakespeare, Max Weber, Herman Melville, Karl Marx, Emmanuel Kant, Virginia Woolf, and a host of other writers whose work challenges us to think deeply or to engage emotionally? Almost certainly not. Nor do e-books seem to be the best choice for young readers: Baron cites a number of studies and professional opinions that suggest that, despite a lot of marketing hype, screens are far less effective environments for babies being read to or for developing readers. It turns out that the sometimes lamented, or ridiculed, limitations of the paper medium might be its greatest strengths.

The consequences of Baron's argument for anyone connected to the academy must be obvious. Although paper texts may put very real pressures on college students' budgets and school districts may leap at the chance for some relief from expensive textbook purchases, resorting to e-reading for financial motives rather than conscious and carefully considered objectives may be a tragic false economy—at least if deep learning is the ultimate goal. E-reading looks like the wrong choice in cases where deep engagement of one sort or another is called for.

As she concludes her final chapter, Baron offers nine prescriptions for navigating a world of paper and digital reading opportunities. Two of the most important of these are, first, to let form follow function—in other words, to choose one's reading medium according to one's task—and second, to craft educational policy to maximize learning outcomes, not to shave costs (233). Free will is ultimately the underlying theme of this study, at both the individual and social levels: we need to think before we commit to a reading medium, and individuals with discretionary power over the cognitive development of others need to keep their priorities straight. A given in the new thinking about the "fate of reading in a digital world" is that digital is here to stay. The question is whether we are adequately equipped to make the right individual and social choices about where and how to read.

## VII Contributors

**Sean Antonucci** has an MS in Library and Information Science from the University of Buffalo and an MA in English from SUNY New Paltz. His scholarly interests include visual rhetoric, cartosemiotics, word-image hybrid texts, and alternative comics.

**Gregory E. Bruno** is an MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. He is a Hudson Valley native and enjoys his time spent in the mountains.

**Laurence Carr** writes plays, fiction and poetry. His novel, *Pancake Hollow Primer*, (Codhill Press), won the Next Generation Indie Book Award for First Short Novel. He is the editor of *Riverine: An Anthology of Hudson Valley Writers* and co-editor of *A Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley* (USA Best Book Award for Anthology) also from Codhill. His fiction and poetry have been published throughout the U.S., and over 20 of his plays have been produced in NYC, regionally, and in Europe. He teaches Dramatic and Creative Writing at SUNY New Paltz. Learn more at [carrwriter.com](http://carrwriter.com)

**Marilyn Cooper** is an Emeritus Professor of Humanities at Michigan Technological University, where she helped create the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Technical Communication. She has served as editor of *College Composition and Communication*, and has publications in that journal, *Technical Writing Quarterly*, the *Journal of Advanced Composition (JAC)*, and many others. Her first book, *Writing as Social Action*, remains an important work in rhetoric and composition studies. Her recent work looks at complexity theory and process philosophy in relation to writing and pedagogy. She is currently working on a book entitled *The Animal Who Writes*.

**Daniella Denaro** is a second year graduate student at SUNY New Paltz, where she also serves as a Composition TA. She obtained her undergraduate degree from St. Thomas Aquinas College, where she studied English and Secondary Education. Daniella brings an interest in Shakespeare and contemporary

young adult works to her scholarship, which she feels coincides with her future career as a secondary educator. This is Daniella's first published work.

**Dennis Doherty** teaches literature and creative writing at SUNY New Paltz. He is author of three volumes of poetry: *The Bad Man* (Ye Olde Font Shoppe Press, 2004), *Fugitive* (Codhill Press 2007), and *Crush Test* (Codhill Press, 2010), as well as a book on Mark Twain's novel: *Why Read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New Street Communications, 2014). His poems, essays, and stories appear throughout the literary press.

**Heinz Insu Fenkl** is a writer, editor, translator, and folklorist. His first novel, *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (Dutton 1996), was a Barnes and Noble "Discover Great New Writers" selection and a PEN/Hemingway finalist. He is a consulting editor for the international web journal *Words Without Borders* and currently teaches in the English Department at SUNY New Paltz.

**Allison Leshowitz** received her BA in English at SUNY New Paltz. She is currently an English MA student at SUNY New Paltz, teaching freshman composition as a Teaching Assistant, and living with her bunny named Chip.

**Jon Munk** is a poet and translator living in east-central Nebraska. His poetry has been published in *A Ritual to Read Together: Poems in Conversation with William Stafford* (Woodley Press, 2013), *Prairie Schooner*, *Great River Review*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Seneca Review*, and *Plain Song Review*. He has translated the complete *Rimas* of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and *Calle del Vento* by the Italian poet Diego Valeri.

**Matt Newcomb** is an Associate Professor of English and Composition Program Coordinator at SUNY New Paltz. He appreciates the chance to work with the graduate students involved in the 2015 English Graduate Symposium. Some of his current research connects rhetoric, the field of design studies, and new materialism.

**Matthew Nickel**, an Assistant Professor of English at Misericordia University, finished his BA and MA at SUNY-New Paltz. He is the author/editor of numerous books including *Hemingway's Dark Night* (New Street Communications 2013) and *The Route to Cacharel* (Five Oaks Press 2016).

**Thomas G. Olsen** is an associate professor of English, specializing in early modern English studies, Shakespeare studies, and issues related to literary adaptation.

**Christopher Paolini** is an MA student in English and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. His poetry has been published in various collections, including *Kentucky: Poets of Place* (Ed. Matthew Nickel, 2012). In 2016 he will present papers at the IX International Aldington Society & V International Imagism Conference at the Franklin Inn Club in Philadelphia, PA and at the 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Hemingway Society Conference in Oak Park, IL.

**Daniel J. Pizappi** recently completed his MA in English at SUNY New Paltz. His poetry and fiction have previously appeared in this journal, *Your Impossible Voice*, *Burningword*, and *The Stonethrow Review*.

**Alana Sawchuk** is a TA and English Graduate student at SUNY New Paltz, where she also earned an English BA in 2012 (with a double-minor in Evolutionary Studies and Philosophy). She gets the sense that most of her professors would like her to stop writing about women already, but she really can't seem to help herself. She plans to continue writing both academically and creatively for the foreseeable future.

**Jan Zlotnik Schmidt** is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz where she teaches composition, creative writing, and literature courses. Her work has been published in many journals including *The Cream City Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Phoebe*, *The Chiron Review*, *Memoir(and)*, and *Wind*. Her work also has been nominated for the Pushcart Press Prize Series. She has had two volumes of poetry published by the Edwin Mellen Press (*We Speak in Tongues*, 1991; *She had this memory*, 2000). Recently a chapbook, *The Earth Was Still*, was published by Finishing Line Press, and she co-edited an anthology with Laurence Carr, *Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley*, published by Codhill Press.

**H. R. Stoneback** is SUNY Distinguished Professor in the English Department at SUNY New Paltz and the author or editor of 36 books, roughly half literary criticism, half poetry. Recent critical volumes include *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (Kent State UP 2007), *Imagism: Essays on Its Initiation, Impact & Influence* (UNO Press 2013), and *Affirming the Gold Thread* (Florida English Press 2014); recent volumes of poetry include *Voices of Women Singing*, *Why Athletes Prefer Cheerleaders*, and--forthcoming in 2015--*The Stones of Strasbourg*, *The Language of Blackberries*, and *Mystics on the Wissahickon*. His award-winning poems have been translated and published in Chinese, French, Italian, Provencal and other languages.

**Damien Tavis Toman** is the author of several books, has recorded more than twenty albums, and is the founder of a theological-philosophical belief system called *Memorialism*. He lives in New York's Hudson Valley in the company of a cat named Kali.

**Kasey Tveit** has many ways of avoiding being an active participant in the highly mundane and disappointing “real” world, three of which are reading, writing, and being a citizen of Academia. This paper combines all three. She has AA and BA degrees, respectively, in Communications and Creative Writing, and is currently completing her MA in English. Kasey is a Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz and has a pipe dream of becoming the next Margaret Atwood.

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**Ethel Wesdorp** is a 2001 graduate of SUNY New Paltz, and works in the English Department. She has published poems in *WaterWrites*, *From Penn's Store to the World*, and *A Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley*.

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